

# Ultra Orange Cake Recipe: Orange you glad a 4-year-old is in charge of the cooking?



A few weeks ago Daniel's preschool teacher mentioned how much he loves cooking in her classroom. She talked about how it enhances his math and science skills. I don't know about that, but I do know he adores being in the kitchen.

I figured it would be fun to bake with him this weekend since it was three years ago yesterday that we first saw photos of a little boy who was waiting for us in China. So I invited him to join me, and he ran to the kitchen.



This is one of my favorite recipes to make with our children, partly because there are no raw eggs involved, partly because it's so easy, partly because it's fairly healthy, and mostly because it's really yummy.

So Daniel and I set out to gather the uncomplicated list of ingredients, which we almost always have on hand.



My theory is that you can make it with any juice. My favorite version is made with pineapple juice and then topped with coconut icing. We did that for our bunny-shaped Easter cake one year, and it was magnificent.

But it's still Lent, and today was not a pineapple/coconut day. Orange juice was what we had on hand, and the boys like the recipe best with orange juice in it.

So we measured.

We poured.

We stirred.

Daniel told me that we should use two spoons at once.



He stirred slow. He stirred fast.

I let him pour the ingredients together.



Then we stirred some more.

I'll let Daniel explain to you what we are making on today's cooking show.

Throughout the whole process, he was the expert. I just sat back (well, with a few paper towels and lots of advice) and watched him in action.

Three years ago when we saw photos of this little boy in China, he had a somber expression, except in one photo where he was laughing out loud, apparently cracking himself up over a little plastic toy in his hands.

That's the same boy who was kneeling on a chair in our kitchen today.



He is always laughing, looking for a reason to laugh, or trying to make you laugh. He is stubborn and independent, but he's also so, so compassionate, constantly telling us he loves us without any prompting. And you should see him dance around the room.

But today Daniel didn't want to reminisce about China or the day we saw his picture.

He wanted to make cupcakes. So that's what we did.



We made just 12 cupcakes, which is perfect for our family of four. And we used wild wrappers because they were the only fun option last time we were at the store.

Of course, the wildest part of the process was getting to taste our finished products. And they were good.



My 10-year-old niece first made this Ultra Orange Cake for a cooking class a few years ago, and I can't tell you how many times my family and I have baked it since. I wish I knew where the recipe came from. I would love to give appropriate credit.

And so would the chef, I'm sure.



## **Ultra Orange Cake**

Ingredients (for an 8 x 8 cake):

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1 cup sugar

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup orange juice

1/3 cup canola oil

1 tablespoon orange zest (I use dried orange peel I buy from Penzey's Spices, but I have also made it without orange zest or peel and it still tastes good)

1 tablespoon cider or white vinegar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

### **Directions:**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Combine all the dry ingredients in a bowl.

You can use freshly squeezed orange juice and supplement with store-bought. I rarely have

fresh oranges on hand, so I just use regular store-bought orange juice. Mix juice and zest with oil, vinegar, and vanilla. Combine the wet mixture with the dry ingredients.

Pour the dough into a parchment-lined or greased pan, and bake for 30-35 minutes in the oven. This recipe makes 12 cupcakes, filling each cup about 2/3) that bake for 20 minutes.

Allow the cake to cool for 10 minutes. Then remove it from the pan and let it cool completely, right side up.

The recipe says you can make a glaze with a little orange juice and powdered sugar and pour on top of the cake as it is cooling, but I've never tried that. We either leave our cake unfrosted, or make some butter cream frosting. And that recipe I just find on the side of the powdered sugar box.

Orange you wishing you had one of these right now?

