

Salt and Serenity

Banana Chocolate Fudge Cake

This decadent recipe is the creation of Allyson Bobbit and Sarah Bell, from their 2016 cookbook, *Bobbette & Belle*. There are several components to the cake, so plan to start making it the day before you want to serve it. The original recipe called for 1 cup of chocolate chips folded into the cake batter before baking. I left them out because I felt that there was enough chocolate in the fudge frosting between the layers, the chocolate buttercream masking the outside of the cake and the chocolate glaze topping the cake.

Makes one 9-inch round three-layer cake. Serves 12.

Special equipment: offset spatula, cake turntable, 9-inch cardboard cake round, bench scraper

Dark Chocolate Fudge Frosting:

4 ½ cups icing sugar
1 ¾ cups cocoa powder
Rounded ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup whole milk, room temperature

Chocolate Buttercream:

4 large egg whites
1 cup granulated sugar
1 pound unsalted butter, cut into 1 inch cubes, room temperature
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
6 ounces chopped bittersweet chocolate (Use really good quality dark chocolate, 65-70% cocoa content. I like Valrhona or Lindt), melted and cooled to just above room temperature

Cake:

3 ½ cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons baking soda
3 cups mashed ripe bananas (about 7 ripe bananas)
2 cups plus 2 tablespoons loosely packed brown sugar
4 large eggs
1 ⅔ cups vegetable oil
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 ½ cups whole milk, room temperature

Chocolate Glaze:

4 ounces chopped bittersweet chocolate (Use really good quality dark chocolate, 70-85% cocoa content. I like Valrhona or Lindt)

½ cup unsalted butter, cut into 1-inch cubes, room temperature

¾ teaspoons corn syrup

¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

¼ teaspoon fleur de sel

For garnish:

½ cup Banana chips

½ cup Chocolate Chips

1. **Make Dark Chocolate Fudge Frosting:** Sift the icing sugar and cocoa powder **together** into a large bowl. Whisk in salt.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer, fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Reduce the speed to low and alternate adding the icing sugar mixture in 3 additions and the milk in 2 additions, beginning and ending with the icing sugar mixture. Beat after each addition until fully incorporated, stopping the mixer to scrape down the sides of the bowl when needed. Increase the speed to high for 3 more minutes and beat until very smooth.
3. Use immediately, or store in an airtight container in fridge for up to a week. Let come to room temperature before using. You can hasten softening by putting it back into the stand mixer and giving it a good beating for a few minutes.
4. **Make Chocolate Buttercream:** In a medium saucepan, bring an inch of water to a simmer.
5. In a large heatproof bowl, combine egg whites and sugar. Place over the simmering water and whisk gently until very hot to the touch or a candy thermometer reads 140°F. Immediately pour the egg white mixture into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment.
6. Whisk on medium-high speed until the egg whites have cooled to room temperature, doubled in volume and hold medium peaks. This will take 8-10 minutes.
7. Turn the mixer to medium-low speed and slowly add the butter, a few cubes at a time, increasing the speed to medium-high after each addition and beating until the butter is fully incorporated before adding more. Once all the butter has been added, continue to beat on medium-high until the buttercream is light and fluffy 1-2 minutes. Stop the mixer to scrape down the sides of the bowl, making sure

to scrape the bottom as well. Add the vanilla and beat on medium speed for 2 more minutes.

8. With the mixer on medium speed, add the melted chocolate in a slow stream, beating until fully combined. Stop to scrape down the sides of the bowl. Beat for an additional minute.
9. Use immediately, or store in an airtight container in fridge for up to a week. Let come to room temperature before using. You can hasten softening by putting it back into the stand mixer and giving it a good beating for a few minutes.
10. Any leftover buttercream can be frozen for up to 3 months.
11. **Make cake:** Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease three 9-inch round cake pans with non-stick cooking spray, then line the bottoms with parchment paper.
12. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder and baking soda.
13. In the bowl of a stand mixer, fitted with the paddle attachment, beat bananas and brown sugar on medium speed until the mixture resembles a paste, about 2 minutes.
14. Beat in eggs, oil and salt until well combined.
15. With the mixer on low speed, alternate adding the flour mixture in 3 additions and the milk in 2 additions, beginning and ending with the flour mixture. Blend after each addition, just until combined, stopping the mixer to scrape down the sides of the bowl at least once. Divide the batter evenly between the 3 pans, using a rubber spatula to spread it to the edges.
16. Bake for 30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. For even baking, rotate pans from front to back halfway through the baking time. Allow cakes to cool in the pans for 10 minutes before turning them out onto a wire rack to cool completely.
17. **Make Chocolate Glaze:** In a medium saucepan, bring an inch of water to a simmer.
18. Combine chocolate, butter, corn syrup, vanilla and fleur de sel in a large heatproof bowl and set the bowl over the simmering water. Gently and continuously stir until the chocolate and butter are melted and the glaze is smooth. Remove the bowl from the pot and allow the glaze to cool to room temperature before pouring on the cake.

