Date Nut Spice Bread

350 degrees

2 cups coarsely chopped dates (10 ounces pitted)

1/3 cup orange liqueur (recommended: Cointreau or Triple Sec)

4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature

3/4 cup light brown sugar, lightly packed

1 extra-large egg

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1 tablespoon grated orange zest (2 oranges)

2 cups all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground nutmeg

1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

1 teaspoon kosher salt

3/4 cup freshly squeezed orange juice (3 oranges)

3/4 cup coarsely chopped pecans (3 ounces)

**Frosting:**

6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature

1/3 cup granulated sugar

1 tablespoon grated orange zest

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Butter the bottom of an 8 1/2 by 4 1/2 by 2 1/2-inch loaf pan. Line the bottom with parchment paper, then butter and flour the pan.

Combine the dates and orange liqueur in a small bowl and set aside for 30 minutes. Stir occasionally.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter and brown sugar together on medium speed for 1 minute. Scrape down the bowl. With the mixer on low, add the egg, vanilla, and orange zest. Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and salt. With the mixer still on low, add the flour mixture alternately with the orange juice to the creamed mixture, beating only until combined. By hand, stir in the dates with their liquid, and the pecans. Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan and smooth the top. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes, until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack and cool completely.

Meanwhile, in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the cream cheese, sugar, and orange zest on medium speed until just combined.

Slice the bread and serve with the orange cream cheese on the side for spreading.