

Reine de Saba avec Glaçage au Chocolat (Chocolate and Almond Cake with Chocolate Icing)

From *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (Canada, UK),
by Julia Child, Simone Beck & Louisette Bertholle.

This extremely good chocolate cake is baked so that its center remains slightly underdone; overcooked, the cake loses its special creamy quality. It is covered with a chocolate-butter icing, and decorated with almonds. Because of its creamy center it needs no filling. It can be made by starting out with a beating of egg yolks and sugar, then proceeding with the rest of the ingredients. But because the chocolate and the almonds make a batter so stiff it is difficult to fold in the egg whites, we have chosen another method, that of creaming together the butter and sugar, and then incorporating the remaining items.

Ingredients:

For the Cake:

4 ounces or squares semisweet chocolate melted with 2 Tb rum or coffee
1/4 lb. or 1 stick softened butter
2/3 cup granulated sugar
3 egg yolks
3 egg whites
Pinch of salt
1 Tb granulated sugar
2/3 cup pulverized almonds (pulverize the almonds in a food processor with 2 Tb sugar)
1/4 tsp almond extract
1/2 cup cake flour (scooped and leveled) turned into a sifter

For the Icing:

2 ounces (2 squares) semisweet baking chocolate
2 Tb rum or coffee
5 to 6 Tb unsalted butter

Equipment:

A round cake pan 8 inches in diameter and 1-1/2 inches deep
A 3-quart mixing bowl
A wooden spoon or an electric beater
A rubber spatula
A cake rack
A small covered pan
A larger pan of almost simmering water

A wooden spoon
A bowl with a tray of ice cubes and water to cover them
A small flexible-blade metal spatula or a table knife

Instructions:

For the Cake:

Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).

Butter and flour the cake pan. Set the chocolate and rum or coffee in a small pan, cover, and place (off heat) in a larger pan of almost simmering water; let melt while you proceed with the recipe. Measure out the rest of the ingredients. Cream the butter and sugar together for several minutes until they form a pale yellow, fluffy mixture.

Beat in the egg yolks until well blended.

Beat the egg whites and salt in a separate bowl until soft peaks are formed; sprinkle on the sugar and beat until stiff peaks are formed.

With a rubber spatula, blend the melted chocolate into the butter and sugar mixture, then stir in almonds, and almond extract. Immediately stir one fourth of the beaten egg whites to lighten the batter. Delicately fold in a third of the remaining whites and when partially blended, sift on one third of the flour and continue folding. Alternate rapidly with more egg whites and more flour until all egg whites and flour are incorporated.

Turn the batter into the cake pan, pushing the batter up to its rim with a rubber spatula. Bake in middle level of preheated oven for about 25 minutes. Cake is done when it has puffed, and 2-1/2 to 3 inches around the circumference are set so that a needle plunged into that area comes out clean; the center should move slightly if the pan is shaken, and a needle comes out oily.

Allow cake to cool in the pan for 10 minutes. Run knife around the edge of the pan, and reverse cake on the rack. Allow it to cool for an hour or two; it must be thoroughly cold if it is to be iced.

For the Icing:

Place the chocolate and rum or coffee in the small pan, cover, and set in the larger pan of almost simmering water. Remove pans from heat and let chocolate melt for 5 minutes or so, until perfectly smooth. Lift chocolate pan out of the hot water, and beat in the butter a tablespoon at a time. Then beat over the ice and water until chocolate mixture has cooled to spreading consistency. At once spread it over your cake with spatula or knife, and press a design of almonds over the icing.

Yield: For an 8-inch cake serving 6 to 8 people