

Pear Hazelnut Upside Down Cake

If you were to walk into a busy restaurant with my dad the first thing he would say is, “This isn’t a restaurant, it’s a goldmine!”. Now obviously that is a comment about perceived profits but it also says something about it being so much more than your average restaurant. When I think about this recipe, given what a true workhorse it is and how easily it can be adapted to suit your tastes and current fruit stock, well it’s so much more than a recipe... it’s a goldmine!

I created this recipe for Pear Hazelnut Upside-down Cake in an effort to use up some pears that were on the turn. Though to say I “created” it last week is a bit of a stretch, as I actually wrote this recipe in 2018 for my cookbook *Let Me Feed You*, where it called for rhubarb instead of pears. But as I mentioned above, it is a very adaptable recipe. If you don’t have any pears (I did ask you in my last newsletter to purchase them so what the hell?) and hazelnuts, try it with apples and pecans or cranberries and orange zest, maybe blueberries with lemon zest or plums and sliced almonds. I might even try it with a pile of sliced banana, which I think would be amazing baked in all that caramelized sugar topping. Honestly, once you start thinking about it, the possibilities feel endless. What did I tell you? It’s a bloody goldmine.

2 cups all-purpose flour

Makes: 1 8-inch cake

2 tsp baking powder

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Butter an 8-inch x 3-inch cake pan (you need it deep to accommodate all the batter and fruit) and line with parchment paper. Set aside.

1 tsp ground cinnamon

Sift the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and 1/2 salt onto a large piece of parchment paper and set aside.

1 1/2 tsp salt

Use a small pairing knife to remove the stems and peel the pears. Cut two of the pears in half and slice each half into 6 -8 slices, about 1/8-inch thick. Cut the remaining pear into 1/2-inch cubes and set aside.

1 cup butter, room temperature

Place 1/4 cup butter, 3/4 cup sugar, the brown sugar and the remaining salt in a small bowl. Use a spoon to combine until a smooth paste forms. Spread the paste across the bottom of the prepared pan. Sprinkle the chopped hazelnuts across the paste and then top with the pear slices, slightly overlapping, in a circular pattern. Set aside.

1 3/4 cup sugar

1/2 cup dark brown sugar

In a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment or a large mixing bowl using a handheld mixer, cream the remaining butter and sugar on high speed until light and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time, making sure to beat well after each addition. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

2 eggs

In a small liquid measuring cup, combine the buttermilk and vanilla. With the mixer running on low speed, add the dry ingredients in three parts, alternating with the buttermilk in two parts, beginning and ending with the dry. Scrape down the sides of the bowl several times during this process to make sure everything is properly combined.

1 cup buttermilk

Add the remaining chopped pear and use a wooden spoon or spatula to fold them into the batter.

1 tsp pure vanilla

Spoon the batter evenly into the pan atop the pears and then use the back of the spoon or a small offset spatula to smooth it over.

3 pears

Bake for 55 to 60 minutes or until a wooden skewer inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove from the oven and allow it to cool for at least 10 minutes before turning it out onto a cake plate or your chosen serving pieces. You’ll do this by placing the plate or platter over the cake pan and then carefully but quickly flipping it over to release the cake onto the serving dish.

1/2 cup toasted hazelnuts, roughly chopped

Serve the cake with a big dollop of whip cream while still a little warm....sooooo good!

*If replacing the pears with berries you’ll need approximately 4 cups. 3 cups for the toppings and 1 cup to be folded in the batter.