



A chocolate hero

► In an exclusive *Friday* interview, master chocolatier Eric Lanlard talks to Pratyush Sarup about his plans to satisfy the UAE's sweet tooth

Eric Lanlard is on a high; the kind of ecstasy only artisan 80 per cent dark chocolate can give. He has been busy finalising his new book, *Chocolat*, and those sneaky chef's treats have been rushing through his veins since he dreamt it up.

"I am a chocolatier," he says. "I love chocolate's versatility and its richness and luxuriousness. Like cheese, its make-up and flavour can change depending on the climate and the conditions of where it's grown. I want people to understand and appreciate quality chocolate, particularly as a baking ingredient. Chocolate is about romance, love and feeling special. I want my readers to feel the love and spread it from their kitchen."

Eric points to scientific studies linking chocolate's feel-good effect to phenylethylamine. "It is that chemical that makes the brain release B endorphin, a hormone that gives a pleasurable effect very similar to being in love."

And 44-year-old Eric's love story with chocolate is still going strong. The boy from Brittany, France, whose first experiment with baking at the age of six went horribly wrong ("starting with eclairs wasn't the best choice!"), is today the go-to pâtissier for the world's A-list.

Everyone from the Duchess of Cambridge to the President of France has enlisted his talent to anoint their special occasions with something sweet. Over the years, he's made cakes for the late Queen Mother decorated with her favourite corgis in tiaras, personally airlifted Madonna's croque-en-bouche for her wedding to Guy Ritchie and made fans out of Elton John and Elizabeth Hurley.

For a career speckled with best-selling cookbooks and highly rated TV shows (including *Baking Mad*, currently airing on BBC Lifestyle), Eric is particularly proud of his boutique Cake Boy, which opened in London six years ago.

"Up until then we had been a wholesale business providing all of the desserts and patisserie for Fortnum & Mason, as well as the bespoke wedding and celebration cake business. The timing felt right to try something new.

"As early as I can remember I had always dreamed about owning my own patisserie. Cake Boy was that dream," he says. "As a child in France I always loved the glamour of the patisserie shops – the finishing details, the ribbons, the individual



decorations, the packaging – for me it looked stunning. It was like walking into a fabulous jewellers. With Cake Boy I wanted that glamorous feel with a laid-back attitude – somewhere for people to enjoy delicious cake that looked every bit as amazing as it tasted. I also wanted to create a cookery school."

'I fell in love with the UAE'

Six years on, Eric is still the first to arrive at Cake Boy at 5am to start work – teaching classes and interacting with his customers, who come from all over the world. But he likes to travel, too. He first came to the UAE as a guest of the Jumeriah brand for the opening of the Burj Al Arab ten years ago.

"I fell in love with the UAE immediately. I loved the food, the people, the traditions and the beautiful landscape," he says. "You could see that the UAE was an up-and-coming international hub, but I was impressed by its efforts to retain its culture, customs and values."

Many memorable trips later, his relationship with the region took an interesting turn when the Jumeirah Carlton Tower hotel, London, invited him to create a series of afternoon teas for its Chinoiserie lounge.

"I was so pleased to be asked – it was an opportunity for me to be creative and give this long-celebrated English tradition a modern makeover," he says.

After the success of his first menu, Eric recently launched the Fusion afternoon tea inspired by his travels.

The menu begins with a selection of savoury delights including an onion brioche with crispy Peking duck, cucumber and spring onion; a pumpernickel roulade with

marinated lemongrass-flavoured salmon; and a roast beef wrap.

For the sweet tooth, Eric created a delicious array of cakes, pastries and desserts including a strawberry cone pop topped with strawberry cheesecake popcorn and dark chocolate cannelloni filled with tarte Tatin mousse.

Can you keep a secret?

Given Eric's love of the UAE, it comes as no surprise that he plans to open the first international outpost of Cake Boy here.

