



# ISTRIA

Recipes and stories from the hidden heart  
of Italy, Slovenia and Croatia

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I have always loved this cake – the sweet ricotta dotted with grappa-soaked sultanas and pine nuts, with a hint of citrus throughout. I still make it in Mamma’s old metal cake tin with its rounded edges. Every time I bake it, I think of our times together in the kitchen. If she let me stir the ricotta filling I would sneak quite a few spoonfuls before she spread it over the base, prompting her to comment that there was always less than she thought she had prepared.

This cake tastes much better when it has cooled completely, and even better the next day, perhaps for breakfast with a cup of espresso. Some who have made this cake have substituted the sultanas for chocolate chips, which, if you love chocolate, would also work well.

# Livia’s ricotta cake

## *(Dolce di ricotta di Livia)*

**Serves 16**

### **For the filling**

500 g (2 cups) ricotta, drained  
40 g (1½ oz) self-raising flour  
1 egg  
2 tablespoons sultanas (golden raisins), soaked in grappa for at least 2 hours, drained  
80 g (⅓ cup) caster sugar  
zest of ½ lemon  
zest of ½ orange  
2 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted

### **For the batter**

2 large eggs, lightly beaten  
100 g (3½ oz) unsalted butter, melted then cooled, plus extra for greasing  
100 g (3½ oz) caster sugar  
zest ½ lemon  
250 g (1⅔ cups) self-raising flour  
185 ml (¾ cup) milk, plus extra if needed  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
pinch of salt

Preheat the oven to 150°C (300°F) fan-forced. Butter the base and sides of a 24–26 cm (9½–10¼ in) square cake tin and line with baking paper.

To make the filling, place the ricotta in a large bowl and mix well with a spoon to remove all lumps. Add the remaining ingredients and mix together until homogenous. Set aside.

Place the batter ingredients in another bowl and mix with a spoon until well combined. The batter should be easily spreadable, so add a bit more milk if needed.

Spoon just under half the batter into the cake tin, spreading it evenly. Spoon all the ricotta filling evenly over the batter, so that it almost touches the edge of the tin, then flatten it with the back of a spoon. Pour on the remaining batter so that it evenly covers the ricotta and fills in the small gap around the inner perimeter of the cake tin. Tap slightly on the bench if needed to even out the cake batter.

Bake for about 50 minutes, or until golden on top and firm to touch.

Allow to cool completely in the cake tin, before inverting to remove.

The ricotta cake is lovely cold or at room temperature, and will keep in an airtight container in the fridge for about 3 days.