

Gâteau de noix

WALNUT GÂTEAU – THE ULTIMATE WALNUT CAKE

SERVES 8-10

EVERYONE HAS THEIR FAVOURITE WALNUT CAKE RECIPE. THIS RECIPE WAS GIVEN TO US BY OUR FRIEND MONIQUE PÉBEYRE. IT IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE OLD WAY OF MEASURING CAKES BEFORE KITCHENS HAD ELECTRONIC SCALES OR ELECTRIC MIXERS. LIKE ALL REALLY GOOD THINGS IT IS INCREDIBLY SIMPLE, AND USES THE LOCAL PRODUCE — THERE ARE WALNUT TREES EVERYWHERE AND WALNUTS ARE SOLD IN ALL THE MARCHÉS. THE OLD RECIPE BEGINS WITH ‘COLLECT A LARGE BASKET OF WALNUTS, SORT AND SHELL THEM’.

220 g (7¾ oz/2¼ cup) walnuts
100 g (3½ oz) butter
30 g (1 oz) plain (all-purpose) flour
caster (superfine) sugar, measure in a measuring jug
up to the 400 ml (14 fl oz) mark
6 egg whites
icing (confectioners') sugar, to serve

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6). Grease a 24 cm (9½ inch) loose-based tart tin with butter, and cut a circle of baking paper for the base of the tin, even if it is non-stick, because this cake will stick!

Grind the walnuts in a food processor, not too finely and take care not to over-process or it will form a paste.

Melt the butter slowly and set aside.

Mix the walnuts, flour and sugar in a bowl. Mix in the egg whites, using a wooden spoon. Lastly add the melted butter, mix well and pour into the tin. Bake for 20–25 minutes. It should be quite brown and will go crunchy at the edges.

Remove to a wire rack and turn out after 5 minutes, peel off the baking paper while it is still warm.

To serve, sprinkle with icing sugar. If you like, you can serve this cake with whipped cream or ice cream and red berries in summer, or with chocolate sauce in winter. If there are any leftovers, this cake keeps well for a few days.