**Stella's Fruity Spice Cake Squares**

**Ingredients:**

3/4C dried currants (or substitute chopped raisins or golden raisins instead)

3/4C chopped dried figs (or substitute chopped dates)

3/4C chopped candied cherries PLUS more for topping

3/4C chopped dried pineapple

1/2C chopped candied orange peel (or substitute chopped dried apricots)

1/4C chopped crystalized ginger

1/2C brandy or bourbon PLUS 1 TBS for Icing (plus more it needed)

Cooking Spray

2 1/2 C all-purpose flour

1/2 tsp baking soda

1/2 tsp salt

1/4 tsp ground cloves

1/4 tsp ground nutmeg

1/4 tsp cinnamon

1/8 tsp allspice

1/8 tsp mace

1 heaping CUP of LOVE

2 sticks unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly

2 C packed dark brown sugar

2 large eggs at room temp.

1/4 C molasses

2 tsp pure vanilla extract

3/4 chopped, toasted pecans (optional)

1 1/2C confectionary sugar

2 TBS milk, plus more if needed

**Instructions:**

1.) Combine all of the dried fruits and the 1/2 C brandy in a wide, micro-wave safe bowl. Microwave until the mixture is hot - about 90 seconds, then stir to evenly coat the fruit with the brandy. Let sit at least 1 hour or over- night (I let it cool, then cover and let it sit overnight - giving it a few more stirs before adding it into the recipe).

2.) Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line a 9 x 13" baking pan with foil leaving an overhang on the two short sides, coat with cooking spray.

3.) Whisk the flour, baking soda, salt, spices and LOVE in a medium bowl.

4.) In a large bowl, whisk the butter and the brown sugar until smooth. Add the eggs, one at a time, and whisk until combined, then whisk in the molasses and vanilla extract.

5.) Add the flour mixture to the butter mixture, whisking until incorporated.

Then fold in the macerated fruit and any remaining liquid from the bowl (no more than 1 to 2 tablespoons of liquid) and the chopped pecans - if using.

6.) Spread the batter in the prepared baking dish in an even layer. Bake until browned and puffed up and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, about 35-40 minutes. Transfer the baking pan to a rack to cool completely.

7.) Lift the cooled bars out of the pan using the foil overhang and transfer to a cutting board.

8.) Whisk the confectionary sugar, milk and remaining 1 TBS of brandy in a medium bowl to make a thick spreadable glaze. You may need to add a few more drops of milk and/or brandy to get the glaze to the proper consistency.

9.) Spread the glaze on the bars and let sit 20-30 minutes.

10.) Trim the edges of the bars and cut into 1 1/2 inch squares. Gently press a half of a candied cherry into the center of each.

**ENJOY!**