

# Périgord Walnut Cake (Gâteau aux Noix)

(Serves 8)

## Ingredients

- 200 g (2 cups) walnut halves, shelled
  - 150 g ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup) sugar
  - 100 g (1 stick) butter, melted
  - 4 eggs (separated)
  - 40 g ( $\frac{1}{3}$  cup) flour
  - 1 tsp baking powder
  - 1 pinch salt
  - Optional glaze: 2 tbsp apricot jam + 2 tbsp water
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## Preparation

1.

### Prepare the Walnuts

- Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F).
- Toast walnuts lightly in a dry pan or oven (5–7 minutes) to bring out flavor.
- Allow to cool, then grind finely (but not into a paste — a little texture is nice).

2.

### Make the Batter

- Separate eggs.
- In a large bowl, whisk egg yolks with sugar until pale and creamy.
- Stir in melted butter, ground walnuts, flour, and baking powder until smooth.

3.

### Whip Egg Whites

- In a clean bowl, beat egg whites with a pinch of salt until stiff peaks form.
- Gently fold egg whites into the walnut mixture, keeping as much air as possible.

4.

### **Bake**

- Pour batter into a buttered and floured 22 cm (9-inch) round cake pan.
- Bake for about 30–35 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

5.

### **Optional Glaze**

- Warm apricot jam with water and brush over cake while still warm for a shiny finish.

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## **Serving**

- Serve at room temperature, dusted with powdered sugar or with a dollop of crème fraîche or vanilla ice cream.
- Perfect with a glass of Monbazillac dessert wine or strong coffee.

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## **Tip for Extra Périgord Flair**

For a festive version, drizzle with walnut liqueur (liqueur de noix) or add a tablespoon of Armagnac or rum to the batter.



## **Cultural Anecdote: The Périgord Walnut**

The walnut is the pride of the Périgord, so much so that it carries a protected designation: AOP Noix du Périgord. Walnut trees have been grown here since Roman times, and in the Middle Ages they were so valuable that landlords often collected rent from peasants in the form of walnuts or walnut oil.

Walnut oil was once called “the poor man’s butter” — used not only for cooking but also for lighting lamps in winter. In the 19th century, Dordogne families would gather for the “noce de l’huile”, the oil-pressing party, which was as social as grape harvest celebrations.

Even today, every October, villages in the Périgord hold fêtes de la noix, where locals crack nuts by hand, sell walnut oil, and of course serve this very cake.