

# Ocracoke Island Fig Cake

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Extremely moist with a hint of fruity sweetness, jam-based spice cakes are very popular across the Southern United States. Take blackberry jam cake for instance, which is a favorite in both Tennessee and Kentucky. But the Outer Banks barrier islands of North Carolina claim one of the most beloved and famed Southern spice cakes, Ocracoke Island fig cake. Often considered the gem of the Outer Banks, Ocracoke Island is replete with a variety of fig trees, many of them native, which thrive on the island due to its moderate climate and low acidity sandy soil. Figs abound on the remote island and are considered one of its most notable natural resources, legendary to the Ocracokers (native islanders) and visitors alike. While fig preserves have been used as a filling between layers of plain cake for years, it wasn't until the 1960s that it became an integral part of the island's spice cake recipe. As the story goes, Margaret Garrish, an Ocracoke native, was baking a date cake, and realizing that she didn't have any dates on hand, substituted preserved figs, kicking it up a notch with regards to the cake's flavor and moistness. The rest is Ocracoke Island history and Southern culinary lore. While this cake is traditionally made with buttermilk, it can also be prepared dairy-free by replacing the buttermilk with almond milk or the like. You won't get that buttermilk flavor, but it's still awesome. Enjoy, y'all. See y'all on Ocracoke.

## Dairy or Dairy-Free Makes 1 (10-inch tube or 10 1/4-inch loaf) Cake

- 1 cup light Olive Oil
- 1 1/2 cup Granulated White Sugar
- 3 large Eggs, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon Baking Soda, dissolved in 1 tablespoon Boiling Water
- 2 cup All-Purpose Flour
- 1 teaspoon Ground Nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon Ground Allspice
- 1 teaspoon Ground Cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon Salt
- 1/2 cup Buttermilk or Almond Milk
- 1 teaspoon Vanilla extract
- 1 (13.8 oz.) jar Fig Preserves
- 1 cup Chopped Pecans (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease and lightly flour a 10-inch metal tube (angel food) pan or 10 1/4-inch x 3 5/8-inch x 2 5/8-inch loaf pan, tapping out any excess flour. Sift together the flour, nutmeg, allspice, cinnamon, and salt into a large bowl.

Set aside. Using an electric mixer, cream oil and sugar together until creamy and pale. Add eggs, one at a time, and continue to cream until well incorporated. Add Vanilla, baking soda, chopped pecans, and fig preserves, and mix to incorporate. While continuing to mix, slowly add in the flour, alternating with the buttermilk/almond milk, until the batter is smooth and all ingredients are well incorporated. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake for 1 hour to 1 hour and 10 minutes, or until an inserted toothpick comes out clean. Allow cake to cool completely before glazing.

### Buttermilk Glaze

- 1 cup Granulated White Sugar
- 1 tablespoon Cornstarch
- 1/2 teaspoon Baking Soda

- 1/2 cup well-shaken Buttermilk
- 4 tablespoons (1/4 cup) Unsalted Butter
- 1 tablespoon Light Corn Syrup
- 1 teaspoon Vanilla extract

Stir together the sugar, cornstarch, baking soda, buttermilk, butter, and corn syrup in a large saucepan. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium-high heat and cook, stirring constantly, for about 10 minutes, or until the glaze is thick and opaque.

Remove the glaze from the heat, stir in the vanilla, and let cool to room temperature (glaze will thicken as it cools). Drizzle glaze over the cooled cake. When preparing a non-dairy version of the cake, glaze with a simple confectioners sugar glaze (confectioners sugar + hot water). Enjoy, y'all.