FOOD & CULINARY

Mr Kipling Manor House Cake Recipe

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795582679808700

The Nostalgic Allure of the Mr Kipling Manor House Cake

For decades, the mention of Mr Kipling has evoked a sense of comfort, quality, and homely indulgence. Among his most celebrated creations, the Manor House Cake holds a special place in the hearts of those who grew up with its distinctive morello cherry filling and crumbly pastry top. This cake is more than just a dessert; it is a slice of British baking heritage. While the original shop-bought version is a beloved classic, recreating a Mr Kipling Manor House Cake Recipe at home offers a deeply rewarding experience. It allows you to capture that nostalgic flavour while enjoying the unbeatable freshness of a cake baked in your own kitchen.

This guide will take you through every step of crafting your own version of this iconic bake. We will explore the key components that make it so special, from the buttery shortcrust base to the luscious cherry compote and the signature crumbly topping. Whether you are a seasoned baker or a novice looking to impress, this journey into homemade baking will result in a cake that rivals, and perhaps even surpasses, the original.

What Makes the Manor House Cake So Irresistible?

Before we dive into the flour and butter, it is worth understanding the magic behind this cake. The Mr Kipling Manor House Cake is essentially a British-style traybake, characterised by three distinct layers. The base is a firm, sweet shortcrust pastry that provides a sturdy foundation. The middle is a layer of tangy, dark morello cherry jam or compote, which cuts through the sweetness of the surrounding elements. Finally, the top is a delicate, crumbly streusel-like mixture that bakes into a golden, textured crust. It is this combination of textures buttery, fruity, and crumbly that makes every bite a perfect balance of flavours.

Replicating this at home requires attention to detail, but the ingredients are surprisingly simple. The secret lies in the technique and the quality of the components you choose.

Ingredients for Your Homemade Mr Kipling Manor House Cake Recipe

To create an authentic tasting Manor House Cake, you will need to prepare three separate elements. Precision is key, especially with the pastry and topping.

For the Shortcrust Pastry Base

- 250 grams plain flour (all-purpose flour works well, but plain flour gives a finer crumb)
- 125 grams cold unsalted butter, cubed (ensure it is very cold for a flaky texture)
- 50 grams caster sugar (superfine sugar dissolves easily)
- 1 large egg yolk
- 2-3 tablespoons cold water (add gradually, only as needed)
- A pinch of salt

For the Morello Cherry Filling

- 400 grams jar of morello cherries in syrup (drained, reserving 3 tablespoons of syrup)

- 2 tablespoons cornflour (cornstarch)
- 50 grams granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Squeeze of lemon juice (to brighten the flavour)

For the Crumbly Topping

- 150 grams plain flour
- 100 grams cold unsalted butter, cubed
- 80 grams caster sugar
- 50 grams ground almonds (this adds a subtle nuttiness and helps create the signature crumbly texture)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder (for a lighter crumb)

Step-by-Step Instructions: Crafting the Perfect Cake

Follow these steps carefully to ensure your Manor House Cake turns out beautifully. Patience during the chilling stages is crucial for the best results.

Step 1: Prepare the Shortcrust Pastry

Begin by making the base. In a large mixing bowl, combine the plain flour and a pinch of salt. Add the cold, cubed butter. Using your fingertips, rub the butter into the flour until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Stir in the caster sugar. Make a well in the centre and add the egg yolk. Gradually add the cold water, mixing with a fork or your hands until the dough just comes together. Do not overwork it. Form the dough into a disc, wrap it in cling film, and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Chilling the dough prevents shrinkage during baking and ensures a tender, crisp base.

Step 2: Make the Cherry Compote Filling

While the pastry chills, prepare the filling. Drain the jar of morello cherries, reserving the syrup. In a small saucepan, combine the drained cherries, 3 tablespoons of the reserved syrup, the granulated sugar, vanilla extract, and a squeeze of lemon juice. In a separate small bowl, whisk the cornflour with 2 tablespoons of cold water to create a slurry. Bring the cherry mixture to a gentle simmer over medium heat. Pour the cornflour slurry in, stirring constantly. Continue to cook for 1-2 minutes until the mixture thickens significantly. Remove from heat and allow it to cool completely. The filling will continue to set as it cools.

Step 3: Create the Crumbly Topping

In another bowl, combine the plain flour, ground almonds, caster sugar, and baking powder. Add the cold, cubed butter. Use your fingertips to rub the butter into the dry ingredients. This time, however, you want a slightly uneven texture. Some larger, pea-sized pieces of butter are desirable as they create the characteristic crumbly clusters on top of the cake. Do not overmix. Place the topping in the refrigerator while you roll out the base.

