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Lady Baltimore Cake

For the cake layers

2 sticks (1 cup) unsalted butter, softened

2 cups sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

½ teaspoon almond extract

3 cups all purpose flour

1 tablespoon baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

1 cup whole milk

7 large egg whites

¼ teaspoon cream of tartar

For the filling

2 cups sugar

6 large egg whites

2 teaspoons vanilla

½ cup finely chopped dried figs plus dried figs for garnish

1 cup pecans, plus pecan halves for garnish

½ raisins, chopped

¼ cup dried cherries, chopped

Brandy

Directions:

Soak the chopped figs, dried cherries and raisins in brandy in a small bowl from 1 hr. to overnight

Toast the pecans in a 350* oven, on a cookie sheet lightly spritzed with cooking oil, for 5 minutes. Watch carefully. Set aside.

Preheat the oven to 325*. Line four buttered 9-inch round cake pans with rounds of parchment paper, butter the paper, and dust the pans with flour, knocking out the excess.

Make the cake layers: In a large bowl with an electric mixer cream the butter and sugar until the mixture is light and fluffy. Beat in the vanilla and almond extract. In a bowl stir together the flour, baking powder, and the salt, add the flour mixture to the butter mixture in batches alternately with the milk, and stir batter until just combined. In another bowl beat the egg whites with the cream of tartar and a pinch of salt until they just hold stiff peaks, stir one third of them into the batter, and fold in the remaining eggs whites gently but thoroughly. Divide the batter among the prepared pans, smoothing the tops, and bake the cake layers, in batches, if necessary, in the middle of the oven for 25 to 35 minutes or until a tester comes out clean. Let the cake layers cool in the pans on racks for 5 minutes, turn them out onto the racks, and let them cool completely.

In a small saucepan combine the sugar and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water, bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar is dissolved, and boil the syrup until it registers 248* on a candy thermometer. While the syrup is boiling, in a large bowl with an electric mixer beat the egg whites with a pinch of salt until they hold soft peaks. With the mixer running add the hot syrup in a stream, beat in the vanilla, and beat the icing until it is cool. Transfer 2 cups of icing to a bowl, reserving the remaining icing, and fold in the chopped figs, chopped dried cherries, chopped raisins and toasted pecans.

Arrange one of the cake layers, flat side up, on a serving plate, spread it with a third of the dried fruit, pecan icing and top the filling with another layer flat side down. Do the same with the third and fourth layers. Spread the top and sides of the cake with the reserved plain icing and garnish with dried figs and dried cherries or pecan halves.