19. Use immediately, or store in an airtight container in fridge for up to a week. Let come to room temperature before using.
20. **Assemble Cake:** The first step is to cut off any dome on the top of your cake layers, to make them perfectly flat and level. Place one cake layer on a cutting board. Place the edge of a long serrated knife on the outer top edge of the cake and cut off the dome, leaving a flat surface. Repeat the process for the other 2 layers. I found that my banana cake baked up fairly level and only needed a minimal amount of trimming.
21. Place a dab of dark chocolate fudge frosting in the center of the cake turntable. Lay a 9-inch cardboard cake circle over top of the frosting, to hold it into place. Lay your first layer on top of the cardboard circle, trimmed side up. Spoon a large dollop of the dark chocolate fudge frosting in the center of the cake layer. Using a large offset spatula, start moving the filling gently back and forth with light pressure while you simultaneously turn the cake stand. You will see the filling evenly spread out toward the edge of the cake layer. This takes coordination and practice but it is the easiest way to ensure an even filling that covers the whole surface of the layer without getting crumbs in it. The finished layer of filling should be ½ inch thick.
22. Place the next layer on top, this time cut side down. This will allow you to smooth your filling on a smooth uncut surface. (You do not do this with the bottom layer because you need the stability of the uncut side on the bottom). Smooth more fudge filling over this layer, just as you did with the first, again ending up with a ½ inch thick layer of frosting.
23. Place the third layer on top, cut side down. Smooth out any frosting that has oozed out the sides with your offset spatula.
24. Now it's time for the chocolate buttercream. Give the whole outside of the cake (both top and sides) a "crumb coat". Using a clean offset spatula, apply a very thin see-through layer of chocolate buttercream over the entire top and sides of the cake. Chill the cake on the cake turntable in the fridge for 30 minutes to allow the crumb coat to set.
25. Remove cake from fridge. Place a large mound of buttercream on the top of the cake and use the same technique you used to spread the filling, but this time allow the buttercream to extend about ½ inch beyond the edge of the cake. Hold the blade of your offset spatula at a slight angle over the top of the cake and rotate the cake stand to smooth out the top.

26. Use your offset spatula to apply lots of buttercream to the sides of the cake. Really lay it on thick. Place your bench scraper at a 90° angle, with the blade barely touching the cake and the bottom edge resting tightly against the cake stand. Angle the bench scraper toward you and begin turning the cake turntable. Don't apply too much pressure at the beginning. You will begin to collect extra buttercream on your scraper while seeing the buttercream smooth out. Be careful not to remove too much buttercream from the sides or you will start to see the cake underneath. If this happens, trowel on more buttercream and repeat the smoothing process. As you become more comfortable with the smoothing process, you can turn the stand at a faster speed.
27. When the sides are smooth, you will notice a small wall of buttercream that has formed at the top edge of the cake. Using the edge of a clean offset spatula, push the excess buttercream towards the center of the cake.
28. If you would like to create the decorative swirl on the side, place the tip of your clean offset spatula at a slight angle touching the bottom edge of the cake. Begin rotating the cake stand fairly quickly, and with each full rotation, move the tip of the spatula upward without taking it off the cake. This fluid motion will create one continuous swirl. It takes a bit of practice to get it right. You can easily start over by applying more buttercream and smoothing it out with the bench scraper for a clean canvas. I did it about 4 times before I was satisfied. Chill cake for 30 minutes.
29. Pour chocolate glaze on the center of the top of the cake. Gently spread glaze outward, using a small offset spatula until it begins to seep over the edge of the cake and drip down. Garnish the top of the cake with banana chips and chocolate chips. Chill cake for about 30 minutes so that all the frosting and glaze forms up. You can then insert a large spatula under the cardboard cake bottom and carefully transfer cake from turntable to a more decorative cake plate.
30. Finished cake should be served at room temperature, but cake can be covered and stored in the fridge for up to 1 week.