

When Jakob and Bella married secretly in a darkened basement in Lvov, he envisions what the occasion would have been like had they married a year earlier. Instead of just the two of them, Bella's sister Anna and her husband, Daniel, Jakob's brother Genek and the rabbi, both their families and all their friends would all be assembled. And instead of horsemeat burgers, boiled potatoes and homemade beer, they would be enjoying champagne and gingerbread cake.

Polish gingerbread cake, called piernik, is really a honey spice cake, often topped with a chocolate frosting or glaze, and possibly chopped nuts; or layered with a filling. While it contains multiple baking spices, ginger is not necessarily one of them. (You could certainly add some if you wish.)

This piernik recipe is easy to make, moist and with a delicious warm spice flavor.

<https://www.carolinescooking.com/piernik-polish-gingerbread-cake/>

Piernik (Polish Gingerbread Cake)

Makes 1 loaf, about 12 servings

½ cup honey

½ cup sugar

¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter

Zest from ½ orange

2 tablespoon marmalade or fruit jam
(apricot, plum)

1 ½ cups flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

¼ teaspoon salt

1 ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

½ teaspoon ground allspice

½ teaspoon ground cloves

⅛ teaspoon ground cardamom

2 eggs

½ cup milk

For the glaze:

½ cup powdered sugar

1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa
powder

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1 tablespoon boiling water

Preheat oven to 355 degrees. Lightly butter a 9-by-5-inch or 8 ½-by-4 ½-inch loaf pan, then line it with parchment, at least through the bottom and up the longer sides.

In a small saucepan, warm the honey, sugar, butter, orange zest and marmalade or jam over medium-low heat until butter and sugar dissolve. Remove from heat and set aside until cooled.

In a large bowl, mx together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and spices. In a separate small bowl, lightly beat eggs. Add honey-butter mixture, eggs and milk to flour mixture and mix just until well combined; do not overmix.

Pour batter into lined loaf pan and transfer to oven (lower middle shelf). Bake 45 to 50 minutes, until top is golden and a skewer inserted into middle comes out clean.

Allow loaf to cool slightly.

Make glaze: Sift powdered sugar into a small bowl and add cocoa powder. Melt butter, then add along with boiling water to the sugar mixture and mix well. (Add more powdered sugar, if you wish, until desired consistency.) Spread evenly over top of loaf, but try not to overwork it. Ideally let it harden before removing loaf from pan and slicing it. It's OK to remove and slice while the cake is still slightly warm.

Note: Glaze can be doubled, as we did, if you want thicker chocolate coating.

