

Apricot Amaretti Cake

This bright summer cake is a whimsical adaptation of my Blueberry Nutmeg Cake, one of the most popular recipes from my cookbook *Ripe*. I kept it super-simple and streamlined, which is what makes the cake so appealing, replacing the blueberries and nutmeg with bright apricot halves and anisette, a licorice-flavored liqueur. (You could certainly use pastis, or ouzo, or even go a different route entirely and use amaretto or even just a small 1/2 teaspoon of almond extract. Please don't buy a bottle of liquor just for this. Use what you have.) I also worked in a handful of store-bought amaretti cookies for crunch, a last minute call that makes this cake a multi-textured delight with just a hint of intoxicating bitter almond flavor.

Serves 6 to 8

10 ripe apricots, halved and pitted
1 tablespoon + 3/4 cup granulated sugar, divided
1 tablespoon anisette, or other liqueur of your choice
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
9 amaretti cookies (about 1-1/4 ounce or 33 grams), crushed with the side of a knife
4 ounces (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
2 eggs
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
Powdered sugar, for serving

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 9-inch springform pan and line the bottom with parchment.

Set the apricot halves hollows-up on a baking tray. Sprinkle with 1 tablespoon of the sugar and the liqueur of your choice. Set aside while you make the cake.

In a medium bowl, sift the flour, baking powder, and salt. Stir in half the crushed amaretti. Using an electric mixer, cream the butter and the remaining 3/4 cup sugar until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well to incorporate. Beat in the almond extract. Scrape down the bowl, then beat in the sifted ingredients in two additions. Transfer to the prepared cake pan and smooth the top. You won't think you have enough batter because it seems like very little, but you do.

Press the apricots ever-so-gently onto the top of the cake, hollows-up, with some space in between each one. Scrape any residual juice from the baking sheet over the apricots. Sprinkle with the remaining crushed amaretti.

Bake for about 45 minutes, until a skewer emerges clean. Cool completely, unmold, and sift with powdered sugar at servingtime.