

Cardamom and caramel make a formidable sauce for this pillow-soft cake studded with chopped dates. Scoop some ice cream or crème fraîche over it, sprinkle with the bashed brittle and indulge your friends after a Middle Eastern feast.

STICKY DATE CAKE WITH PISTACHIO BRITTLE & CARDAMOM TOFFEE SAUCE

PREPARATION: 15 MINUTES, PLUS 10 MINUTES SOAKING • COOKING: 55 MINUTES • SERVES: 4–6

200 g (7 oz) pitted dates, preferably soft medjool dates, finely chopped
80 ml (2 ½ fl oz/⅓ cup) boiling water
100 g (3 ½ oz) unsalted butter, softened
220 g (7 oz/1 cup) caster (superfine) sugar
2 eggs
175 g (6 oz) plain (all-purpose) flour
1 teaspoon baking powder ½
60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) milk

Ice cream, to serve

Pistachio brittle

75 g (2¾ oz) pistachio nut kernels, chopped
100 g (3½ oz) caster (superfine) sugar

Cardamom toffee sauce

200 g (7 oz) unsalted butter, chopped
250 ml (9 fl oz/1 cup) pure cream (35% fat)
350 g (12 oz) soft dark brown (muscovado) sugar
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Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F) or 160°C (315°F) fan forced. Lightly grease a 20 cm (8 inch) square cake tin. Put the dates in a bowl and pour the boiling water over them. Set aside for 10 minutes or until the water is absorbed.

Using an electric mixer fitted with the beater attachment, beat the butter and caster sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Sift the flour and baking powder into the bowl, then stir in the milk and dates and continue stirring until well combined. Spoon the mixture into the prepared tin and bake for 40–50 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean. Remove from the oven and allow to stand while you prepare the sauce.

Meanwhile, to make the pistachio brittle, line a baking tray with baking paper and spread the nuts on the tray. Put the sugar in a heavy-based non-stick saucepan over medium heat. Don't stir, as it will cause the sugar to crystallise, simply tilt the pan when the sugar at the edge starts to go brown faster than the middle. When the sugar is evenly coloured to a light caramel, pour it over the nuts and stand for about 10 minutes to set. Break the brittle into pieces, making some quite fine and leaving others in larger pieces for serving.

To make the cardamom toffee sauce, put all of the ingredients in a heavy-based saucepan. Cook over low heat until the sugar dissolves, then increase the heat to medium and simmer rapidly for 5 minutes or until thick and dark. Serve the warm date cake and the hot toffee sauce with vanilla ice cream and a sprinkling of pistachio brittle

GET AHEAD: The cake can be made earlier in the day, cooled and covered with foil. The toffee sauce can be prepared 2 days before, then covered and refrigerated. Reheat just before serving. Make the brittle up to 3 days ahead and store in an airtight container.

My Street Food Kitchen by Jennifer Joyce (Murdoch Books, £18.99). Photography by Jean Cazals.