



## AUTUMNAL BIRTHDAY CAKE



**Serves: 8**

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There is no reason on earth why this, adapted from the Magnolia Bakery Cookbook, has to be a birthday cake, but since the first two times I made it were for my sister-in-law's and a friend's birthdays in late October and early November, that's how I think of it. In both cases, I put just one (gold) candle on top: better on any number of counts. I know that adorning plates with autumn leaves is not my usual aesthetic, but that's another benefit of using this as a birthday cake: you can allow yourself a little ironic leeway.

**Recipe posted by Nigella**

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### Ingredients

#### for the cake

12 tablespoons butter (softened)

1/2 cup superfine sugar

3 large eggs

1 1/2 cups maple syrup

3 1/3 cups self-raising flour

2/3 cup hot water

#### for the icing

2 large egg whites

1/2 cup maple syrup

2/3 cup superfine sugar

1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/4 teaspoon maple extract (optional)

1 cup pecan nuts

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## Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4/350°F.
  2. Beat together the butter and sugar until very pale and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time, beating in well after each addition, then gradually add the maple syrup to make a smooth mixture. Finally, spoon in the flour alternately with the hot water, beating gently until smooth again. Divide the batter between the two tins, and cook for 40 minutes. A cake-tester, inserted, should come out clean when they're cooked. Let the cakes cool in their tins on a rack for 10 minutes before unmoulding them, then leave them to get cold before you get on with the icing.
  3. Put everything except the pecans and extracts into a glass or metal bowl that fits over a saucepan to form a double boiler. Fill the saucepan with enough water to come just below - but not touching - the bowl when it sits on top. Bring the water to the boil, set the bowl on top and, using an electric hand-held whisk, beat the mixture vigorously for 5-7 minutes. It should stand up in peaks like a meringue mixture. Take the bowl off the saucepan, away from the heat, and add the extracts, beating them in for another minute.
  4. Cut out 4 strips of baking parchment and use to line the cake plate. Using your dreamy, ivory-coloured meringue, ice the middle, sides and top of the cake. Give the icing a swirly effect rather than smooth, letting the top have small peaks.
  5. Chop most of the pecans finely, leaving some pieces larger. Sprinkle over the top of the cake, and throw at the sides. This cake is best eaten the day it's cooked.
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