

# Blood Orange Almond Olive Oil Cake

Serves 6-8 | 10 minutes prep + 45 minutes cook time

Legendary cookbook author Claudia Roden introduced us to the idea of using whole oranges in a cake more than 50 years ago. A recipe in 'A Book of Middle Eastern Food' combined boiled citrus with almonds, eggs, and sugar to make a custardy, pudding-like cake she says was popular amongst the Sephardic Jews who brought it to the Middle East in the 15th century.

Sicilians also use whole oranges in baking, not surprising since the island produces some form of ripe citrus 10 months of the year. Pan d'arancio, literally orange bread, is a typical quick bread made with a whole, raw orange and usually baked in loaf pans. It's typically eaten as a snack with an afternoon coffee. I adapted a version from writer Domenica Marchetti, using extra virgin olive oil instead of butter and increasing the amount of almonds. And instead of using almond flour, I ground the nuts in the food processor. The result is coarser than flour, more like a fine meal, but it adds a lovely texture to the cake.

Marchetti's recipe included a simple glaze, and when made with the deep red blood orange juice it adds a dramatic note as well a lightly sweet layer to this simple cake. When the height of citrus season passes and blood oranges become scarce, I'll try it with navel oranges, lemons and limes.

*For the cake:*

**1 cup raw almonds**

**1 cups Edison flour**

**2 teaspoons baking powder**

**1/4 teaspoon sea salt**

**1 blood orange (slightly larger than a tennis ball)\***

**1 cup sugar**

**½ cup olive oil**

**3 eggs**

**1/3 cup milk**

*For the glaze:*

**1 blood orange**

**1/3 cup sugar**

\*During citrus season you can usually find two different kinds of blood oranges. I think the tarocco oranges taste better, but the moro variety is usually much deeper red and makes a better looking glaze. You can make this cake with any oranges or, for that matter, other citrus. Just make sure to take out any seeds, they can be very bitter.

**Step 1** Heat the oven to 350F. Cut a circle of parchment paper to fit a 9 inch cast iron skillet. Drizzle a little olive oil into the skillet and spread it around and up the sides with the parchment, then straighten the paper into the bottom of the skillet. Or use a 9 inch cake pan with the parchment.

**Step 2** Put the almonds into a food processor with the metal blade, blitz until you have a fine meal. Transfer to a mixing bowl and combine with the flour, baking powder, and salt.

**Step 3** Cut the orange into chunks and remove any seeds, which can make the cake bitter. Blitz in the food processor (don't need to clean it from the almonds), wiping down the sides a couple of times. Add the sugar and blitz again, then add the olive oil and process for a few more seconds. Add the eggs and milk and process until well blended.

**Step 4** Add the wet ingredients to the flour mixture and blend together. Pour the mixture into the prepared skillet. Bake for 45 minutes or until the top is golden brown and the cake is pulling away from the sides of the skillet.

**Step 5** As the cake cools in the skillet, make the glaze by zesting the orange, squeezing out the juice, and combining both with the sugar in a small saucepan. Heat gently to a boil, let it bubble for 2-3 minutes or until it forms a light syrup (drag a spoon through it to create a trough, and if it takes a second for the liquid to flow back together, it's ready). The syrup will thicken as it cools, but a few seconds back on the burner will make it runny enough to brush on the cake.

**Step 6** Run a knife around the edge of the cake and carefully invert it onto a plate or, even better, a rimless baking sheet. Use another plate to invert again onto a nice plate so it's right side up. Gently brush the warm glaze over the top of the cake and let cool.