

Cholly's World-Famous Gingerbread Cake

PREP AND COOK TIME: About 1¼ hours, plus at least 1¼ hours to cool

NOTES: This dark, moist cake is a favorite of guests at the ranch, where it's cut into rounds and set on a pool of custard sauce. You can make the cake up to 2 days ahead; cool, cover, and store airtight at room temperature.

MAKES: 9 or 10 servings

- 1 cup dark molasses
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ cup (¼ lb.) butter, at room temperature
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 large eggs

Crème anglaise (recipe follows)

Unsweetened cocoa and/or powdered sugar (optional)

Fresh mint sprigs (optional), rinsed

1. In a 2- to 3-quart pan over high heat, bring 1 cup water to a boil. Remove from heat and stir in molasses and baking soda. After mixture stops foaming, stir in ½ cup cold water; let cool to room temperature, stirring often, about 10 minutes.

2. In a small bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, cinnamon, ginger, salt, and cloves.

3. In a large bowl, with an electric mixer on high speed, beat butter and brown sugar until well blended. Beat in eggs until blended. Reduce speed to medium-low. Add flour

and molasses mixtures alternately until incorporated, then beat on high speed until well blended. Pour into a buttered and floured 9-inch square pan.

4. Bake in a 325° regular or convection oven until a toothpick inserted in center of thickest part comes out clean, 45 to 50 minutes. Let cool in pan on a rack at least 1¼ hours.

5. Pour about ¼ cup crème anglaise onto each plate. Cut cake into pieces (see notes) and set them in sauce on plates. If desired, lightly sift cocoa and/or powdered sugar over each plate and garnish with a mint sprig. Offer remaining crème anglaise to add to taste.

Per serving: 378 cal.; 26% (99 cal.) from fat; 4.7 g protein; 11 g fat (6.3 g sat.); 67 g carbo (0.9 g fiber); 526 mg sodium; 68 mg chol.

Crème Anglaise

PREP AND COOK TIME: About 30 minutes

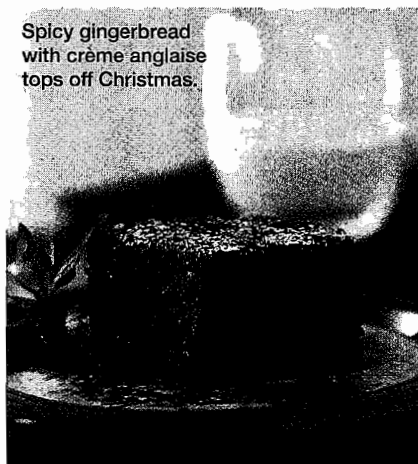
NOTES: You can make this sauce up to 2 days ahead; cover and chill.

MAKES: About 3¾ cups

- 1 quart milk
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 8 large egg yolks, lightly beaten
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

1. In a 3- to 4-quart pan over medium heat, stir milk and sugar often until mixture begins to bubble around edges of pan, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove from heat.

2. Whisk about ½ cup of the hot milk mixture



Spicy gingerbread with crème anglaise tops off Christmas.

into egg yolks, then pour mixture into pan and whisk to blend. Stir with a flexible spatula over medium-low heat until custard coats the spatula in a smooth, velvety layer, 10 to 14 minutes. Remove from heat and pour through a fine strainer set over a bowl. Set bowl in a container of ice water and stir often until cool. Stir in vanilla. Serve cool or cold.

Per ¼ cup: 108 cal., 41% (44 cal.) from fat; 3.6 g protein; 4.9 g fat (2.2 g sat.); 12 g carbo (0 g fiber); 36 mg sodium; 123 mg chol. ♦