



# THE *Traveling Fork*

And a MERRY CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY NEW YEAR to all of you and yours!

Here we are in the Holiday Season which, of course, immerses itself in the foods of the season. One of my favorite foods of the Season of Good Cheer is Fruit Cake. I'm not writing about store-bought stuff which is usually dry, crumbly, and filled with candied orange and lemon peels. I speak of the Fruit Cake my Mother made which, for me, was always the favorite of the Season's sweets. And there will be no suggestion of ruining it with rum or your favorite expensive whiskeys. I have never tasted a fruit cake whose flavor was enhanced by the addition of these things.



Of course, I matured and moved on to marriage and children. Of course, I asked her for the recipe, and she joyfully responded that she would always produce one for our growing family upon arrival of the Season. She



did for years! But, of course, as she aged it seemed more of a task, so I often asked for the recipe. She would

Seemingly, there has been a slow decline in the popularity of Fruit Cake which saddens me. Therefore, I will share with you a tale of how I finally learned to make the perfect Fruit Cake. Hopefully, this effort will result in Fruit Cake's restoration as one of the Season's favorite delicacies.

This tale begins with a description of my earliest connection with fruit cake. My Mom usually bought one from the grocery store when I was a child. Some early ones came from the ovens of Claxton, Georgia. Mom announced in the early 1950s that she had been working on the perfect fruit cake and had perfected its recipe. With this, we enjoyed the first one off her assembly line. It was the most heavenly, scrumptious fruitcake I had ever eaten. From then on that's the one we always shared during the Holy Holiday Season.

cooly reply that it was so complicated I would probably have trouble with it; anyway, she was going to always provide the cake for the season. And she added that her culinary work was something of a secret.

About the time she was maturing into her '90s, she began to understand that she wouldn't be around forever. She called me up one day and said she was going to mail the recipe to me.

I joyfully opened the envelope when it came. Imagine my surprise! It was a clipping from The Tampa Tribune, our news source for years. The little article contained the following: "Although the Tribune has been publishing the late Mrs. P. J. Harvey's White Fruitcake recipe annually since 1951, when it won a Tribune contest, readers still call every year to ask when it will run again. Please clip and save it because it won't be printed again until Dec. 1, 1988".

- BILL BLACKWELL

### Mrs. Harvey's 'White' Fruitcake

- 4 cups shelled pecans
- 1 lb. candied cherries
- 1 pound candied pineapple
- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 lb. butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 5 large eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 to 2 oz. vanilla extract
- 1 to 2 oz. lemon extract

Chop nuts and fruits into medium-sized pieces; dredge with 1/4 cup of flour. Cream butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Add well-beaten eggs and blend well. Sift remaining flour and baking powder together; fold into egg and butter

mixture. Mix in vanilla and lemon extracts. Blend in fruits and nuts.

Grease a 10 inch tube pan; line with foil, parchment, or wax paper; do not use grocery bags. Grease again. Pour batter into prepared pan. Place in cold oven and bake at 250 degrees for 3 hours.

Or line 2 9X5X3-inch loaf pans, greasing pans and liners well. Place in cold oven and bake at 250 degrees for 2 hours. Cool in pans on cake racks. Makes 5 pounds of fruitcake.

Note: Mrs. Harvey preferred 2 full ounces of lemon and vanilla extracts

in her fruitcake, but many cooks use just 1 oz. of each flavoring with good results. Some use only a 1/2 oz. of each.

My Note: Where "grease" is called for in the recipe, I choose to use melted butter or a favorite vegetable oil on the pans. Back in the day of this recipe, Crisco was the "grease" of choice in the kitchen.

Well, there you have it! My own version of the World's Perfect Fruitcake-the family secret that wasn't so secret after all. Many thanks also to Mrs. P. J. Harvey and my Mom up there looking down on us.

