

June, moon, croon, spoon

by Lydia Lovell

All her life Aunt Olivia remained vibrant and enthusiastic; I have no memory of her declining invitations or admitting incapacity to take part in family activities. As we of the younger generations grew older, of course, her responsibilities lightened because we assumed as many of them as she would permit. With conserved energy, Aunt Olivia continued to participate, contributing her own precious touches to each gathering.

With June just around the corner, my thoughts turn to weddings, and fond remembrance brings to mind celebrations of marriage when Aunt Olivia provided the bride's cake. In those days a proper cake for such an occasion was butter-rich and heavy with fruits and nuts. The **Wedding Cake** Aunt Olivia baked for me was nothing less than spectacular.

8 C. flour	4 lb. dried currants
4 lb. butter	1 lb. shelled almonds
4 C. sugar	1 lb. light raisins
2 t. mace	2 C. candied orange peel
2 t. nutmeg	2 C. candied lemon peel
32 eggs, separated	1 C. French brandy

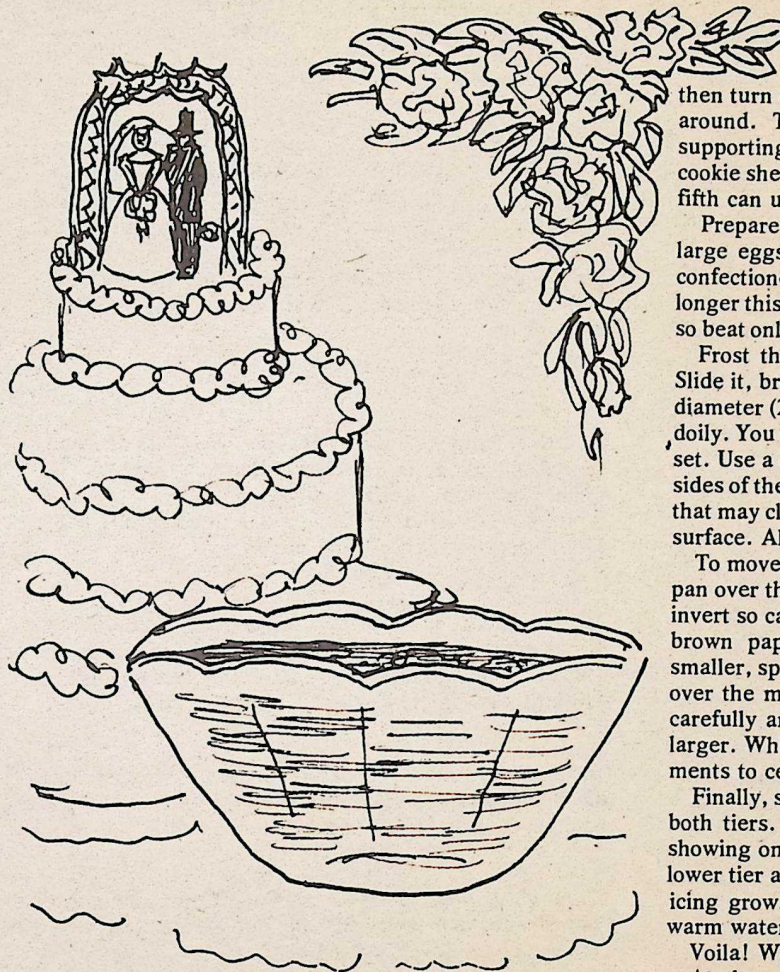
(Anyone reading this list of ingredients realizes a **LARGE** cake will result. Before tackling this project, make certain to have on hand two baking pans, one 18" in diameter, another 12", and both at least 6" deep. You will also need one great big mixing bowl, a long-handled wooden mixing spoon, and an assortment of smaller bowls. An electric mixer is a great help.

The night before baking day, combine currants, raisins, and blanched and slivered almonds with the brandy. Cover the bowl with plastic film and leave at room temperature until ready to use. Next morning, separate the eggs, whites in one medium bowl, yolks in another, being careful to get no yolk in the whites. Using the electric mixer, whip whites of eggs to stiff peaks; set aside to add to the batter last. Work the butter to a cream; Aunt Olivia used her hands, but the electric beater does the job more quickly and neatly. Add sugar gradually while beating; continue beating until mixture is light and fluffy. Set aside.

