

PEAR AND ALMOND TORTE with scotch whipped cream

6-8 servings A very loose riff on the old New York Times-Marion Burros Plum Cake. *Best served fresh—warm or at room temperature. Leftovers, however, will eat admirably well with coffee for breakfast. Uses a 9-inch springform pan, though a 9-inch regular cake pan or a 3-quart round casserole dish will work, too.*

- 1/2 cup salted butter, softened, plus 1 tablespoon for greasing pan
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar, plus 2 teaspoons for topping
- 2 eggs, room temperature (or place in a bowl with warm water for several minutes)
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 3/4 cup all-purpose, unbleached flour
- 1/4 cup stoneground cornmeal
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 ripe, but firm Anjou or Bosc pears, cored and sliced into 1/2-inch pieces*
- 1 tablespoon fresh orange juice
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
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FOR SCOTCH WHIPPED CREAM: Whip 1 tablespoon single malt Scotch (otherwise known as whisky without an “e”) and 1 teaspoon granulated sugar with 1 cup heavy cream until very soft peaks form.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Place rack at center. Grease 9-inch springform or other pan with *1 tablespoon of the softened butter*. With electric mixer, beat *the other 1/2 cup softened butter* with just 3/4 cup granulated sugar for two minutes. Scrape down bowl. Beat in eggs and almond extract and beat for 30 seconds. Scrape down bowl again.

Add both flours and salt and mix dry ingredients lightly while on top of wet ingredients. Beat wet and dry ingredients together until well-mixed. With a rubber spatula, scrape out the batter (rather stiff) into the prepared pan and smooth top evenly.

Add sliced pears on top of batter and squeeze a little orange juice over them. In a small bowl or cup, mix together lightly the almonds, *other 2 teaspoons sugar*, cinnamon, and ginger. Sprinkle almond

mixture over pears and batter evenly.

If using a springform pan, place the pan on a baking sheet before baking as it may leak a little from bottom. Bake 35-45 minutes **or** until golden and toothpick inserted at center comes out clean. Remove from oven and cool on rack 5 minutes. Unclip the side of the springform pan, if using, cool a little longer until warm or lukewarm and slice. Serve with Scotch Whipped Cream, if you like.

*I happened to have a dozen Bartlett pears that needed eating, and while they are best eaten out of hand, I've found I can bake with them if they're nearly ripe and still firm.

What else could I use? Apples would be one obvious fall idea. If so, change the orange juice to lemon and the scotch to Calvados or brandy. You might think of exchanging ground nutmeg or just 1/8 teaspoon of ground cloves for the ginger.