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One of the best ways to make a house into a home is to invite some friends over for a meal. If you try this recipe, let me know how it turns out for you. And if you have a favorite recipe of your own, send it my way.

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## Alsatian Plum Cake

This recipe comes from the resort at Canyon Ranch, and it takes just a little effort to create a nice impression at the end of a meal. Give the finished cakes a little time to cool before serving, since the ramekins and the liquid in the plums will get quite hot.

4 Tablespoons almond paste	1/4 cup all-purpose flour
2 Tablespoons butter	4 Tablespoons granulated sugar
2 Tablespoons nonfat sour cream	3 fresh plums
1 large whole egg	2 Tablespoons brown sugar
3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract	

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. In a medium bowl, cream together almond paste, butter, and sour cream. Stir in egg and vanilla extract. Gradually stir in flour & sugar. Set aside.
3. Cut plums in half & remove pits. Scoop 3 Tablespoons of paste mixture into each of 6 ramekins, and place 1/2 plum on top of paste, cut side down. Sprinkle each with 1 teaspoon of brown sugar.
4. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until plum is roasted & tender, and cake is spongy.

Makes 6 servings.

Here's a tip: Especially in our climate, the almond paste may be very dry & stiff when you open the package. Follow the directions to soften it up, and allow a day for that to happen. If you're on a tight schedule, you can mix the paste in a blender or food processor.

For convenience, you can prepare the cakes ahead of time and keep them in the fridge until dinner time. Start baking when you serve dinner and they'll be ready to go when you are.

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