24 STATION STREET CARROT, COCONUT, DATE & PINEAPPLE CAKE WITH BEETROOT FROSTING

I have been infatuated with carrot cake all my life – almost a holy grail search for me. One birthday a cake was delivered to my home, without card or message, the most beautiful, moist, luxurious and delicious carrot cake ever! It haunted me to the point where I set myself on a course to perfect the carrot cake of my dreams. Here it is – laden with fruit, dates, nuts and a quirky beetroot-flavoured icing to boot. I love everything about it.

SERVES: 8–10 | PREPARATION TIME: 15 minutes | BAKING TIME: 45–50 minutes | OVEN TEMPERATURE: 160°C

CAKE

400g brown sugar

5 extra-large eggs

10ml vanilla extract or paste

375ml canola oil

3 ripe bananas

500ml cake wheat flour

5ml baking powder

10ml bicarbonate of soda

10ml ground cinnamon

5ml salt

750ml grated carrot

65g desiccated coconut

100g almonds, chopped

170g dates, chopped

1 x 432g can crushed pineapple, drained

FROSTING

125g butter, softened

250g cream cheese

500g icing sugar

15ml beetroot powder or 5ml pink food colouring

10ml vanilla extract or paste

5ml rosewater

200g white chocolate, melted

CAKE

Preheat the oven and grease two 25cm cake tins.

Place the sugar, eggs, vanilla, oil and bananas in a bowl and beat with an electric beater until the banana is mashed and the sugar dissolved.

Sieve the flour, baking powder, bicarb, cinnamon and salt together, add to the wet ingredients and beat until combined. Add the carrot, coconut, almonds, dates and pineapple and mix through.

Divide the batter into the prepared cake tins and bake for 45–50 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the centre comes out clean. Turn out onto wire racks to cool completely before icing.

FROSTING

In a food processor, beat the butter and cream cheese together until pale and fluffy. Add the icing sugar, beetroot powder or food colouring, vanilla and rosewater and beat while gradually pouring in the melted chocolate. Let the machine run until the frosting has doubled in volume. Spread the frosting evenly over both cakes, then stack them on top of each other. Refrigerate until the frosting has set.

Notes and tips

If you like, garnish the cake with crushed pistachio nuts and fresh purple Parisian figs if in season, or fresh baby beetroot.

• The cake will keep for a week if stored in an airtight container and will improve on standing.