

Salt and Serenity

Perfect Chocolate Birthday Cake

The cake recipe is adapted from "Pleasures of Your Food Processor" by Noreen Gilletz. The buttercream recipe comes from Nila at www.thetoughcookie.com

Makes a double layer 9 inch round cake

Cake

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour
2 cups sugar
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking soda
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoons salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup strong coffee
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups whole milk
3 eggs
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups vegetable oil

Dark Chocolate Buttercream

260g (or 1 cup + 3 Tablespoons) unsalted butter, cubed and softened at room temperature (30 minutes out of the fridge is perfect)
500g (or 4 cups) powdered sugar
140g (or 1 cup + 3 tablespoons) Dutch-processed cocoa powder
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
160ml (or $\frac{2}{3}$ cup) heavy whipping cream
pinch of salt

Smarties to decorate cake (optional)

1. **Make cake:** Preheat oven to 350° F. Butter and flour two 9-inch round baking pans and set aside.
2. Combine all the dry ingredients for the cake in the food processor bowl and process with the steel knife until well blended, about 10 seconds. Add milk and eggs. Start processor and pour oil through the top while the machine is running. Process batter for about 45 seconds.

3. Pour batter into prepared pans, and bake the layers for about 30 –35 minutes, until cake tests done. Cool on a rack for about 20 minutes before removing cake from pans. Let cakes cool completely before icing.
4. **Make buttercream:** In the bowl of a stand mixer, beat softened butter with the whisk attachment until smooth and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Using a rubber spatula, scrape the sides of the bowl, and then beat for another 30 seconds.
5. Add powdered sugar and cocoa powder. Combine vanilla, cream and salt and add it to the bowl with the butter. Using a rubber spatula or a wooden spoon, stir ingredients until somewhat incorporated and the mixture looks dry and crumbly, but not powdery. This is just so that you don't end up with a big cloud of powdered sugar and cocoa in your kitchen when you turn the mixer on.
6. Mix for 3-5 minutes, or until the buttercream looks creamy, fluffy and smooth.
7. 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. Spread about $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the icing onto the top of the first layer. Cover with the second layer and proceed to ice the sides and then top of the cake.
8. Fit a disposable piping bag with a medium sized star tip. Fill with buttercream and pipe a decorative border. Top with Smarties if desired.
9. Remove waxed paper strips and refrigerate until serving time.