

MRS. PETERSON'S VINARTERTA,  
ICELAND'S CHRISTMAS CAKE

2 lb dried prunes, cooked	1 cup sugar
½ cup prune liquid	2 eggs
1 cup sugar	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon cardamom seeds	4 cups sifted all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	2 teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt	½ teaspoon salt
1 cup butter	¼ cup milk

Best to make up prune filling first. Wash prunes (if you use bulk or untenderized ones, soak fruit for 2 hours. With packaged tenderized prunes, soaking is not necessary). Cover fruit with water and cook *slowly* for about 45 minutes or until tender when tested with a fork. Drain prunes, *saving the liquid*. Cool, remove pits, put prunes through a food grinder or cut them into fine pieces with scissors.

Now add prune liquid, sugar and cardamom seeds, split in half, to prunes and cook until filling is about as thick as jam. Cool, add vanilla extract (many Icelanders use wine, rum or whiskey) and salt. Set aside until all cake layers are baked.

Now comes the cake-making time. Work or cream butter until soft. Add sugar gradually and continue mixing until very creamy. Beat eggs slightly, then stir eggs and vanilla extract into creamed sugar. Sift flour, baking powder, salt together. Add alternately with milk to butter mixture. The dough should be firm but not stiff. Mrs. Peterson suggests you chill Vinarterta dough in the refrigerator so it will handle more easily.

Start your oven at 350F or moderate.

When dough has chilled enough to be manageable, divide into 7 equal portions. Roll out each portion *very thin* on a lightly floured bread board to fit an 8" cake pan. Turn cake pan upside down, place dough on ungreased top of pan and trim the edges tidily. Bake 20 minutes or until edges turn a delicate brown. Remove from oven and slide cake off bottom of pan with the help of a spatula and cool on a wire rack until all 7 layers are baked. Of course, bake as many layers at a time as you have 8" cake pans and oven space. The baked layers should not be more than ¼" in thickness and will be very hard.

When all 7 layers of dough have been rolled and baked and cooled, spread a generous amount of prune filling between the layers and pat the Vinarterta with the palm of your hand to make the many thin layers of cake blend with the fruity filling.

Mrs. Peterson wraps her handsome holiday cake rather tightly in a dry cloth so moisture from the filling mellows the cake, then *lets it stand at least overnight before cutting*. "Better yet," says Mrs. Peterson, "let it age several days."

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As printed in McCall's Magazine, 1949