

SERVES EIGHT

## APRICOT, WALNUT AND LAVENDER CAKE

185g unsalted butter, at room temperature, diced  
2 tbsp walnut oil  
220g caster sugar  
120g ground almonds  
4 eggs, beaten  
120g walnuts, freshly blitzed in a food processor to a coarse powder  
90g plain flour  
½ tsp vanilla extract  
grated zest of 1 lemon  
1½ tsp lavender, fresh or dried  
600g fresh apricots, halved and stones removed  
salt

### Icing

50g icing sugar  
1 tbsp lemon juice

*The combination of walnuts, apricots and lavender is as French as a good baguette with butter and ripe Brie, and it is every bit as invincible. I seriously urge you to try this cake, and not just as a French classic. It has a moist and soft crumb and a delicate fruity topping and it will keep well, covered, for a few days.*

Preheat the oven to 190°C/170°C Fan/Gas Mark 5.

Place the butter, oil, sugar and almonds in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat on a medium-high speed until light and fluffy. Add the eggs in small additions and continue to beat until well incorporated. Fold in the walnuts, flour, vanilla, lemon zest, 1 teaspoon of the lavender and ¼ teaspoon of salt.

Line the base and sides of a 23cm cake tin with baking parchment. Pour in the cake mix and level out the top. Arrange the apricot halves over the top, skin side down and slightly overlapping, right to the edge. Bake in the oven for 70–80 minutes, covering with foil if the top starts to brown too much.

While the cake is baking, make the icing. Whisk together the icing sugar and lemon juice to get a light, pourable icing, adjusting the amount of sugar or juice if needed. As soon as the cake comes out of the oven, brush the icing on top. Sprinkle over the remaining lavender and leave to cool before serving.