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RECIPE

Why Bourbon-Spiked Lane Cake Reigns in Alabama

“If somebody makes you a Lane cake, they love you”

RECIPE BY STACY LYN HARRIS

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“Lane cake is the official cake of Alabama, and rightly so, ever since Mrs. Emma Lane of Clayton, Alabama, entered her cake in the county fair,” writes Stacy Lyn Harris in her new cookbook, *Love Language of the South*. The original baker Mrs. Lane dubbed it Prize Cake when she included it in her 1898 self-published recipe collection. Variations abound: Harper Lee mentions Lane cake a few times in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and the character Scout Finch’s neighbor Miss Maudie Atkinson spiked her concoction with bourbon.

“I have fond memories of my granny standing in her kitchen making her version of the Lane cake for birthdays and potlucks, and for her family and friends,” Harris says. “My recipe is exactly what she had written on her 3×5

index card, which is hanging in my pantry. There is one difference: I like to toast the pecans in the filling. It keeps them crunchier and boosts the nutty flavor. And she made it mostly in the fall, when the pecans dropped from her trees, but I make it more in spring, when my chickens are laying too many eggs for me to use up. The recipe calls for a dozen.

I included a lot of simple recipes, but this isn't one of them. If somebody makes you a Lane cake, they love you.”

Read the rest of the interview with Harris [here](#).

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LANE CAKE (YIELD: 12-16 SERVINGS)**FOR THE CAKE**

3 ¼ cups sifted cake flour

2 tsp. baking powder

Pinch salt

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened

2 cups sugar

1 cup milk

1 tsp. vanilla extract

8 large egg whites (reserve yolks for filling)

FOR THE FILLING

8 large egg yolks

1 cup sugar

8 tbsp. (1 stick) unsalted butter

1 ½ cup golden raisins, finely chopped

1 cup unsweetened shredded coconut

1 cup finely chopped pecans, toasted

3 tbsp. bourbon

1 tsp. vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

3 cups sugar

⅔ cup cold water

4 tsp. light corn syrup

4 large egg whites

½ tsp. cream of tartar

Pinch salt

PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Butter and flour three 9-inch round cake pans. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt; set aside.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter and sugar on high speed until light and fluffy. Add the flour mixture in three additions, alternating with the milk. Stir in the vanilla.

In a clean mixer bowl, using the whisk attachment, whisk the 8 egg whites on high speed until stiff. Gently fold the egg whites into the cake batter.

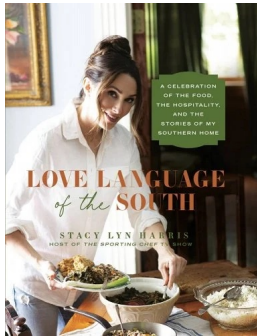
Divide the batter evenly into the prepared cake pans. Bake for 15-20 minutes, until the cakes spring back but have very little color on the top. Let the cakes cool in the pans on a wire rack for 15 minutes. Turn the cakes out onto the rack and allow them to cool completely.

Meanwhile make the filling. In a small saucepan, whisk together the egg yolks, sugar, and butter over medium heat for about 20 minutes, until the mixture has thickened. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the raisins, coconut, pecans, bourbon, and vanilla. Allow the mixture to cool.

To make the frosting, fill a saucepan with 2 inches of water and set a metal or heat- proof glass mixing bowl over the top, creating a double boiler. The bottom of the bowl should not touch the water. Bring the water to a boil over medium-high heat, then lower the heat to medium and continue to simmer. Add the sugar, water, corn syrup, egg whites, cream of tartar, and salt to the bowl. With an electric mixer, beat the egg whites until soft peaks form and the mixture is stiff and glossy, 10-15 minutes. Remove the bowl from the heat.

To assemble the cake, place one cake layer on a serving plate. Add half of the filling on top of the layer. Repeat with the second layer, then place the third layer on top. Cover the top and sides of the cake with the frosting. If desired, decorate the top of the cake by lining the top edge and center with pecan halves. Store in the refrigerator.

Note: This is a perfect make-ahead recipe, as it tastes best 2-3 days after making it. If you have leftover icing, bake it at 200°F until it gets crunchy all the way through and serve with your favorite fruit.



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