Spiced Pear Upside-Down Cake

The flavors of fresh, sweet pears and gingerbread blend beautifully in this intriguing variation on pineapple upside-down cake. Leftovers—if there are any—taste great with coffee or tea the next day. **—LISA VARNER** CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA FE

PREP: 25 MIN. • **BAKE:** 35 MIN. + COOLING
YIELD: 9 SERVINGS

- ½ cup butter, melted
- ½ cup coarsely chopped walnuts
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- 2 large pears, peeled and sliced
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 egg
- ⅓ cup molasses
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ tsp. ground ginger
- ¾ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- ½ cup warm water
- Ice cream, optional

1. Pour melted butter into a 9-in. square baking pan; sprinkle with nuts and brown sugar. Arrange pears over nuts.
2. In a large bowl, cream softened butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and molasses. Combine the flour, ginger, cinnamon, salt, baking powder and baking soda; add to creamed mixture alternately with water, beating well after each addition.
3. Spread batter over pears. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before inverting onto a serving plate. Serve warm with ice cream if desired. ■

Pear-adise on a Plate "I came across a recipe for this cake but didn't have all the ingredients, so I made some substitutions and changes in spices. Instead of ice cream, I sometimes top it with sweetened whipped cream," says Lisa.

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