



Sarah's Sicilian Olive Oil Cake has a deliciously moist and tender crumb, and is the perfect coffeecake for sunny mornings. Sarah Nasello / The Forum

Sicilian Olive Oil Cake

Makes: 9-inch cake

Ingredients:

- 1 cup good-quality extra-virgin olive, plus more to grease the pan
- 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus 2 tablespoons for the pan
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda
- 3 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups granulated sugar, plus 2 tablespoons to dust the top of the batter
- 2 tablespoons lemon zest
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups whole milk, room temperature
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons pure vanilla extract

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Grease a 9-inch round cake pan (at least 2 inches in height) with olive oil and line the bottom with a round of parchment paper. Brush the paper with olive oil and dust with 2 tablespoons of flour, then shake the pan and discard the excess flour.

In a medium bowl, use a whisk or fork to mix the flour, baking powder, salt and baking soda until combined; set aside.

In the bowl of a stand mixer, use the paddle attachment to beat the eggs, sugar and lemon zest on the highest speed until thick, pale and fluffy, and the batter falls from the beater in a slow ribbon, about 4 to 5 minutes. Use a rubber spatula to scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl, and the beater, too.

Turn the mixer to medium speed and add the olive oil in a slow, steady stream. Turn the mixer to high and beat for 2 minutes until fully incorporated. Scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl, and the beater, too.

In a small bowl or measuring cup, combine the milk, lemon juice and vanilla. Turn the mixer to the lowest speed and add the dry ingredients in 3 additions, alternating with the milk mixture, beginning and ending with the dry ingredients, beating until just incorporated.

Pour the batter into the prepared cake pan and tap on the counter several times to release the air bubbles. Sprinkle the top with the remaining 2 tablespoons of granulated sugar.

Bake in the center of the oven until a toothpick inserted into the middle comes out free of crumbs, about 40 to 45 minutes. The top may puff up and appear to crack — this is normal, and the cake will settle as it cools.

Transfer the cake to a rack and let cool in the pan for 20 minutes. Then, run an offset spatula or knife around the edge of the pan two times to release the cake. Place a plate or cutting board over the top of the cake and flip the pan over — the cake should easily slide out.

Remove the parchment liner and then flip the cake back over onto the wire rack to cool completely.

To serve, dust the top liberally with powdered sugar, or slice and serve with whipped cream and fresh berries. The cake may be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week, or in the freezer for up to 2 months.

Sarah's tips:

- Room temperature ingredients will incorporate better into the batter and help the cake to bake more evenly.
- You can use almond or lemon extract instead of vanilla, and orange zest and juice instead of, or combined with, the lemon. Liqueurs like amaretto and Grand Marnier would also work well and can be added to replace ¼ cup of the milk.

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"Home with the Lost Italian" is a weekly column written by Sarah Nasello featuring recipes by her husband, Tony Nasello. The couple owned Sarello's in Moorhead and lives in Fargo with their son, Giovanni. Readers can reach them at sarahnasello@gmail.com.