DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease 3 (6-inch) round cake pans or 2 (8 inch) round cake pans. Line with parchment paper, then butter/spray with cooking spray.

2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, all-spice, nutmeg, and black pepper.

3. In a bowl of a stand mixer (or a separate bowl using a hand mixer) beat together the canola oil, sugar, vanilla, eggs, and pumpkin puree until combined.

4. Gradually add the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients until smooth and no lumps remain.

5. Pour the batter evenly among the cake pans. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until the tops are set. If checking the center, use a toothpick or skewer. When ready, it should come out cleanly.

6. To make the buttercream frosting, add 2 sticks of butter to a pan set over medium heat. Let the butter brown lightly until it acquires a nutty smell, approximately 3-5 minutes. Stir frequently. Once browned, remove from heat and transfer to a mixing bowl. Let cool until it's room temperature.

7. Add the remaining stick of room temperature butter, cream cheese, powdered sugar and maple syrup to the bowl. Beat together until light and fluffy. Add the vanilla and beat until the mixture turns from light yellow to white, approximately 5 minutes. If the frosting feels loose or watery, add powdered sugar to thicken.

8. To assemble, place one cake layer on a serving plate. Spread 1/3 of the buttercream over the cake. Repeat with the remaining layers, being careful not to overfill. Frost the outside of the cake and chill for 30 minutes once frosted. Decorate with star anise, cinnamon sticks, and cinnamon sugar as desired.