Step 4: Assemble the Cake

Preheat your oven to 180°C (350°F) or 160°C (320°F) for a fan-assisted oven. Grease and line a 20cm x 20cm square baking tin or a similar sized rectangular traybake tin with baking parchment.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out the chilled pastry dough to a thickness of about 5mm. It should be large enough to line the base and go slightly up the sides of the tin (about 2cm up). Carefully lift the pastry into the tin, pressing it gently into the corners. Prick the base all over with a fork to prevent it from bubbling up during baking. This is called docking.

Spread the cooled cherry compote evenly over the pastry base. Avoid going right to the edges, as the filling will spread during baking.

Remove the crumbly topping from the fridge. Using your hands, sprinkle the topping evenly over the cherry filling, covering it completely. Press it down very gently so it adheres to the filling, but do not compact it. You want a loose, crumbly texture.

Step 5: Bake to Golden Perfection

Place the tin on the middle rack of your preheated oven. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until the top is a deep golden brown and the filling is bubbling slightly at the edges. The aroma in your kitchen will be incredible. If the topping is browning too quickly, you can tent the tin loosely with foil for the last 10 minutes of baking.

Allow the cake to cool completely in the tin. This is essential. Cutting the cake while it is still warm will cause the filling to run and the crumbly top to break apart. Patience is your best friend here. Once completely cool, lift the cake out using the parchment paper and place it on a cutting board.

Expert Tips for a Professional Finish

Even a straightforward recipe can be elevated with a few professional techniques.

- Use Morello Cherries: The original Mr Kipling cake uses morello cherries for a reason. They are tart and slightly sour, which balances the sweet pastry and topping perfectly. Sweet cherries will not give you the same authentic flavour.
- Chill Everything: Cold butter is non-negotiable for both the pastry and the topping. It creates steam as it melts in the oven, resulting in a flaky base and a crumbly top. If your butter gets warm, pop the mixture back in the fridge.
- Don't Overwork the Pastry: Overworking develops gluten, which makes the base tough and chewy rather than tender and crisp. Mix just until combined.
- Cool Completely: I cannot stress this enough. Let the cake cool fully in the tin. For best results, refrigerate it for an hour after cooling. This sets the filling and makes slicing much cleaner.
- Use a Sharp Knife: When slicing, use a sharp serrated knife and cut with a gentle sawing motion. This will help maintain the integrity of the crumbly top.

Variations on the Classic Recipe

Once you have mastered the original Mr Kipling Manor House Cake Recipe, you can experiment with different flavours.

Apple and Cinnamon Manor House Cake

Replace the morello cherry filling with a homemade apple compote. Cook peeled, diced apples with brown sugar, cinnamon, and a little lemon juice until soft and thick. Proceed with the same pastry and crumb topping. This version is especially lovely in autumn.

Raspberry and Almond Variation

Use a good quality raspberry jam or a quick raspberry compote. Add a teaspoon of almond extract to the crumb topping instead of vanilla. The combination of raspberry and almond is a classic pairing that works beautifully with the buttery base.

Lemon and Blueberry Twist

For a fresher, tangier take, use a blueberry compote made with fresh or frozen blueberries and lemon zest. Add the zest of one lemon to the pastry base and the crumb topping. The bright citrus notes will elevate the entire cake.

Why Bother Baking at Home?

In an age of convenience, taking the time to bake a cake from scratch might seem old-fashioned. However,

there is something profoundly satisfying about creating a beloved classic with your own hands. When you bake a Mr Kipling Manor House Cake at home, you control the quality of every ingredient. You choose real butter, high-quality cherries, and no preservatives or artificial flavourings. The result is a cake that tastes fresher, richer, and more vibrant than anything from a box.

Furthermore, the process of baking itself is a form of mindfulness. Kneading the dough, stirring the compote, and watching the topping turn golden in the oven these simple acts connect you to a tradition of home baking that spans generations. Sharing a slice of your homemade Manor House Cake with friends or family is an expression of care and generosity.

Serving Suggestions for Your Homemade Cake

This cake is versatile and can be served in several delightful ways.

- Classic Style: Serve a square of the cake on its own with a cup of strong tea or coffee. This is how Mr Kipling intended it to be enjoyed.
- With Cream: A dollop of clotted cream or a spoonful of lightly whipped double cream adds a luxurious richness that complements the tart cherry filling.
- Warm with Custard: For a comforting dessert, gently warm a slice of the cake in the microwave for 15 seconds and serve with a generous pour of warm custard.
- Ice Cream Pairing: A slice of Manor House Cake pairs wonderfully with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. The contrast between the warm cake and cold ice cream is divine.

Storing Your Homemade Manor House Cake

Proper storage will keep your cake fresh for several days.

- Room Temperature: Store the cake in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days. The crumbly topping will remain crisp, and the filling will stay luscious.

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