

Opera Cake

LOVE P&O rating - Not for the faint-hearted. Need to be head-over-heels

Ingredients

Almond sponge cake

6 large egg whites, room temperature
20 grams granulated sugar
300 grams ground blanched almonds
400 grams confectioners' sugar, sifted
6 large eggs
75 grams all-purpose flour
20 grams butter, melted and cooled

Espresso syrup

½ cup water
1/3 cup sugar
3 tablespoons strong espresso

Coffee buttercream

2 tablespoons strong espresso
2 tablespoons boiling water
200 grams sugar
20 ml water
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 egg
1 egg yolk
80 grams butter, at room temperature

Dark chocolate ganache

200 grams bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
125 ml whole milk
60 ml heavy cream
20 grams butter, at room temperature

Chocolate glaze

150 grams bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
125 grams butter

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Method

To make the almond sponge cake

1. Preheat the oven to 190C. Line two 15-inch by 12-inch pans with parchment paper and brush the surface of the paper with butter. Set them aside for a moment.
2. Using an electric beater, beat the egg white on high until they become foamy and start to expand.
3. Sprinkle in the sugar, one teaspoon at a time, until all of it is incorporated into the egg whites. Continue beating the meringue until it is glossy and holds stiff peaks.
4. In a separate bowl, beat the ground almonds, confectioners' sugar, and whole eggs on medium just until the mixture becomes light and foamy.
5. Gently stir the flour into the almond batter.
6. Gently stir 1/4 of the almond batter into the whipped egg whites.
7. Fold the remainder of the almond batter and the melted, cooled butter into the egg whites.
8. Divide the sponge cake batter between the two prepared pans and bake the cakes for 5 minutes, until the surfaces spring back from a light touch.
9. Cover the top surface of each cake with a fresh piece of parchment and carefully invert them onto a clean surface.
10. Slowly peel back the old parchment from the cakes and allow them to rest loosely over the cakes to prevent them from drying out.

To make the espresso syrup

1. In a small saucepan, set over medium heat, bring 1/2 cup water, 1/3 cup granulated sugar, and 3 tablespoons espresso to a boil.
2. Allow the mixture to cool for 5 minutes.
3. Set it aside to brush onto the cake later.

To make the coffee buttercream

1. Stir together the espresso and boiling water and set the mixture aside for a moment. In a medium saucepan, set over medium heat, bring 1 cup sugar, 3 tablespoons water, and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract to a boil.
2. Continue cooking it until it reaches 120C on a candy thermometer.
3. Remove the sugar syrup from the heat and allow it to cool slightly.
4. In a separate bowl, beat the egg and egg yolk until they begin to get fluffy.
5. Continue to beat the mixture and add the hot sugar syrup to the bowl in a smooth, steady, slow stream.
6. Once the syrup is incorporated, mix in the reserved coffee mixture.
7. Continuing to beat on medium-high, add the butter, one tablespoon at a time, until it is fully incorporated into the buttercream.
8. The coffee buttercream is completely once it turns thick and fluffy.

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Method Cont.

To make the ganache

1. In a medium saucepan, set over medium heat, bring the milk and cream to a boil.
2. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the chocolate.
3. Continue stirring the chocolate for 2 minutes, to insure a completely smooth texture.
4. Stir in the butter and continue stirring the ganache for 90 seconds.

To assemble the cake

1. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Cut one 10-inch by 10-inch square out of each layer of cake and place it on the baking sheet.
3. Brush the cake with the espresso syrup. Carefully spread 3/4 of the coffee buttercream over the surface of the cake.
4. Place the two spare rectangles of cake over the buttercream, and then brush them with espresso syrup.
5. Spread the ganache over the cake in a smooth layer.
6. Place the last layer of cake over the ganache, brush with espresso syrup, and then spread it with a thin layer of the coffee buttercream.
7. Chill the cake in the refrigerator for 1 hour before glazing it.

To glaze the cake

1. Clarify the butter by boiling it, skimming off, and discarding the solids.
2. Melt the chocolate in a double boiler and stir in the clarified butter until the glaze is smooth.
3. Pour the chocolate glaze over the cake and allow it to set in the refrigerator before serving