

Gateaux Mont Saint Michel - Julia Child's Apple Crepe Cake

Who doesn't love Julia Child? I learned many of my cooking skills and techniques, from her as young chef, eagerly awaiting each new episode of her cooking shows, while carefully studying her well researched cookbooks. I am an apple pie fan, like big time, and here is the ultimate apple pie. I know, it says "gateaux", but you try this recipe and tell me it isn't the best apple pie you've ever had! The name comes from the Island off the coast of Normandy in France, Mont St. Michel. The centerpiece of the tiny island is an abbey and monastery that sit atop the "mound" of the island. This gateaux, when baked in a bowl-shaped vessel, and inverted after baking, is said to resemble the island.

You may if you like, haul out your favorite Julia cookbook and make your own crepes, but actually there are many fine prepared crepes available in the frozen food section of most grocers. So whatever you decide is good with me, but do try this dish.

Serves 8 to 10

12 tart apples, peeled, cored, and sliced

Juice of 1 lemon

½ cup sugar

½ cup melted butter

1 ⅓ cups blanched almonds, toasted until medium-brown (not burnt)

⅔ cup sugar

2 eggs, beaten

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

1 teaspoon almond extract

8 tablespoons (1-stick) butter, at room temperature

1 tablespoon dark rum

Pinch of salt

Prepared Crepes

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.

Toss the apples, lemon juice, sugar, and melted butter together in a bowl. Place into a buttered baking dish and bake for about 30 minutes, or until the apples have somewhat softened. Remove from oven and set aside.

Place the almonds into the bowl of a food processor and pulse to chop fairly fine. Add the sugar, eggs, extracts, butter, rum, and a pinch of salt. Process to a smooth paste consistency. Scrape the almond mixture out of the processor with a rubber spatula and transfer to a bowl.

To assemble the gateaux, butter a glass pie plate, or a wide, ovenproof glass bowl. Place a crepe on the bottom, and spread a layer of the burnt almond cream on the crepe. Top with a layer of apples. Repeat over and over, until all the apples and almond cream are used. Make sure to finish with a crepe on top. Refrigerate for about 20 minutes before baking.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

Bake for 30 minutes, or until nicely browned and bubbling. Let sit for at least 20 minutes before serving. Cut into wedges and serve warm, or cold, with plenty of lightly sweetened whipped cream. For a more impressive serving, the gateaux may be inverted onto a platter, or large cake plate, and presented at the table, where it may be cut into servings.