BROWN SUGAR-SPICE CAKE

Makes 10 servings

If there were a kind of cake called "snackable," this would be it. It's a cake you enjoy when it's served to you on a plate, with or without whipped cream, and then you go back into the kitchen and polish it off, one thin slice at a time. The combination of brown sugar, warm spices, cornmeal and plums marks it for fall, but its tender crumb and appealing fragrance can stretch into spring. You can keep the spices and swap the plums for apples or pears in late fall through winter and then, when spring is just beginning to show its colors, you can top the cake with rhubarb and strawberries. For those two fruits, I'd omit all the spices except the ginger.

1 cup (136 grams) all-purpose flour
¼ cup (38 grams) yellow cornmeal
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground coriander
3 large eggs, at room temperature
¾ cup (150 grams) packed light brown sugar
¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ cup (120 ml) neutral oil, such as canola
9 to 11 Italian plums, preferably small, halved and pitted

¼ cup (60 ml) honey, for the glaze
Lightly whipped cream, sweetened or not, for serving (optional)

Center a rack in the oven and preheat it to 350 degrees F. Generously butter a 9-inch round cake pan with 2-inch-high sides (use a springform if you don't have a tall regular cake pan), dust with flour and tap out the excess. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat.

Whisk the flour, cornmeal, baking powder and spices together.

Whisk the eggs, brown sugar and salt together in a large bowl until the sugar dissolves and the mixture is smooth. Whisk in the vanilla. Pour in the oil and whisk until the batter is shiny and homogeneous. Add the dry ingredients all at once and stir with the whisk until thoroughly blended.

Pour the batter into the pan. Arrange the plums cut side down over the batter in whatever pattern you like and place the pan on the baking sheet.

Bake the cake for 23 to 26 minutes, until it's golden brown, slightly springy to the touch and just starting to pull away from the sides of the pan; a skewer inserted

into the center of the cake should come out clean. Transfer the cake to the rack and cool for 5 minutes, then run a table knife around the sides of the pan, very carefully unmold the cake onto a rack and invert it onto another rack so that it is plum side up. Or, if you used a springform, simply remove the sides of the pan.

Put the lined baking sheet under the rack with the cake and have a pastry brush at hand. Place a skillet over medium-high heat, pour in the honey and boil for 1 minute, just until it colors lightly. Carefully pour the honey over the hot cake, using the pastry brush to gently spread it over the surface — a light touch is important here, because the cake is tender.

Allow the cake to rest until it is only just warm or reaches room temperature before serving, with whipped cream, if you'd like.

STORING: Once cooled, the cake can be covered and kept at room temperature for up to 2 days.