"It's been a little secret – a difficult one to keep," he laughs. "Hopefully very soon you'll be able to experience Cake Boy in the Middle East. We are working with dedicated and passionate partners to find the right location and space to open our first boutique in the UAE."

Eric is very passionate about his brand and the UAE boutique will not be just another franchise. "It will be like our London store, a cake emporium with a café, a retail shop and a baking school – where I will teach just like I do in London.

"I'm really excited about it and, of course, having the opportunity to spend more time in the UAE. But that's all I can say at this moment."

For Eric, whose love for baking was inspired by his parents' love for cooking and entertaining, his new book, which will be published in May, is all about adding his

own glamorous twist to regional classics. "I really enjoyed devising the recipes for the book – it gave me an opportunity to think about a wide range of ideas," he says.

Many have written on the subject, but Eric promises to demystify chocolate, hoping to make it an everyday cooking ingredient.

Chocolat has already received critical praise in the publishing inner circles. "I wanted to share my passion and obsession with this incredible ingredient," he says. "I wanted to give people something a bit more than the regular standard chocolate cookbooks, which are often dark and a bit serious, even when they are dealing with such a feel-good subject. My book is fresh, light and modern, and I hope will motivate and encourage people to be more adventurous with chocolate."



i INSIDE INFO
Chocolat will be published in May 2013



Chocolate kouglof (serves 8-10)

Prep time: 35 mins, plus soaking, chilling overnight, rising and cooling
Cooking time: 50-55 mins

Ingredients

- 75g **golden sultanas**
- 100ml **apple juice**
- 20g **dried yeast**
- 100g **golden caster sugar**
- 100ml **milk**, lukewarm
- 500g **plain flour**, plus extra for dusting
- 2 pinches **salt**
- 3 **eggs**
- 200g **unsalted butter**, cubed, plus extra for greasing
- 75g **almonds**, chopped
- 2 tbsp **mixed peel**
- 100g **dark chocolate chips**
- For glaze
- 150g **dark chocolate**, roughly chopped
- 50g **unsalted butter**
- 2 tbsp **icing sugar**

Method:

1. Put sultanas and apple juice into a bowl and leave to soak overnight at room temperature. The following day, put yeast, sugar and milk in a separate bowl and mix gently to dissolve. Leave to rest for 10 minutes.
2. Sift flour and salt into bowl of a freestanding mixer fitted with a dough hook. Add eggs and yeast mixture and mix for 10 minutes or until the dough comes away from the sides of bowl. Add butter a little at a time until well incorporated.
3. Add remaining ingredients, including soaked sultanas, and mix for a further 5 minutes.
4. Grease and flour a 2-litre kouglof mould. Push dough into it, cover with cling film and refrigerate overnight. The following day, remove mould from refrigerator and leave dough to prove for 4-5 hours.
5. Preheat oven to 170°C. Remove cling film and bake kouglof for 45-50 minutes or until golden. Turn out of mould on to a cooling rack and leave to cool completely.
6. To make glaze, melt chocolate and butter together in a heatproof bowl over a pan of barely simmering water, making sure surface of water does not touch bowl. When melted, fold in sugar. Using a pastry brush, cover cake with glaze and leave to set. Traditionally, this cake is served with beaten crème fraîche.



Iced berries with white chocolate sauce (serves 6)

Prep time: 10 mins, plus chilling Cooking time: 5 mins

Ingredients

- 500g **mixed frozen berries**
- For sauce
- 150ml **double cream**
- 150g **white chocolate**, roughly chopped
- 1 tsp **vanilla extract**

Method:

1. Put frozen berries into refrigerator 1 hour before serving so they soften but are still icy.
2. To make sauce, put cream, chocolate and vanilla into a small pan and heat gently, stirring continuously until the chocolate has melted. Leave to cool for 2 minutes.
3. Divide berries into 6 shallow bowls, pour hot sauce over and serve immediately.

Tip: Use a mixture of blackberries, blueberries, raspberries and redcurrants for a perfect summer dessert.

