



## Country Women's Association of Victoria Inc

### Live Judging

### Red Hill Show

2017

#### COOKING FOR COMPETITION

For people confused about metrics, a standard table of measurements to the nearest round figure, a standard table of measurements is at the end of these notes. The nearest round measurement is not precise but is used for simplicity. If your measurements remain constant, no real problems should arise in your baking. Use all metric or all imperial. Never mix them when measuring.

Always use the highest quality ingredients

The word **flour** in recipes means **plain flour**

Make sure that your oven is clean and free from spillage that could cause fumes around your baking

A clean oven will maintain temperature and reflect heat more accurately

Check that the oven temperature is accurate. If in doubt oven thermometers that sit on the rack or hang from it are available, or have your oven tested by a technician.

Use a mixing bowl that is in proportion to the mixture being used

Use clean dry cake tins without wrinkles, dents or chips

Line cake tins with fresh uncrinkled paper. Paper can be ironed if necessary. To get a good fit turn the cake tin upside down and fold the paper around the outside. Then place the paper inside the tin

When cooking fruit cakes you can tie newspaper around the outside of the tin to prevent scorching of the fruit

The size of the cake tin will affect the cake. If the sides are too high the cake will not brown

If the sides are too low the mixture will overflow and the texture will be coarse and the cake could sink in the middle

If the tin is too small the cake will not rise evenly

Try shiny tins for electric ovens, and dull or dark tins for gas

Because there are no corners to fill. Around tin will give a higher cake than a square one/ This is of particular importance when making a fruit cake

Always read your schedule carefully before commencing to bake

Study your recipe carefully and set the oven to the correct temperature before starting

Always watch the texture of your mixture as it changes during creaming, rubbing in or folding. You will learn from practice to recognise the critical textures before the mixture goes into the oven. If you feel that the mixture doesn't look quite right, look around you. Sometimes the melted butter is still sitting on the stove, or the sugar has been left out. This will make the cake not rise properly, cracks on top and tastes dreadful.

Scrape the mixing spoon and sides of the bowl after adding each ingredient

Never use damp or stale flour

Never use overheated butter

Always use butter in a fruit cake

Never use eggs that have been sitting around

Never use sugar that has been packed hard

Bring butter to be creamed to room temperature

Use eggs at room temperature  
Do not melt butter for creaming method

If melting butter for a one-bowl cake, heat and allow to cool to room temperature

It is a good idea to prepare and soak fruit in the alcohol well before mixing.

You can leave in a covered container about one month

Cherries cut up small and then washed to get rid of liquid then well dried and coated with a little of the flour will prevent sinking.

A shake of black pepper in the mixture will enhance the flavour of the fruit

Use the back of a tablespoon dipped in water to smooth the top of the cake to push down surface fruit to stop scorching.

Paper may be placed on top of cake during cooking to stop top from scorching  
Cooking times are only estimates check cake is cooked by inserting a fine skewer

Let cake cool in tin – when cold wrap up well in foil and paper and leave in a cool place to mature

Best cooked a few months before judging or using so that the flavours are well matured

Do not decorate the top with almonds

A small crack on top is not considered a major fault

The cake should cut cleanly without any crumbs

### **What Judges are looking for**

As much fruit and variety as desired, spices, fruit

Dark in colour

Good shape due to lining of tin

Even baking – no scorched patches or burnt fruit

Interior, no plain patches in the centre, fruit cut even and small, not minced, each piece to be easily identifiable, even distribution of fruit.

No damp patches or sodden core, no streaks caused by poor mixing

Flavour rich and pleasant, well mellowed. Adding spirits will change the colour  
Freezing for a few days adds maturity quickly

No almonds on top

A small crack is not detrimental

To judge cut through the centre

Too much rising; due to over creaming, oven too cool; opening the oven door before cooked or being knocked whilst cooking could all cause or contribute to this problem. Also can be caused by lack of acid – a pinch of citric acid or a squeeze of lemon can rectify this.

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The same general rules apply for fruit cakes

A boiled fruit cake will appear much more moist than the above

Flavour can be enhanced by substituting alcohol for the water and lower the sugar a little.

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### **Fault**

Grooves or indentations insides and base of cake

**Carelessly prepared tin, wrinkled lining**

Coarse texture, holes, lack of volume

**Insufficient creaming of butter and sugar**

Curdling

**Eggs not beaten well after each addition**

Overpowering aroma of essences and/or spices

Too much essence or spice (some imported spices are much stronger than local Versions)

Pale or unfruited areas in cake when cut

**Flour and fruit not well mixed in**

Fruit adheres in clumps

**Carelessly prepared fruit, not correctly cut and prepared.**

Burning, cracked top

**Oven too hot**

Sinking, heavy texture, lack of volume

**Oven too cool**

Cake sunken in middle, soggy.

**Insufficient cooking time.**

Air pockets or holes in the cake

**Carelessly filled tin – work the mixture well down**

Dark sticky patch on top of cake

**Scrappings from bowl not well**

After the cake is cut the fruit closest to the outside should not appear to be dark and shiny  
Cooked in too hot an oven

**Colour:** attractive even golden brown on top, bottom and sides. A darker colour for a rich dark cake.

**Texture:** Firm and fine, it should be moist, not soggy, nor dry. The texture should be smooth and even, and the same right through the cake.

**Flavour & Aroma:** Delicious, and should be a perfect blend of fresh eggs and dairy ingredients, sugar, essences, flour and spices, spirits and quality dried fruit. Beware of an overpowering flavour or aroma of essences or the acrid smell of overheated fruit.

**Presentation:** Remove all paper from the cake before exhibiting, present on an appropriate plate or board according to the schedule.

**Check your schedule carefully—recipes are often supplied**