

CHOCOLATE TORTE

Yield: 1 cake

A classic crowd-pleasing favorite, this torte fuses simple ingredients to produce a dessert chocolate lovers will adore, especially with its baked-in hints of coffee and vanilla.

1½ cups all-purpose flour
2½ cups plus 2 tablespoons sugar
1½ tablespoons baking soda
¼ tablespoon baking powder
5 ounces cocoa powder
3 large organic eggs, beaten
1½ cups coffee
1½ cups buttermilk
¾ cup vegetable oil
½ tablespoon vanilla

MAKE THE BLACKOUT CAKE

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. In a large bowl, sift the flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and cocoa powder. Add the eggs, coffee, buttermilk, oil, and vanilla and beat at medium speed until combined—the batter will be thin. Divide the batter evenly onto the baking sheets. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until a cake tester comes out clean.

Milk Chocolate Crèmeux

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons heavy cream
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons whole milk
4 tablespoons sugar
7 tablespoons egg yolks
10.5 ounces milk chocolate

MAKE THE CHOCOLATE CRÈMEUX

In a medium saucepan, add the heavy cream and milk, bring to a simmer, and then remove from the heat. In a small mixing bowl, add the egg yolks and sugar, and whisk to combine. Carefully pour in the hot cream, whisking to combine. Return the mixture to the saucepan and cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until the custard is slightly thickened and coats the back of the spoon.

Strain the custard through a sieve into a heat-proof bowl. Add the chocolate, let the mixture stand until melted, and then whisk vigorously until smooth. In a glass or ceramic dish, add the crèmeux. Press a sheet of plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the crèmeux and refrigerate until set, at least 6 hours or overnight.

Salted Caramel Ganache

7 ounces heavy cream
½ teaspoon sea salt
7 ounces sugar
7 ounces white chocolate

MAKE THE CARAMEL GANACHE

In a saucepan, add the cream and salt, and bring to a boil, scalding the liquid over medium-high heat. Keep hot. In another saucepan over medium-high heat, add the sugar. When the sugar begins to liquefy around the edges, use a wooden spoon or spatula to stir and break up any clumps. Once the sugar reaches a dark mahogany color, remove the pan from the heat. Slowly add in the heavy cream, stirring constantly. (Caution: There will be a large amount of steam and bubbling caramel when adding the cream.)

Once all the cream has been added, return the pan to medium heat and stir to melt any caramel lumps. In a separate heat-proof bowl, pour the hot caramel otop the white chocolate and whisk until the chocolate has melted and the mixture is a creamy texture. Let cool at room temperature and then refrigerate overnight.

Earl Grey Almond Milk Sauce

2 tablespoons sugar
1 cup almond milk
1 corn starch slurry
1 Earl Grey tea bag

MAKE THE EARL GREY SAUCE

In a heavy-bottomed pot, add the sugar and almond milk. Bring to a boil and add the corn starch slurry. Place the Earl Grey tea bag in the pot and steep for 15 minutes. Strain the liquid through a sieve into a separate container to remove any lumps. Remove the tea bag and discard. Let the milk sauce cool.

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CHOCOLATE TORTE *(cont'd)*

Candied Hazelnuts

1¼ cups hazelnuts

½ cup sugar

1½ tablespoons cocoa butter
(or substitute butter)

MAKE THE CANDIED HAZELNUTS

Preheat the oven to 275°F. Place the hazelnuts on a baking sheet, toast them, and then keep warm. In a heavy-bottomed pan over low heat, add ¼ cup of sugar. When the sugar has melted and just started to caramelize, sprinkle in the remaining ¼ cup—the sugar should develop an amber color. Add the warm hazelnuts and using a spatula, coat them in the sugar. Remove the pan from the heat to control the caramelization—if needed, place back on a low flame. Add the cocoa butter and stir. On a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, pour the mixture and ensure it spreads evenly. If desired, use the tip of a spatula to separate the nuts.

Coconut Whipped Ganache

2 cups coconut milk

1½ cups white chocolate

¼ cup light corn syrup

¾ cup cold heavy cream

1 teaspoon ground cardamom

MAKE THE COCONUT GANACHE

In a heavy-bottomed pot, heat the coconut milk and bring to a boil. In a medium mixing bowl, add the white chocolate and pour the hot coconut milk over it. Wait 3 minutes and then blend using an immersion blend. (The white chocolate and hot coconut milk can also be blended in a food processor.) Slowly pour in the cold heavy cream and add the cardamom. Using a whisk, whip until all the cream is incorporated and until it reaches a creamy texture. Keep cool until ready to serve.

Hazelnut Crèmeux

4 gold gelatin sheets
¾ cup milk
1¾ cups heavy cream
3 egg yolks
½ cup sugar
¾ overflowing cup gianduja chocolate or Nutella

MAKE THE HAZELNUT CRÉMEUX

In a bowl of ice water, hydrate the gelatin sheets. In a heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, add the milk and heavy cream and bring to a boil. In a medium mixing bowl, hand whisk the yolks and sugar together for 2 minutes, then let rest for a few minutes. Carefully pour ¼ cup of the hot milk into the yolk mixture and continue to whisk. Add another ¼ cup of the hot milk and continue to whisk. At this point, the egg mixture should be tempered and warm. Add the tempered egg mixture back into the pot of hot simmering milk. Continue whisking slowly and cook until it thickens (when it reaches roughly 170°F).

In a medium mixing bowl, add the chocolate and softened gelatin. Pour the hot thickened sauce overtop the chocolate. Wait 3 minutes and then blend using an immersion blender. (The chocolate and hot milk can also be blended in a food processor.) Reserve until needed.

ASSEMBLE THE TORTE

This is an eight-layer half sheet cake with alternating fillings of milk chocolate crèmeux and salted caramel ganache. (If you baked 4 full sheets, cut each sheet cake in half to get 8 total.) On a half sheet of blackout cake, spread a thin layer of milk chocolate crèmeux, evenly covering the cake. Layer another half sheet of cake. Spread a thin layer of salted caramel ganache, evenly covering the cake. Continue until all of the half sheets of cake are used and then chill in the refrigerator.

GARNISH & SERVE

Add a bit of the Earl Grey almond milk sauce to the bottom of the plates. Garnish with the candied hazelnuts. Decorate the top of the torte with the coconut whipped ganache and the hazelnut crèmeux.