

SUNDAY CHOCOLATE CAKE

Preparation time: 30 minutes
Baking time: 25 minutes
Use: 2 x 20cm (8in) cake tins

- 200g (7oz) plain flour
- 4 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 200ml (7fl oz) milk
- 100g (3½ oz) unsalted butter, softened
- 175g (6oz) caster sugar
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

SYRUP

- 4 tablespoons apricot jam
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon kirsch

BUTTER CREAM FILLING

- 100g (3½ oz) dark chocolate, minimum 60% cocoa solids
- 50g (2oz) unsalted butter
- 100g (3½ oz) icing sugar
- 1 large egg yolk

ICING

- 50g (2oz) dark chocolate, minimum 60% cocoa solids
- 25g (1oz) unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon rum

Preheat the oven to 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5. Butter and flour the cake tins.

Sift together the flour, cocoa, baking powder and bicarbonate of soda three times.

Stir the lemon juice into the milk to curdle it.

In a large bowl cream together the softened butter and sugar until fluffy. Beat in some of the egg, then some of the flour mixture, then some of the milk and lemon juice. Continue in this way, beating vigorously between each addition, until the batter is fairly stiff (don't add all the milk if it seems to be getting too liquid). Finally add the vanilla extract.

Divide the batter between the tins and bake for 20–25 minutes, until springy to the touch. Leave the cakes in their tins for a few minutes and then turn them out to cool on to a wire rack, so that the top crust is on the bottom. Prick the bases gently all over.

To make the syrup, simmer the jam, lemon juice and kirsch and pour it evenly over the cooled cakes.

For the Butter Cream Filling, melt the chocolate in a heatproof bowl suspended over a saucepan of barely simmering water and leave to cool until warm to touch while you cream together the butter and icing sugar. Beat in the egg yolk, then the chocolate, spread it on to the surfaces and sandwich the cakes together.

To make the icing, melt the chocolate as above, beat in the butter, then the rum and continue to beat until glossy. Leave to cool slightly before pouring over the top of the cake. Leave to set.



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