

Perfect Peach Cake

adapted from *Cook's Illustrated* July and August 2011

makes one 9-inch cake

2 1/2 pounds peaches

4 teaspoons lemon juice

6 tablespoons plus 1/3 cup sugar

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 1/4 teaspoon baking powder

3/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup packed light brown sugar

2 eggs

8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled

1/4 cup sour cream

1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1/4 teaspoon plus 1/8 teaspoon almond extract

1/3 cup panko bread crumbs, crushed fine (optional- see note)

1 cup creme fraiche (optional)

preparing the peaches

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Line a baking pan with a baking mat or foil and spray with oil.

Slice all peaches into 1/2 inch wedges. Place 24 peach wedges in a bowl and toss with 2 teaspoons lemon juice and 1 tablespoon sugar. Set aside.

With the remaining peaches, cut crosswise into thirds, place in a bowl, and toss with 2 teaspoons lemon juice and 2 tablespoons sugar. Spread peach chunks on the prepared pan and bake for 20-25 minutes until peaches begin to caramelize and their juices thicken. Remove and cool to room temperature. (If your peaches are super juicy, toss them with the panko. If they are not, you can skip that step.)

making the cake

Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees.

Grease a 9-inch springform pan.

Combine flour, baking powder, and salt in a bowl; whisk. Whisk brown sugar, 1/3 cup granulated sugar, and eggs in another bowl until fully combined. Whisk in melted butter. Add sour cream, vanilla, and 1/4 teaspoon almond extract; whisk until combined. Add dry flour mixture to wet mixture and stir until just combined.

Spread half the batter over the bottom of the prepared springform pan. It will be a very thin layer. Spread the roasted peaches evenly over the batter. Spread the remaining batter over the top of the peaches. Be careful not to disrupt the peach layer. Smooth the top with a spatula. Arrange peach slices on the batter. Gently press them down into the batter. Stir together remaining 3 tablespoons of sugar with 1/8 teaspoon almond extract. Sprinkle infused sugar over the top of the cake.

Bake cake for 50-60 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool cake on a wire rack for 5 minutes. Loosen cake from sides of pan by sliding a knife around the edge of the cake. Remove pan sides and allow to cool completely.

Cut into wedges and serve with a dollop of creme fraiche.