

- 4 sticks (2 cups) unsalted butter, softened
- 2 cups sugar
- 6 large eggs, separated
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon lukewarm water
- 1 (1-oz) bottle pure lemon extract

Special equipment: 2 (9- by 5- by 3-inch) loaf pans; parchment paper

- ▶ Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 250°F. Line bottom and sides of loaf pans with parchment paper.
- ▶ Toss raisins and pecans with 1 cup flour until coated well and set aside.
- ▶ Whisk salt into remaining 2 cups flour in a small bowl.
- ▶ Beat butter in a large bowl with an electric mixer at medium-high speed until light and fluffy, then add sugar and beat until light and fluffy again. Add yolks and beat until incorporated, then add flour (with salt) and mix at low speed until just combined.
- ▶ Stir baking soda into lukewarm water in a small bowl until dissolved, then add to butter mixture along with lemon extract and stir until smooth. Stir in raisins and nuts (including flour remaining in bowl) with a wooden spoon until raisins and nuts are coated and no visible traces of flour remain.
- ▶ Beat egg whites in a clean bowl with dry well-cleaned beaters until they just hold stiff peaks. Fold into batter until combined. (Batter will be thick and very lumpy from raisins and nuts.)
- ▶ Divide batter between loaf pans and smooth tops by gently rapping bottom of each pan against counter.
- ▶ Bake until tops of cakes are golden and a wooden pick or skewer inserted in center of each cake comes out clean, about 2 3/4 hours. Cool cakes in pans on racks 10 minutes, then turn out onto racks. Peel off and discard parchment and cool cakes completely, about 3 hours.

Cooks' note:

Fruitcake is best when made at least 1 day ahead (to allow flavors to develop) and can

LOLLIE'S LEMON FRUITCAKE

MAKES 2 LOAVES

Active time: 25 min

Start to finish: 6 1/4 hr (includes cooling)

Those who don't generally like fruitcake may change their mind after one bite of this lighter version. Slow baking in a low oven ensures that the cake stays moist. Not only does it taste fabulous, it keeps well and gets even better with age, so it's a perfect make-ahead gift for the holidays. The recipe does indeed call for an entire 1-ounce bottle of lemon extract, but don't worry—the lemony flavor is surprisingly subtle.

1 lb golden raisins (3 cups)