Mini red velvet cakes with white chocolate frosting (serves 6)

Prep time: 40 mins, plus cooling
Cooking time: 40 mins

Ingredients

- butter**, for greasing
- 225g **golden caster sugar**
- 2 **eggs**
- 275ml **vegetable oil**
- 125ml **buttermilk**
- 1 tbsp **red food colouring**
- 1 tsp **vanilla extract**
- 175g **plain flour**
- 15g **cocoa powder**
- 1/2 tsp **baking powder**
- 1/2 tsp **table salt**
- 2 tsp **white vinegar**
- icing sugar**, for dusting
- For frosting
- 75g **white chocolate**, roughly chopped
- 175g **unsalted butter**, softened
- 375g **icing sugar**
- 2 tbsp **milk**

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease and line with baking paper 7 cooking rings that are 7cm in diameter and 4cm deep, and place on a baking tray lined with baking paper.
2. In a large bowl, whisk sugar and eggs together using an electric hand whisk until pale and fluffy. On slow speed, add oil a little at a time until it has all been incorporated.
3. Beat in buttermilk, food colouring and vanilla. Sift flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt together, then fold in, followed by vinegar.
4. Divide mixture between cake rings, filling them three-quarters full. Bake in oven for 35 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centres comes out clean.
5. Leave to cool in rings for 5 minutes, then remove cakes from rings on to a cooling rack to cool completely.
6. To make the frosting, melt chocolate in a heatproof bowl

over a pan of barely simmering water, making sure the surface of the water doesn't touch bowl. Leave to cool.

7. Beat butter and half the icing sugar together until smooth, then add remaining icing sugar a little at a time, beating until smooth. Add milk and cooled chocolate and beat for a further 2 minutes.
8. To assemble, slice a mini cake into 3 layers. Spread a thin layer of frosting on base layer, then sandwich middle layer on top.
9. Spread a little more frosting on middle layer, then add top layer. Repeat with 5 mini cakes so you have 6 cakes in total, leaving one spare. Spoon remaining frosting into a piping bag fitted with a plain piping nozzle, then pipe all over cakes until completely covered. Crumble remaining mini cake over tops of piped cakes. Serve dusted with icing sugar.





White chocolate and passion fruit cheesecake (serves 6)

Prep time: 30 minutes, plus cooling and chilling overnight
Cooking time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Ingredients

- 50g **unsalted butter**, melted, plus extra for greasing
- 100g **digestive biscuits**, crushed
- 125g **white chocolate**, chopped
- 125ml **single cream**
- 225g **cream cheese**, softened
- 225g **mascarpone cheese**
- 4 tbsp **golden caster sugar**
- 2 tsp **vanilla extract**
- 3 **eggs**, separated
- 125ml **passion fruit pulp**, sieved to remove pips
- passion fruit**, to decorate

Method:

1. For the base, preheat oven to 180°C. Grease a 20cm springform cake tin. Mix melted butter and crushed biscuits in a bowl. Tip mixture into prepared tin and press down with back of a spoon. Bake in oven for 10 minutes or until golden. Leave to cool.
2. Put chocolate into a heatproof bowl. Heat cream in a small pan, then pour on to chocolate and stir until smooth.
3. In a separate bowl, beat cream cheese and mascarpone together until smooth. Add sugar, vanilla and egg yolks. Stir in white chocolate mixture and passion fruit pulp.
4. In a large, clean, dry bowl, whisk egg whites to soft peaks. Fold a large spoonful of egg whites into batter vigorously, then gently fold in remaining whites until smooth.
5. Reduce oven temperature to 150°C. Spoon mixture on to cooled base and bake for 50–60 minutes or until set but with a slight wobble in centre. Turn off oven and leave cheesecake to cool inside for 2 hours, with the door ajar. Chill in refrigerator overnight.
6. Remove from tin and decorate with fresh passion fruit.