

Best ever...

chocolate Christmas cake



Recipe by Eric Lanlard

"I've created this alternative Christmas cake using all my favourite festive flavours and added dark chocolate to give it a naughty spin. The marzipan and ganache topping makes it extra indulgent, though it's also delicious without icing and topped instead with whole nuts or glacé fruits. The cake will keep without icing for a week. Once iced, it should be eaten within four days."

Serves 16

Prepare 1 hour, plus overnight soaking, cooling, chilling and setting

Cook 1 hour 30 minutes

- 200g raisins
- 100ml orange liqueur, such as Grand Marnier, plus 1 tbsp extra for drizzling
- 200g unsalted butter, softened, plus extra for greasing
- 150g dark chocolate
- 100g walnut halves
- 200g dark brown muscovado sugar
- 4 eggs

- 200g plain flour
- 1 tsp ground mixed spice
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 lemon, juice
- 200g sultanas
- 100g mixed peel
- 100g glacé cherries
- 100g chopped roasted hazelnuts

ICING AND DECORATION

- 150g unsalted butter
- 450g dark chocolate
- 1 tsp orange liqueur
- 150g milk chocolate
- 1 pot pure gold leaf
- 500g golden marzipan



- 1 Put the raisins in a bowl and pour over the orange liqueur. Cover the bowl with clingfilm and leave to soak overnight.
- 2 The next day, preheat the oven to 150°C, gas mark 2. Grease a 22cm springform cake tin and line with baking parchment. Melt the dark chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of gently simmering water; set aside. Meanwhile, dry-toast the walnut halves in a frying pan for 2-3 minutes until golden; set aside.
- 3 Using handheld electric beaters, or in a freestanding mixer, cream together the butter and sugar in a large bowl. Beat in the eggs one at a time, then beat in the melted chocolate. Fold through the flour and spices, then stir in the soaked raisins, toasted walnut halves, lemon juice, sultanas, mixed peel, cherries and hazelnuts until you have a smooth batter.
- 4 Tip the mixture into the prepared tin; bake for about 1 hour 30 minutes until a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean. Set on a wire rack to cool, then use a skewer to poke in holes all over and drizzle over 1 tbsp orange liqueur.
- 5 To decorate, start by making the ganache. Melt the butter and 300g dark chocolate together in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of gently simmering water. When melted, stir in the 1 tsp orange liqueur, remove from the heat and leave to cool for 2 hours, until you have a spreadable consistency.
- 6 Meanwhile, make the chocolate scrolls. Melt the milk chocolate and remaining dark chocolate separately, either in heatproof bowls set over pans of gently simmering water or in the microwave. Pour the dark chocolate over the back of a flat, non-stick baking tray, then repeat with the milk chocolate over another tray. Leave the trays at room temperature until just firm (your thumb should barely leave an imprint on the chocolate).
- 7 To make the chocolate scrolls, press a palette knife into the top of the chocolate at a 45° angle and carefully pull it towards you. This should scrape up a thin layer, which will curl as you go. Place the scrolls on a piece of baking parchment and carefully brush with a little gold leaf.
- 8 Finally, assemble the cake. Use a little marzipan to plug any large holes in the cake or any spaces around the edge. Dust a work surface with icing sugar and roll out the marzipan to 0.5cm thickness, then lay it over the cake and smooth down the edges. Trim any excess from the sides and discard.
- 9 Cover with the ganache and allow to set for 30 minutes, then gently pile up the chocolate curls in the middle.

Per serving 837kcal/9.9g protein/94.8g carbs/83.7g sugars/46.5g fat/22.3g saturated fat/2.9g fibre/0.2g salt

Eric Lanlard is a pastry chef, TV presenter and author of 'Tart It Up! Sweet and Savoury Tarts and Pies' (Mitchell Beazley; £18.99)



Decorate the cake with nuts and glacé fruits for a simpler, but just as stylish finish