After cleaning your mixer blades, beat the egg yolks until light and frothy and lemon-colored. Use the wooden spoon to stir beaten yolks into sugar and butter mixture. (This is a good time to set the oven temperature to 275° and turn on the oven to bake.) Measure and sift together onto a generous sheet of wax paper the flour, mace, and nutmeg. (Take time out now to butter heavily the two baking pans and dust each one with flour.) In a small bowl toss together the candied peels.

Now transfer the egg-sugar-butter mixture to your big mixing bowl and gradually stir in the flour mixture to form a very stiff batter. When well-mixed, add brandy, fruits, and nuts. Stir until just blended. Fold in the beaten egg whites.

Into the larger of the two greased and floured baking pans put about an inch of batter. Scatter candied peels evenly over batter; repeat with another layer of batter and candied peels, ending with a third layer of peels. The pan should be



about half-to-two-thirds full, and you should have about a third of the original quantities of batter and peel left for the smaller cake. Using the 12" pan, repeat the layering, dividing all the peel between the three layers of batter.

Place both cakes in the oven, the larger one on the lower rack, the smaller one above and off-center. To insure the cakes are moist, place a shallow pan of water on the bottom of the oven while they bake. After the cakes have baked for one hour, reverse their positions in the oven. If the edges of the cakes look as though they are browning too quickly, lower heat to 250°. You may want to cover them with tents of aluminum foil to allow slower browning. Continue baking another two hours, approximately, but during the last hour, test every 20 minutes with a toothpick. Cakes are done when a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean and edges of cake come away from the pan. The smaller cake will probably be ready before the larger one.

When done, remove from pan and cool before frosting. Because the cakes are large and hard to handle, be prepared when they come out of the oven. Cut circles of brown paper slightly larger than the cakes. Place these on cookie sheets. Invert the paper and cookie sheets over the cake pans and

then turn over so cakes slip out onto paper and can be slid around. To hasten cooling, elevate the cookie sheets, supporting them at all four corners with soup cans. If the cookie sheet under the larger cake threatens to buckle, use a fifth can under the center.

Prepare frosting by whipping until stiff the whites of 14 large eggs. Add 1 T. vanilla extract and beat in 3½ C. confectioners' sugar. Beat until light and very white. The longer this mixture is beaten, the firmer the frosting will be, so beat only until it will spread smoothly and hold its shape.

Frost the cooked cakes beginning with the larger one. Slide it, brown paper and all, to a plate at least 4" larger in diameter (22"). You may want to center the cake on a paper doily. You will snip away the brown paper after the icing has set. Use a case knife to lay a thin layer of frosting over the sides of the cake, incorporating the frosting with any crumbs that may cling. Then lay a thin layer of frosting over the top surface. Allow frosting to stiffen.

To move the second tier, place the washed and dried 12" pan over the cake and, supporting it with the cookie sheet, invert so cake slides back into its pan. Remove the sheet of brown paper. Before topping the larger cake with the smaller, spread a second, somewhat thicker layer of frosting over the middle of the larger cake. Now, tip the cake-pan carefully and allow the smaller cake to slip on top of the larger. While the frosting is still soft, you can make adjustments to center it.

Finally, spread a thicker layer of frosting over the sides of both tiers. (The first coat serves to prevent crumbs from showing on the finished surface.) Now frost the top of the lower tier and, finally, frost the top of the upper tier. If the icing grows stiff in the bowl, stir in one or two drops of warm water.

Voila! Wedding cake.

At the reception, champagne may be served with the cake. Or tea, coffee, and/or punch. Punch may be non-alcoholic or spiked. The bride (or her mother) makes that decision. When thinking in terms of **Wedding Punch**, consider this recipe.

1-1/2 quarts boiling water	Juice of six oranges
2-1/2 C. granulated sugar	1-1/2 quarts white rum
2 C. fresh lemon juice	1 pt. French brandy
	1 quart of champagne

In a saucepan, bring water to boil and stir in sugar. Reduce heat to low and stir until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat. Add fruit juices, pour into a large pitcher, and refrigerate. Place bottles of rum, brandy, and champagne in refrigerator. When ready to serve, put a big block of ice in a large punch bowl, pour fruit-juice mixture over the ice, stir in the rum and brandy, and then add the champagne.

Such a punch may not guarantee wedded bliss for the bride and groom but should make for good cheer and merriment at the reception and, with a bit of luck and plenty of tender, loving care, the newlyweds will live happily ever after.

"To your good health..."