

And with a few minutes more work—browning butter and briefly cooking the apples—we had a dessert that might, we propose, be good enough for the hall of fame, right next to the blue ribbon winner, American apple pie.

French Apple Cake

Start to finish: 1 hour (25 minutes active), plus cooling | Servings: 8

THIS SIMPLE DESSERT is less cake than sautéed apples set in a thick, custardy crumb in a golden, sugar-sprinkled crust. We liked using two



les build flavor in French apple cake.

varieties of apples here, one tart and one sweet—the variation in the apples’ sweetness gave the cake a full, complex flavor. The cake is delicious served plain, but we also loved it with crème fraîche or ice cream.

Don’t use a spatula to scrape the browned butter out of the skillet—simply pour it into the bowl. A skim coat of butter in the pan is needed to cook the apples. And don’t slice the cake until it has fully cooled; if it is at all warm, the texture at the center will be too soft. —ERIKA BRUCE

- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) salted butter, plus more for pan
- ¼ teaspoon ground allspice
- 1½ pounds Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, cut into ¼-inch slices
- 1 pound Braeburn or Golden Delicious apples, peeled, cored and cut into ¼-inch slices
- 149 grams (12 tablespoons) white sugar, divided
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons brandy or Calvados
- 86 grams (⅔ cup) all-purpose flour, plus more for pan
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

■ **Heat the oven to 375°F** with a rack in the middle position. Coat a 9-inch springform pan with butter, dust with flour, then tap out the excess.

■ **In a 12-inch skillet** over medium-high, melt the butter. Cook, swirling the pan frequently, until the milk solids are golden brown and the butter has a nutty aroma, 1 to 3 minutes. Pour into a small heatproof bowl; don’t scrape the skillet. Stir the allspice into the butter. Set aside.

■ **Add all the apples**, 2 tablespoons of the sugar and the salt to the still-hot skillet and set over medium-high. Cook, stirring occasionally, until all the moisture released by the apples has evaporated and the slices are beginning to brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Add the brandy and cook until evaporated, 30 to 60 seconds. Transfer to a large plate, spread in an even layer and refrigerate uncovered until cool to the touch, 15 to 20 minutes.

■ **In a small bowl**, whisk the flour and baking powder. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, vanilla and 9 tablespoons of the sugar; gradually whisk in the butter. Add the flour mixture and stir until smooth; the batter will be very thick. Add the cooled apples and fold until evenly coated. Transfer to the prepared pan, spread in an even layer and sprinkle with the remaining tablespoon of sugar.

■ **Bake** until deeply browned, 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool completely in the pan on a wire rack, about 2 hours. Run a knife around the inside of the pan and remove the sides before slicing. ♦