

# Upside Down Pear Gingerbread Cake

Serves 6

## For Topping:

2 1/2 firm pears (preferably Bosc)  
1/2 stick (1/4 c) unsalted butter  
3/4 c packed light brown sugar

## For cake:

2 1/2 cups all purpose flour	1 c molasses (preferably mild)
1 1/2 tsp baking soda	1 c boiling water
1 tsp ground cinnamon	1 stick (1/2 c) unsalted butter, softened
1 tsp ground ginger	1/2 c packed light brown sugar
1/2 tsp ground cloves	1 large egg, lightly beaten
1/4 tsp salt	

## Special equipment:

well-seasoned 10" cast-iron skillet  
or  
12" deep nonstick skillet (handle wrapped with a double layer of foil if not ovenproof)

## Accompaniment:

vanilla ice cream

## Make topping:

Peel and core pears and cut each into 8 wedges. Melt butter in skillet over moderate heat until foam subsides. Reduce heat to low, then sprinkle brown sugar over bottom of skillet and cook, undisturbed, 3 minutes (not all sugar will be melted). Arrange pears decoratively over sugar and cook, undisturbed, 2 minutes. Remove from heat.

## Make cake:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Whisk together flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and salt in a bowl. Whisk together molasses and boiling water in a small bowl. Beat together butter, brown sugar, and egg in a large bowl with an electric mixer at medium speed until creamy, about 2 minutes, then alternately mix in flour mixture and molasses in 3 batches at low speed until smooth.

Pour batter over topping in skillet, spreading evenly and being careful not to disturb pears, and bake in middle of oven until a tester comes out clean, 40-50 minutes.

Cool cake in skillet on a rack 5 minutes. Run a thin knife around edge of skillet, then invert a large plate with a lip over skillet and, using pot holders to hold skillet and plate tightly together, invert cake onto plate. Replace any pears that stick to skillet. Serve warm or at room temperature.

from Pamela Melko