

Lemon-Honey Nian Gao (Mochi Cake)

Recipe from Jessica Wang

Adapted by Eleanore Park

Updated May 13, 2025



David Malosh for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Simon Andrews.

Total Time 1 ¾ hours

Prep Time 15 minutes

Cook Time 1 ½ hours

Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (55)

Jessica Wang, who runs [Gu's Grocery](#), a Chinese Taiwanese online store, in Los Angeles, always sells a variation of her mother's [mochi cake](#) at her pop-ups. Subtly sweet, this honey-lemon variation gets a double jolt of moisture from a blend of honey and macerated lemon that gets stirred into the batter and then drizzled on top after baking. Mochiko (sweet rice flour) multitasks here, bolstering the hints of the cake's sweetness and imparting this gluten-free treat with a unique textural crumb that's both bouncy and light. Though this dessert is well-suited for a crowd, it also makes for a lovely snacking cake as it keeps well too, since the soaking liquid softens the cake over the first day and into the second. —**Eleanore Park**

INGREDIENTS

Yield: One 9-by-13-inch cake

FOR THE LEMON TOPPING AND SOAKING LIQUID

4 lemons (preferably Meyer)

1 cup/333 grams honey, plus more if needed

FOR THE CAKE

½ cup/113 grams unsalted butter, melted and cooled, plus more for

PREPARATION

Step 1

Prepare the lemons: Very thinly slice 2 or 3 of the lemons until you have about 24 rounds, each no thicker than ⅛-inch. (Save the tips and any imperfect slices for juicing.) In a small bowl or container, cover the lemon slices with the honey and allow them to macerate until lemons have softened slightly and start to release their juices. (The lemons can soften in the honey up to overnight if kept in an airtight container in the refrigerator.)

From the remaining lemons, squeeze ⅓ cup juice into a measuring cup for the cake and 2 tablespoons juice into a small bowl for the soaking liquid; set both aside.

greasing the pan

3 cups/454 grams mochiko (sweet rice flour), like Koda Farms Blue Star brand

1 tablespoon baking powder

½ teaspoon kosher salt (such as Diamond Crystal)

4 large eggs

1 (14-ounce) can unsweetened coconut milk

1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk

Step 2

Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Butter a 9-by-13-inch metal cake pan. Line the pan with parchment paper so that there is some overhang on the long sides of the pan. Butter the parchment paper. (Be generous greasing the pan. The extra butter will yield an extra golden brown crust.)

Step 3

Carefully pluck the lemons out of the honey, allowing excess liquid to drip back into the bowl, and layer the slices in an even layer on the prepared parchment paper. (You'll want enough to snugly cover the bottom of the pan.) Reserve the remaining honey mixture for the batter and the soaking liquid.

Step 4

Whisk the mochiko, baking powder and salt in a large bowl. In a separate large bowl, whisk the eggs to break up the yolks. Add the melted butter, coconut milk, condensed milk, ⅓ cup reserved lemon juice and ¾ cup (241 grams) of the reserved honey mixture, and whisk until smooth.

Step 5

Pour the liquid mixture into the dry ingredients. Whisk until the batter is smooth and there are no lumps. Slowly pour the batter into the prepared pan in an even layer, making sure to not push the lemon slices to the edges.

Step 6

Bake until the cake is golden around the edges, blond across the surface and slightly puffed, 40 to 50 minutes. (A cake tester, toothpick or paring knife should come out mostly clean, with perhaps a few clingy crumbs. There should be some bounce when you touch the cake.)

Step 7

Meanwhile make the soaking liquid: Combine the 2 tablespoons lemon juice with the remaining honey mixture. (You should have about ¼ cup of the mixture; if you're slightly short, add more honey as needed.) Poke holes on the surface of the cake and immediately drizzle the soaking liquid all over the cake. Allow the cake to rest and cool in the pan for at least 20 minutes.

Step 8

To serve, place a large cutting board on top of the cake and flip the cake pan. Remove the parchment paper and cut into squares. Serve warm or at room temperature. Leftovers can be kept in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days.

Private Notes

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