

Chocolate Simnel Cake

From the Good Food Magazine

Serves 10-12

Preparation time 30 mins to 1 hour Cooking time 30 mins to 1 hour

Ingredients

100g/4oz dark chocolate, broken in pieces
100g/4oz caster sugar
100g/4oz softened butter, plus extra
3 eggs, separated
50g/2oz ground almonds
50g/2oz self-raising flour
1 tsp baking powder
4 tbsp apricot jam

For the Almond Paste or Marzipan:

50g/2oz caster sugar
100g/4oz ground almonds
50g/2oz golden icing sugar
1-2 drops of almond extract
1 egg yolk or 1/2 egg, lightly beaten

For the Icing:

175g/6oz dark chocolate, broken in pieces
142ml carton double cream

For the Decoration:

1 large orange
100g/4oz white chocolate
25g/1oz dark chocolate

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4/fan oven 160C. Butter an 18cm/7in deep round cake tin; line the base. Melt the chocolate in a bowl over a pan of simmering water.
2. Beat the sugar and butter until light and fluffy. Beat in the yolks, one at a time. Stir in the almonds and chocolate.
3. Whisk the egg whites in a bowl until stiff peaks form (see tip). Fold a quarter of the egg white into the chocolate mixture, then sift in a quarter of the flour and baking powder. Repeat three more times until the egg white and flour is evenly mixed in.
4. Pour the mixture into the tin. Bake for 35-40 minutes until risen and firm. Cool for five minutes, turn out on to a wire rack, peel off the paper and cool completely.
5. Make the almond paste: put the caster sugar and almonds in a bowl and sift in the icing sugar. Mix well, add the extract and egg; mix to form a stiff paste. Knead briefly on a surface dusted with icing sugar, then cut off a quarter of the paste and divide into 12. Return one

piece to the main lump of paste and shape the other 11 into balls. Leave on a plate to dry slightly. Roll out the remaining paste to the size of the cake, trimming to a neat round using the tin as a template.

6. Warm the jam and two tbsps of water in a pan, then press through a sieve into a bowl. Split the cake in half, putting one on a serving plate. Brush with jam. Cover with the paste round and brush with jam. Top with the other cake half. Brush the cake top and sides with jam.

7. Make the icing: put the chocolate and cream in a bowl. Microwave on Medium for one to two minutes to melt the chocolate; stir. Cool, then chill for 40 minutes, stirring occasionally, until thick enough to spread. Spread over the cake top and sides with a palette knife. Leave to set.

8. Wedge the orange into a tumbler. Melt the white chocolate in a bowl, as before. Spear a ball of paste with a cocktail stick and dip into the chocolate, turning it to coat, then hold it over the bowl for a few seconds until a point forms. Flip the ball and stick into the orange.

Repeat with the remaining balls; leave to set.

9. Melt the dark chocolate. Using the tip of a tsp, drizzle lines back and forth over the chocolate balls. Leave to set. Re-melt a little leftover chocolate and use to attach the balls to the cake.

What Can Go Wrong?

How you whisk egg whites and fold them into the cake are crucial to the success of the cake. When whites are first whisked they look glossy, then take on a drier look and become stiffer (this is the stage you want). Fold a quarter of the whites into the cake mixture to slacken it; when the rest is added more air is preserved.

To Freeze:

This cake freezes beautifully. Open freeze the decorated cake on a flat plate until firm. Wrap in freezer foil or pack into a rigid container.

Freeze

for up to three months.