

Happy birthday!

Love, Eric

When it came to creating a showstopping cake to mark our 10th birthday, we knew who to call: cake boy Eric Lanlard. He came up trumps with this two-tiered chocolate creation



MEET THE MAN BEHIND THE CAKE
 He's the chocolate-mad cake artiste renowned for his creative take on classic patisserie, and the owner of Cake Boy, a café and cookery school in south London. Eric is a TV regular and has written a pile of books, the most recent of which is titled (appropriately) *Chocolat* (£18.99; Mitchell Beazley).

*Chocolate celebration layer cake

SERVES 20-24. TAKES 1 HOUR 15 MINUTES TO MAKE, 1 HOUR 10 MINUTES TO COOK

delicious. KNOW-HOW

Turning the cakes upside-down to cool in step 3 will help flatten the tops. If they're still domed once cool, even them out by slicing the tops with a long serrated knife.

To cut the sponges into 3 even layers, score 2 evenly spaced lines around each one with the tip of a sharp knife. Using the lines as a guide, cut through the sponges with a long serrated knife.

DELICIOUS. TIP For a professional-looking result, turn the sponges upside-down to decorate, so the sharp edges of the base are on top. **FREEZE** ...the cooked, un-iced, uncut sponges, wrapped well in cling film, for up to one month.

350g unsalted butter, softened, plus extra for greasing
 350g golden caster sugar
 50ml black treacle
 8 large free-range eggs, lightly beaten
 50g dark chocolate (70 per cent cocoa solids), melted
 ✪ 1 tbsp chocolate extract (we like Nielsen-Massey)
 2 tsp vanilla bean paste or extract
 2 tsp coffee extract (we like Nielsen-Massey)
 300g self-raising flour
 50g cocoa powder
 2 tsp baking powder
 50g ground almonds
 Blackberries to decorate (optional)

FOR THE BUTTER ICING
 125g unsalted butter, softened
 200g icing sugar, sifted
 1 tsp vanilla bean paste or extract
 2 tsp chocolate extract
 30g dark chocolate (70 per cent cocoa solids), melted
 2 tbsp single cream

FOR THE GANACHE
 250g single cream
 2 tsp vanilla bean paste or extract
 ✪ 2 tsp glucose syrup (from the baking aisle of large supermarkets)
 250g dark chocolate (70 per cent cocoa solids), melted
 25g unsalted butter, softened

1. Preheat the oven to 170°C/fan 150°C/gas 3½. Grease and line 2 x deep round cake tins (one 15cm, the other 20cm) with baking paper.
2. In a large bowl, cream together the 350g butter and the golden caster sugar using an electric hand mixer until light and fluffy. Beat in the treacle, then add the eggs, a little at a time, with the mixer on a slow speed. Fold in the 50g melted chocolate, 1 tbsp chocolate extract, 2 tsp vanilla bean paste/extract and the coffee extract. Sift in the flour, cocoa powder and baking powder, then fold in the ground almonds. You should have a smooth, glossy cake batter. Pour the mixture into the prepared cake tins so each one is three-quarters full. Bake the small sponge for 55 minutes and the large one for 1 hour 10 minutes. Push a skewer into the middle of each to check they're done (the skewer should come out clean).

3. Remove the sponges from the oven and cool in their tins for 10 minutes, then turn out onto wire racks to cool completely (see Know-how).

4. To make the butter icing, use an electric hand mixer to cream the 125g butter with the icing sugar in a mixing bowl until soft and light. Add the 1 tsp vanilla bean paste/extract, 2 tsp chocolate extract, 30g melted chocolate and 2 tbsp cream. Beat until smooth and fluffy, taking care not to over-beat as it may split.

5. Carefully slice each cooled sponge into 3 layers (see Know-how). Put the top layer of the large sponge cut-side up on a serving plate, then spread with butter icing (see tip). Top with the second large sponge layer and spread with more icing. Repeat with the remaining sponge layers, stacking the small cake layers on top. Set aside in a cool place.

6. For the ganache, gently warm the cream in a small pan. Add the 2 tsp vanilla bean paste/extract and the glucose syrup, then fold in the 250g melted chocolate, gently stirring until the mixture is smooth. Stir in the 25g butter, then set aside for a few minutes, stirring occasionally, until it has a spreadable consistency. Spread all over the cake, using a palette knife to smooth the surface. Decorate with blackberries and candles, if you like, then serve.

PER SERVING (BASED ON 24)
 442kcal, 27.7g fat (16g saturated), 6g protein, 42.5g carbs (33.5g sugars), 0.4g salt, 1.3g fibre

✪ For more ways to use chocolate extract and glucose syrup, see Loose Ends, p91

PHOTOGRAPH: LAURA EDWARDS. FOOD STYLING: LIZZIE KAMENETZKY. STYLING: POLLY WEBB-WILSON



“This cake is elegant, glamorous and celebratory – a fitting tribute to 10 years of delicious. magazine – yet straightforward to make. For any occasion that calls for a real celebration, this is the recipe you need. Happy baking... and here's to 10 more inspiring years!”