



TRIUMPHANT CHOCOLATE TRUFFLE CAKE

A celebration of all things chocolate – a rich, decadent sponge, with a silky buttercream filling and a heavenly chocolate Swiss meringue. Elegant Rococo praline eggs and truffles are a fabulous, indulgent finishing touch, sure to satisfy any sweet tooth and impress as a tempting table centrepiece at your next celebration or gourmet gathering.

Prep time 40 minutes | Cook time 30 minutes | Serves 12

For the truffles

150g good quality dark chocolate, finely chopped
150ml double cream
10g unsalted butter
A pinch of sea salt
2 tablespoons cocoa powder
2 tablespoons chopped nuts
1 sheet of gold leaf

For the sponge

Butter or oil, for greasing
300g plain flour
80g cocoa powder
1 tablespoon espresso powder
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
150g caster sugar
150g light soft brown sugar
A pinch of salt
240ml vegetable oil or sunflower oil

150g natural yoghurt
150ml milk
1 teaspoon lemon juice or white vinegar
2 Clarence Court Braddock White eggs

For the chocolate Swiss meringue buttercream

100g milk chocolate, melted and cooled
100g dark chocolate, melted and cooled
150g caster sugar
140g Clarence Court hen egg whites (approximately 5 – 6 medium eggs' worth)
A pinch of salt
300g unsalted butter, diced and softened
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
5 tablespoons cherry jam, heated a little, to a spreadable consistency.



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For this recipe, you will need 3 x 20cm loose base sandwich tins.

Begin by making the truffles. Place 150g dark chocolate in a large mixing bowl, then place the cream and 10g unsalted butter in a small saucepan on a low heat, allowing the butter to melt and the cream to bubble and steam a little.

Pour the warm liquid over the chocolate and add a small pinch of salt, then stir well to achieve a smooth, glossy mixture. If the mixture splits, add a splash of milk whilst whisking, until it becomes smooth and glossy again.

Transfer to a smaller bowl or loaf tin, cover, and place in the fridge for 4 hours or overnight.

When you're ready to roll, use a melon baller or teaspoon to scoop out little balls and place onto a tray lined with baking paper, repeating until all the chocolate truffle mixture is used.

Place two tablespoons of cocoa powder and the chopped nuts on to plates, then add the truffles to the plate and gently shake them around, until coated. Use a small paint brush to add a little gold leaf to some of the cocoa powder coated truffles. Keep chilled in an airtight container in the fridge, until ready to decorate the cake.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C (fan) then grease and line the bases of 3 x 20cm loose base sandwich tins.

Place the 300g plain flour, the remaining cocoa powder, espresso powder, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda, 150g caster sugar and 150g light soft brown sugar, along with a pinch of salt, into a large mixing bowl and mix until well combined.

Add the oil, yoghurt, milk and lemon juice to a measuring jug, stir to combine, then crack in the duck eggs and whisk well.

Make a well in the centre of the dry mix and stir in the liquid until just combined. Divide the mix between the lined cake tins and bake in the oven for around 25 minutes. Insert a skewer to check the sponges are cooked. If any mix remains on the skewer, return the sponges to the oven for a further 5 minutes.

When ready, take the tins out of the oven and place on a cooling rack for around 20 minutes, then carefully turn them out and allow to cool completely.

To make the Swiss meringue buttercream, add both the dark and milk chocolate to a heat proof bowl over a simmering pan of water, melt them and remove from the heat, then place aside to cool.

Place the 150g caster sugar, egg whites and salt in a large heat proof bowl over a pan of simmering water. Place a sugar thermometer in the bowl as you stir with a spoon. Aim for a temperature of 72°C and for the sugar to dissolve.

Place the liquid into a clean stand mixer bowl and use the whisk attachment to beat on medium, until thick, glossy and cool.

Once completely cool, keep the whisk running and add 2 cubes of butter at a time. Keep beating until all the butter is incorporated. It will appear curdled initially but will come back together to form a smooth and glossy mix.

Whisk on high for a few more minutes, then add the cooled chocolate along with the vanilla extract and whisk until fully combined. Transfer to a bowl, cover and leave to one side until ready. Meanwhile heat the jam in the microwave for around 10 seconds, until it begins to melt and is a spreadable consistency.



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To build the cake, place a little Swiss meringue buttercream on a serving plate or board. Place the first sponge on top and lather with a layer of cherry jam, along with buttercream filling.

Place the second sponge on top and coat with another layer of jam and buttercream. Top with the final sponge, then coat the top and sides of the cake with a thin, crumb coat of meringue buttercream and place in the fridge to chill. Cover with another coat of meringue buttercream, then arrange your homemade truffles, Rococo truffles and chocolate eggs into a fabulous display on top and serve.



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