

## CAROLINE BYRON'S OLIVE-OIL POLENTA CAKE WITH BLOOD ORANGES

The gluten-free pastry chef shares a recipe for her favourite summer cake

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*Images: Quentin Bacon*

**This is a gorgeous recipe for summer: all of that gooey citrus zest, and the sticky syrup of the candied oranges, make it work either as a stunning cake or as a seriously delicious pudding that will impress your guests. The mixture of flours and polenta gives it a truly luxurious texture.**

I have yet to find anyone – gluten-free or not – who dislikes this cake, which is why it is one of my go-to sweet recipes. In the UK, [Cup 4 Cup Gluten Free Flour](#) is available, but pricey, so I sometimes use [Doves Farm Free From Gluten Flour](#) and mix in a little xanthan gum, which works equally well.



## Olive-oil polenta cake with blood oranges

### Ingredients

For the batter:

150g caster sugar

50g light muscovado sugar

3 eggs

4fl oz olive oil

50g almond flour

140g Cup 4 Cup Gluten Free Multipurpose Flour or Doves Farm Free From Gluten Plain White Flour (if using Doves Farm blend, add 1 tsp xanthan gum to the mixture)

120g instant polenta

1 1/2 tsp baking powder

1/2 tsp salt

Zest of 2 blood oranges or regular oranges

4 tbsp plain Greek yogurt or coconut yogurt

1 tbsp honey

For the syrup:

4fl oz blood-orange juice or freshly squeezed orange juice  
100g caster sugar

For the candied blood oranges:

8fl oz cup water  
200g caster sugar  
2–3 blood oranges, thinly sliced with end slices discarded

## Method

Grease a nine-inch springform pan with olive oil and line the bottom with a round of parchment paper cut to fit the pan. Dust the lined pan with a little polenta and set aside.

Preheat the oven to 175°C.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, beat the eggs and sugar on medium speed until they are fluffy, pale in colour and have nearly tripled in volume. This should take about three to five minutes.

Meanwhile, mix together the dry ingredients in a separate bowl. Combine the almond flour, polenta, gluten-free flour blend (plus xanthan gum, if using), baking powder and salt.

In another bowl or measuring jug, stir together the olive oil, yoghurt and honey.

Set the mixer to a low speed, and starting with one third of the dry ingredients, alternate adding the dry and wet ingredients to the egg mixture in three stages. Mix only until just combined; you don't want to lose all the lovely, airy lightness and volume you have just beaten into the eggs and sugar.

After the last third of the olive oil has been mixed into the batter, turn the mixer off and add the orange zest. Using a rubber spatula, gently stir to fully incorporate, scraping the bottom to make sure everything is mixed thoroughly.

Using the spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top. Lightly shake the pan to make sure everything is level and evenly dispersed, and give it a little rap on the counter to get rid of any air bubbles.

Place the cake on the centre rack of your preheated oven and bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until the edges of the cake start to pull away from the pan and a toothpick or cake tester comes out clean. Let the cake cool in the pan on top of a wire rack.

To make the syrup, combine the sugar and orange juice in a small saucepan over a medium to low heat until the sugar is fully dissolved.

Using a cake tester or toothpick, gently prick the top of the cake. Pour the warm syrup over the top of the cake and leave to cool in the pan.

To make the candied blood oranges, add the water and sugar to a large, heavy-bottomed skillet with a lid, or a pan such as Le Creuset. Arrange a single layer of the blood-orange (or regular-orange) slices in the pan and bring the mixture to the boil. Once the mixture is boiling and the sugar is fully dissolved, reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for an hour, or until the orange pith becomes translucent and soft. Allow the oranges to cool in the pan until they reach room temperature.

To serve, remove the cooled cake from the pan, peeling the parchment from the bottom. Place the cake on a plate or cake stand and gently arrange the candied blood-orange slices on top. Once the cake is covered with the orange slices, spoon any remaining syrup on top to give an even glossier finish, allowing a bit of the syrup to drizzle down the sides.

*Chef's tip: if possible, only use oranges with thinner skins and minimal pith, as these are easier to cut when on top of the cake; plus, thick orange rind can be very chewy, even when candied. As the amount of pith can vary a lot between oranges, and is impossible to tell before slicing, I generally cut up three to four oranges and use the slices from those with the least amount of pith, and the juice from the extra one or two. Candied blood oranges can be made ahead and stored in their syrup in the refrigerator until ready to serve, then warmed to room temperature.*



*Caroline Byron will be in conversation with the journalist Kate Spicer at the [Good Roots Festival](#) on 11 June at 28 Miller Lane, London E8; tickets are available [here](#).*

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