

Salt and Serenity

Cookies and Cream Cake

(Gluten Free)

This cake was inspired by a “Cookies and Cream” cake I became obsessed with on the charming blog, *preppy kitchen*. I wanted to make a gluten free version. The cake recipe is adapted from cooksillustrated.com and the buttercream recipe is adapted from Stella Parks (aka Bravetart).

I like to bake this in three 6-inch round cake pans, for a tall, impressive presentation. You could also bake it in two 9-inch round cake pans if that's all you have.

Serves 10 people.

Cake:

6 ounces white chocolate, chopped
4 ounces unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces
11 ounces (1¾ cups plus ⅔ cup) Gluten Free Flour blend (I used Bob's Redmill GF 1:1 baking flour)
1 tablespoon baking powder
1¼ teaspoons xanthan gum
1 teaspoons kosher salt
¼ teaspoon baking soda
4 large eggs, separated
pinch of cream of tartar
3½ ounces (½ cups) sugar
1 tablespoon vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste
3½ ounces (½ cups) sugar
⅔ cup sour cream (do not use light or fat free)
5 ounces coarsely chopped gluten-free chocolate sandwich cookies (I used Trader Joes)

Buttercream:

7 large egg whites
7 ounces sugar
½ teaspoon kosher salt
1¼ pounds unsalted butter, cut into 2” chunks and softened at room temperature for 30 minutes
1 teaspoons vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste
3 ounces finely chopped gluten-free chocolate sandwich cookies (I used Trader Joes)

Ganache:

4 ounces finely chopped bittersweet or semi-sweet chocolate
½ cup 35% whipping cream

Decoration:

3 ounces finely chopped gluten-free chocolate sandwich cookies (I used Trader Joes)

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 325° F. Grease three 6-inch round cake pans, (or two 9-inch round cake pans) line bottoms with parchment paper and grease parchment.
2. Microwave white chocolate and butter together in bowl at 50 percent power, stirring occasionally, until melted, about 2 minutes. Whisk mixture until smooth, then set aside to cool slightly. In separate bowl, whisk flour blend, baking powder, xanthan gum, salt, and baking soda until combined.
3. Using stand mixer fitted with whisk, whip egg whites and cream of tartar on medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to medium-high and whip whites to soft, billowy mounds, about 1 minute. Gradually add ½ cup sugar and whip until glossy, stiff peaks form, 2 to 3 minutes; transfer to bowl.
4. Return now-empty bowl to mixer, add egg yolks and vanilla, and whip on medium speed until well blended, about 30 seconds. Gradually add remaining ½ cup sugar, increase mixer speed to high, and whip until very thick and pale yellow, about 2 minutes. Reduce mixer speed to medium, add white chocolate mixture and sour cream, and whip until combined, about 30 seconds. Reduce speed to low, slowly add flour blend mixture, and mix until thoroughly combined, about 1 minute.
5. Using rubber spatula, stir one-third of whipped egg whites into batter to lighten. Gently fold in remaining whites until no white streaks remain. Gently fold in chopped cookies. Divide batter evenly between prepared pans and smooth tops. Bake until cakes begin to pull away from sides of pans and spring back when pressed lightly, 30-32 minutes switching and rotating pans halfway through baking.
6. 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 1½ hours.
7. While cake is cooling, prepare buttercream. Combine the egg whites, sugar and salt together in the bowl of your stand mixer. Set the bowl over a pan of water and turn the heat on medium low. You don't need the water to even simmer, you just want it hot enough to steam, since steam is what actually heats the whites.
8. Whisk frequently to prevent an egg white omelet forming on the sides, but continual mixing isn't necessary. Aim to get the mixture to at least a 145°F for food safety reasons, but reaching 150°F would make for a nice margin of error. If your egg whites are at room temperature, this won't take very long, maybe just a few minutes. Whites straight from the fridge will take longer.
9. When the mixture is sufficiently hot, remove from the heat and use the whisk attachment to whip on medium high speed until the mixture has doubled in volume and turned snowy white. Continue whipping until the meringue is cool. Use your hands to feel the bowl itself, rather than simply testing the temperature of the meringue. You want it to feel perfectly cool to the touch with no trace of warmth.

10. Replace whisk attachment with paddle attachment. Turn the mixer down to medium-low and begin adding in the butter, one chunk at a time. If you didn't let your meringue cool enough, this is when you'll really regret it. By the time you've added all the butter, you may need to scrape down the bowl to fully incorporate any butter or meringue that's stuck at the sides. At one point it will look like the buttercream has curdled, but just keep beating and it will come together. Add vanilla extract or paste.
11. Set aside 1 cup of buttercream for the plain dollops on top of the cake. Mix in the 3 ounces of finely crushed buttercream to the remaining frosting.
12. Prepare chocolate ganache: Melt chocolate and cream together on low heat. Whisk together until smooth. Remove from heat and set aside.
13. Assemble cake: Place one layer of cake on cardboard cake circle. Place on cake turntable if you have one. Spread a thin layer of cookie buttercream. Top with 3 tablespoons of chocolate ganache and spread with an offset spatula to even out. Top with second cake layer. Repeat with cookie buttercream and ganache. Top with final layer and cover entire cake in cookie buttercream.
14. Transfer chocolate ganache to piping bag and pipe close to the edge so that some will drip down the sides of the cake. Transfer plain white buttercream into a piping bag with a #9 star tip and pipe a border around the edge of the cake.
15. Remove cake from cake turntable and hold carefully, with your palm supporting the cardboard cake circle. Move over to the sink and carefully apply a 2-inch border of cookie crumbs to the bottom half of the cake, like a cookie crumb skirt.

Cake can be made and assembled one day ahead and stored in fridge. Bring to room temperature before serving.