

A close-up photograph of two golden-brown, rum-baked apples resting on a dark brown ceramic plate. The apples have a slightly cracked, caramelized surface. A silver spoon with a textured handle is placed to the right of the apples. The plate is set on a light-colored, textured fabric background.

# Rum-Baked Apples

As the weather starts to warm and friends & family get together, traditional desserts like baked apples are even more appealing. They provide all the flavour of a classic apple pie in a convenient single-serving package. They're even better with the grownup addition of rum.

Start with your favourite baking apple. Traditional varieties including Cortland, Braeburn, Rome, Winesap and Gala all have a pretty good balance of sweet and tart, but you'll usually need extra sugar with Granny Smiths or a touch of lemon juice with Golden Delicious. Wash or peel the apples, whichever you prefer, and core them.

Make up the filling by mixing one to two tablespoons of golden brown sugar per apple with cinnamon, nutmeg and a pinch of salt.

Next, roll out the dough. Any kind of pastry you have on hand will work fine, whether it's your aunt's legendary pie crust or something frozen from a store. It's a good way to use up dough left over from making other pies or tarts if you've been baking and have scraps available.

Cut the dough in circles or squares five to seven inches across, depending on the size of your apples. Place one apple in the middle of each piece of dough and loosely pack it with one or two tablespoons of the spiced sugar filling. Top the sugar with a small piece of cold butter, then pour a teaspoon of dark overproof rum over the sugar. Lift the sides of the pastry and mould them around the apple, overlapping and folding the dough to seal it. If you see any gaps or tears, plug them with scrap pieces.

Place the apples on a baking sheet and brush them lightly with milk or beaten egg. Sprinkle them with coarse sanding sugar and bake at 350 F to 375 F, until the pastry is golden and the apple inside is tender when you poke it with a toothpick. If the dough is browning too quickly, cover it with foil until the apple's finished.

The apples are best 15 to 20 minutes after they come out of the oven, when they're still warm but the juices have cooled enough to not burn your mouth. Enjoy their sweet sophistication in every bite.