

Cara Dear 10/10/20

Luscious vegan gingerbread

I am preposterously proud of this squidgy gingerbread, and I don't mind who knows it. It's everything you want out - sticky, spicy, deeply aromatic - and you would never miss the butter or eggs.

Warning: ideally, you need to make this at least a day before you plan to eat it. Harsh, I know. Gives 12 slabs, but could easily be cut into 18

150ml vegetable oil
200g golden syrup
200g black treacle
125g dark muscovado sugar
75g pitted soft prunes (about eight)
30g fresh ginger
2 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tsp ground ginger
1 tsp ground allspice
1/8 tsp ground cloves
1/4 tsp ready-ground black pepper
1/4 tsp fine sea salt
250ml oat milk
300g plain flour
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
2 x 15ml tbsps warm water
2 tsp regular cider vinegar



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Heat the oven to 170C (150C fan)/340F/gas mark 4. Line a 23cm square tin with a sheet of baking parchment, so it covers the bottom and comes up the sides. Leave something heavy on it to keep it down while you melt everything together.

Measure the oil in a jug, and pour it into a fairly wide, heavy-based saucepan; I use one of 22cm diameter. Measure the syrup and treacle using the oily jug, as this will stop them sticking and help them pour out easily into the saucepan.

Tip the sugar into the pan, and chop the prunes finely before adding them. Peel the ginger and grate it finely into the pan. Sprinkle in the spices and salt, and warm over gentle heat, whisking to combine. Don't whisk too much: you do not want to get a lot of air in the mixture.

Once everything's melted and mixed, take the pan off the heat; it should be warm, rather than boiling hot. Add the oat milk, whisking gently to make sure it's incorporated.

Whisk in the flour in three or four batches, getting rid of any lumps as you go. This will take a few minutes; the only lumps you should see are the little bits of prune, which will melt into the gingerbread as it bakes.

Dissolve the bicarbonate of soda

in the warm water in a bigger cup than you think it needs, then add the vinegar and quickly whisk the fizzing mixture into the pan.

Pour the gingerbread batter carefully into the lined tin and bake for 50-55 minutes, though start checking at 45. It may look cooked at 45 minutes, but as it's so damp, a cake tester won't help enormously - you'd expect some crumbs to stick to it - so take it out of the oven and touch the top quickly. If cooked, it should bounce back a bit under your fingers.

Leave to cool in its tin on a rack. To taste this at its best, wrap the tin first in baking parchment and then in foil, and leave for a day or two before cutting into it.