

Salt and Serenity

The Ultimate Gluten Free Chocolate Cake

America's Test Kitchen created this cake recipe. The buttercream recipe is adapted from Tessa Huff's Vanilla Swiss Meringue Buttercream. The coffee simple syrup is my creation.

Cake:

1 cup vegetable oil
6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
2 ounces (2/3 cup) unsweetened cocoa powder
7 ounces (1 1/3 cups plus 1/4 cup) Gluten-Free Flour Blend (I like Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free 1 To 1 Baking Blend)
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon xanthan gum
1 teaspoon salt
4 large eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla extract , or vanilla bean paste
10 1/2 ounces (1 1/2 cups) sugar cup
1 cup whole milk or coconut milk for a dairy free option

Coffee Simple Syrup:

1/2 cup water
1/2 cup white sugar
1 Tablespoon instant espresso powder

Mocha Swiss Meringue Buttercream:

14 ounces bittersweet chocolate
8 egg whites
14 ounces (2 cups) white granulated sugar
1 1/2 pounds (6 sticks) unsalted butter or margarine for a dairy free option, at room temperature
2 Tablespoons instant espresso powder
2 tablespoons boiling water
1 tablespoon vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste

Make cake: Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 350°F. Grease three 8-inch round cake pans, line bottoms with parchment paper and grease parchment.

Microwave oil, chocolate, and cocoa together in bowl at 50 percent power, stirring occasionally, until melted, about 1-2 minutes. Whisk mixture until smooth and

set aside to cool slightly. In separate bowl, whisk flour blend, baking powder, baking soda, xanthan gum, and salt together.

In large bowl, whisk eggs and vanilla together. Whisk in sugar until well combined. Whisk in cooled chocolate mixture and milk until combined. Whisk in flour blend mixture until batter is thoroughly combined and smooth.

Divide batter evenly between prepared pans and smooth tops. Bake until toothpick inserted into center of cake comes out clean, 18-20 minutes, switching and rotating pans halfway through baking.

Let cakes cool in pans on wire rack for 10 minutes. Run knife around edge of cakes to loosen. Remove cakes from pans, discard parchment, and let cool completely on rack, about 1 hour. (Cake layers can be wrapped tightly in plastic wrap and stored at room temperature for up to 1 day.)

Make coffee simple syrup: In a small saucepan, mix together water and sugar. Bring to boil on high heat and cook until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and stir in espresso powder. Pour into glass measuring cup and put in fridge to chill.

Make Buttercream: Melt chocolate in a glass measuring cup or bowl in the microwave for 2 minutes on medium power. Stir well. If not completely melted, put it back in for another 30 seconds at medium power and stir until melted. Set melted chocolate aside

In the bowl of an electric stand mixer add the egg whites and granulated sugar. Whisk them together briefly by hand, just until they are combined.

Create a double-boiler: Fill a sauce pan with a few inches of water and bring to a simmer. Place the mixer bowl with the egg white mixture on top to create a double boiler. The water should be kept at a simmer but should not touch the bottom of the bowl. The double boiler acts as indirect heat for the egg white mixture.

Heat the egg white mixture: Occasionally stirring, heat the egg white mixture until it reaches 160 °F on a candy thermometer. The mixture should be very hot to the touch and the sugar should have dissolved.

Once the egg white mixture is hot, carefully return the bowl to the stand mixer. Fitted with the whisk attachment, beat the mixture on high speed for about 8 minutes. Place your hand on the bottom of the mixer bowl. If it still feels warm, continue mixing until the bowl is at room temperature. The meringue should hold shiny, medium-stiff peaks. Stop the mixer and swap out the whisk for the paddle attachment.

With the mixer on low, begin adding in the butter or margarine, a couple

tablespoons at a time. The butter must be room temperature in order to incorporate properly with the meringue.

Mix espresso powder and boiling water to dissolve powder. Add espresso and vanilla to meringue and mix on medium speed for 20 seconds. Turn mixer to low speed and drizzle in melted chocolate.

Mix buttercream until smooth: Turn the mixer up to medium speed and mix until silky smooth, about 3-5 minutes.

Place one layer of cake on serving platter. Cut 4 small strips of waxed paper and slide them under each side of the cake to keep platter clean while icing. Brush the top of the first layer with some of the espresso simple syrup. Spread about ½ cup of the icing onto the top of the first layer, using an offset spatula. Repeat with second and third layers. Frost top and sides of cake and smooth the sides with an offset spatula.

Remove waxed paper strips and refrigerate until serving time.