


Orange Cake, Ancona-Style

TORTA DI ARANCE ALL'ANCONETANA



2 cups plus 2 tablespoons
all-purpose flour, plus
flour for dusting the pan

3 eggs

The grated peel, avoiding
the spongy white pith,
of 3 oranges

4 tablespoons (½ stick)
butter, softened to room
temperature, plus butter
for greasing the pan

1 cup plus 3 tablespoons
sugar

2 tablespoons ouzo liqueur;
see headnote

1 tablespoon whole milk

2½ teaspoons baking
powder

2 cups freshly squeezed
orange juice with
3 tablespoons sugar
dissolved in it

8 to 10 servings

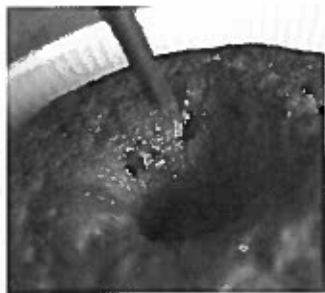
A tube pan with loose bottom

Of all the cakes that I have worked on for this and for my previous books, none has been more gratifying than this tribute to the orange. It is so soft, so juicy, so tenderly aromatic, so easy to make.

I call it *all'Anconetana* because I had it and obtained the recipe for it in Ancona, the large port town in the Marche. But I understand it is made elsewhere in this happy central Italian region between the mountains and the sea. One ingredient of the original recipe is apparently native to the Marche. It is *mistrà*, the driest of the anise-based liqueurs. I have tried such Italian and French alternatives as Sambuca and Pernod, but they are too cloying, too stickily anise-tasting. I was about to abandon trying to duplicate this wonderful cake until I was prompted to try ouzo, which works very nicely.

Another ingredient you may want to replace is the Sicilian blood oranges that one would use in Italy. The Italian blood orange is full of juice and exceptionally fragrant. The ones from California I have tried are stingy with juice, short on fragrance, and, considering the amount of liquid that is required here, extravagantly expensive. You'd be better off forgoing the drama of the red juice and employing an orange such as the tangelo or the temple or any other comparably fragrant variety.

1. Turn on the oven to 350°.
2. Put flour, eggs, grated orange peel, 4 tablespoons softened butter, sugar, and liqueur in a food processor and run until all ingredients are evenly amalgamated.
3. Add the milk and baking powder, and process again to incorporate into the mixture.
4. Thickly smear the tube pan with butter and dust with flour. Put the cake mixture in the pan and place the pan in the upper level of the preheated oven. Bake for 45 minutes or slightly longer, until the top of the cake becomes colored a rich gold.



A



B

5. When the cake is done, place the bottom of the pan over a tumbler or tall mug, using pot holders, and push down to raise the loose bottom. Take the tube with the cake out of the hoop, work the cake loose from the bottom with a knife, and lift it away from the tube. Place it on a plate with a slightly raised rim.

6. While the cake is still warm, poke many holes in it using a chopstick (*photo A*) or any similar narrow cylindrical tool. Into each of the holes slowly pour some of the orange juice (*photo B*). At first the hole fills to the brim with juice, but this is subsequently—in about 1 hour—absorbed by the cake. Always serve at room temperature.

NOTE: You can keep the cake for up to 1 week in the refrigerator, fully covered by plastic wrap.

