**Cream Cheese Pound Cake with Cherries & Orange**

**Ingredients**

* 1 ½ cups sugar
* 1 cup cream cheese, 8 oz.
* 1 cup butter
* 2 tsp vanilla extract
* ½ tsp almond extract, optional
* 4 eggs
* zest of 2 large oranges, finely minced
* 2 1/2 cups flour, reserve ¼ cup to dust the cherries at the end
* 1 ½ tsp baking powder
* 3 cups well drained maraschino cherries, chopped in half

**Instructions**

1. This cake can bake in a standard Bundt pan, an 8-10 cup tube pan or in 2 regular loaf pans. If using a Bundt or tube pan, grease it very well and lightly dust with flour. If using loaf pans, lightly grease them and line with parchment paper. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.
2. Rinse and drain the maraschino cherries well. I drain them on paper towels overnight with the pit holes pointed downward do that no liquid is trapped inside. This may seem like a bit of an effort, but it does make sure that the red maraschino juice does not bleed into the batter and discolour the cake. It makes a nicer presentation when the bright red and orange colours are quite distinct.
3. When well drained, chop the cherries in half and set aside with the 1/4 cup of flour reserved for them. Don't toss the cherries in the flour until it is time to add them though.

**To prepare the cake batter.**

1. Sift together 2 1/4 cups of the flour with the baking powder and set aside.
2. Cream together the sugar, cream cheese, butter, vanilla, and almond extracts for several minutes until light and fluffy. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl a couple of times during this process.
3. Add the eggs one at a time, beating for a minute or so between additions. Stir in the orange zest.
4. Gently fold the flour and baking powder into the creamed mixture until the flour is almost fully incorporated.
5. At that point toss the cherries in the 1/4 cup of reserved flour and add them to the batter. Any flour that doesn't stick to the fruit gets added too.
6. Fold until the flour is fully incorporated and the cherries are evenly dispersed throughout the batter.

**To Bake**

1. Bake for about an hour in the loaf pans or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean. The Bundt or tube pan may take several minutes more, mine took 1 hr 20 minutes; the loaf pans may need a little less, depending on your oven and the type of pans you are using. Always check your cakes a few minutes ahead of time and then every five minutes thereafter to make sure they do not over bake.
2. When fully baked, let the cakes rest in the pans for 10-15 minutes before turning out on a wire rack to cool completely.