



Caramel Apple Brown Butter Buckle

Serves 6 to 8

Honeycrisp apples can be huge, and that's what I used when testing this recipe. You can use other apples, but make sure they are a variety that can stand up to the cooking process and not fall apart. Pink Lady, Cameo, Fuji, and Granny Smith are good options, but use more apples as needed to approximate the weight given below. If the apples are small, you might need up to six! If you don't have an iron skillet, or you don't have one that doesn't taste like recently cooked salmon or onions, you can use any 9 or 10-inch skillet to cook the apples and make the brown butter, and then bake the buckle in a 9 or 10-inch cake pan, just make sure to butter it first. One more thing— you can use other dairy, like yogurt or labneh or crème fraiche in place of the sour cream but go for full fat versions to retain the tenderness of the cake.

For the apples:

3 large Honeycrisp apples (about 2 pounds 6 ounces/1 kg), peeled, cored, and sliced

2 tablespoons/28 g unsalted butter

½ cup/101 g granulated sugar

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Pinch of salt

For the cake:

½ cup (1 stick)/113 g unsalted butter, cut up

¾ cup/151 g granulated sugar

1¼ cups/ 160g all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon kosher salt

¼ teaspoon ground cardamom

2 large eggs

½ cup sour cream

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 tablespoon turbinado (raw) sugar

1. Heat oven to 375°F. Heat a 9-inch iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add butter and let melt. Add sugar and stir to moisten. Heat until sugar melts completely, and starts to brown, stirring occasionally. Continue cooking until smooth and deep amber, about 5 minutes total. Carefully (as in don't let them splash in the hot caramel) add the apples all at once, along with the cinnamon and a big pinch of salt, and cook, stirring occasionally until apples are turning translucent and silky and liquid has thickened, about 10 minutes. Slide onto a dinner plate and set aside. Rinse the skillet and return to the stove.
2. Heat the skillet over medium heat and add the stick of butter. Swirl the pan frequently until the butter turns nut brown and smells toasty, which will take anywhere from 2 to 5 minutes. Even in a dark pan, you'll see the color turn, especially in the center when you swirl it. Immediately transfer it to a medium bowl and set aside to cool slightly. Keep the skillet (now buttered) standing by.
3. In a large bowl, combine sugar, flour, baking powder, salt, and cardamom. Whisk to combine thoroughly.
4. Add eggs, sour cream, and vanilla to the bowl with the butter and whisk to combine thoroughly. Fold the wet mixture into the dry using a rubber spatula, and then fold in about half the apples, avoiding the extra caramel pooled on the plate. Transfer to the buttered skillet and top with the remaining apples and the extra caramel. Sprinkle the raw sugar over top and bake for 40 to 50 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake is deep golden brown on the edges. Let cool 10 minutes. Best served warm!

A note on the baking time: *If you make this straight through, and the ingredients and skillet are still warm, it will take about 40 minutes. If things have cooled off, it will take 5 to 10 minutes longer. If baking in a shallow cake pan, put a baking sheet underneath to catch any errant juices.*