

Almond Cake

Ricotta, ground almonds, lemon, and polenta give this cake a wonderfully soft texture and zesty flavor. It is the ideal cake for anyone who does not have a sweet tooth. It is also a good choice for those seeking a gluten-free teatime treat.

½ cup plus 2½ tablespoons (150 g) butter, at room temperature, plus more for the pan

1¼ cups (180 g) whole blanched almonds

½ cup (60 g) fine polenta

Finely grated zest of 4 lemons

¾ cup plus 2½ tablespoons (180 g) superfine sugar, plus more for dusting

4 free-range eggs, separated

¾ cup (200 g) whole-milk ricotta cheese

Juice of 2 lemons

SERVES 10

Preheat the oven to 300°F (150°C). Butter the sides of a 9-inch (23-cm) round springform pan and line the bottom with parchment paper.

In a food processor, pulse the almonds until finely ground. Add the polenta and lemon zest and process briefly to mix. In a medium bowl, using an electric mixer, beat together the butter and sugar on medium speed until pale and fluffy. Add the egg yolks, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in the almond mixture. In a small bowl, stir together the ricotta and lemon juice, then add to the almond-butter mixture and stir until blended.

In another medium bowl, whisk the egg whites until soft peaks form. Using a rubber spatula, fold the egg whites into the almond-butter mixture just until evenly distributed and no white streaks remain.

Spoon the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top with an offset spatula. Bake the cake until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, 40–50 minutes. Let cool in the pan on a wire rack for 20 minutes, then unclasp and lift off the sides and, working carefully as the cake is quite delicate, gently transfer the cake, still on the pan bottom, to the rack to cool. Once the cake is completely cool, invert it, lift off the base and parchment, and then turn it upright on a cake plate. Dust the top with sugar before serving.

