



How to bake

DARK CHOCOLATE BERRY CAKE

This dark chocolate cake gets a complex and impressive finish by mixing berry preserve into a simple icing.

100g unsalted butter, cold is fine

200g dark chocolate

50g golden syrup

50ml natural yoghurt

175g light soft brown sugar

3 tsp vanilla extract

4 large eggs

250g plain flour

3 tsp baking powder

50g cocoa

1 jar good-quality berry preserve (blackcurrant or raspberry, say)

150g icing sugar

Cover the base and sides of a round, 20cm cake tin with nonstick baking paper or foil, and heat the oven to 180C (160C fan-assisted)/350F/gas mark 4. In a pan, gently melt the butter, 125g chocolate and golden syrup. Remove from the heat and beat in, one by one, the yoghurt, sugar, vanilla and eggs, until smooth. Measure the flour, baking powder and cocoa into another bowl, and toss to combine. Sift this into the chocolate/butter mixture and whisk until smooth. Pour into the tin and bake for 50 minutes.

To ice, melt 75g chocolate and beat in 75g of your chosen preserve. Add the icing sugar and beat with enough water to make a thick, creamy icing. Cut the cake in half horizontally, fill generously with more preserve, then reassemble and spread the icing over the top.

Dan Lepard

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LEMON SPONGE PUDDING

The lemon and sugar in this dish form a sweet, tangy goo that trickles down the sides of the pudding when you turn it out. To ring the changes, try a few generous spoonfuls of jam instead of the lemony syrup, or add some chopped stem ginger, plus a little of the syrup from the ginger jar, both to the lemon syrup and to the batter. Serves four to six.

Finely grated zest and juice of 2 lemons

25g light muscovado sugar

100g unsalted butter, softened

100g caster sugar

2 medium eggs

100g self-raising flour, sifted

Chilled double cream to serve

Generously butter an 850ml pudding basin. Stir together the juice of one lemon and the muscovado until the sugar dissolves, then tip it into the basin.

Cream together the butter, lemon zest and caster sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in one egg at a time, adding a spoonful of flour with each. Fold in the remaining flour and stir in the rest of the lemon juice. Spoon the batter into the basin - the lemony syrup in the bottom will rise up the sides; it's meant to, so don't stir it into the batter.

Tie a double layer of buttered foil over the basin and simmer in a large pot of water, as for the leek pudding, for two hours. Remove the foil, loosen the edges with a knife, place a plate on top, and invert the plate and basin to turn out the pud ●

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SERVING



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BAKED PINEAPPLE WITH ALMONDS

Pineapple baked in a vanilla syrup can be served hot with ice-cream, at room temperature with sorbet or just as it is. To respect the fruit's delicacy, I've added a soft almond pudding crust that makes it feel more filling when the weather is cold, or when you're just in need of a little extra comfort.

1 large, ripe pineapple

125g caster sugar (more if needed)

½ lemon (or lime), juiced

75ml brandy (or orange juice)

1 split vanilla pod

75g butter, softened

1 large egg

75g ground almonds

25g plain flour

Flaked almonds

Trim the skin from the pineapple, cut into quarters, remove and discard the core, and cut into 1cm-thick pieces. Put the fruit in a baking dish big enough that the pieces half fill it, sprinkle on 50g of sugar, the lemon juice, 50ml of brandy and 75ml of water, and submerge the vanilla pod in the liquid. Cover with foil and bake at 180C (160C fan-assisted)/350F/gas mark 4 until hot and tender.

Meanwhile, make the frangipane crust: beat the butter and remaining sugar until smooth, then beat in the egg, ground almonds, flour and the rest of the brandy. Just before serving, spoon this over the fruit, sprinkle with flaked almonds, raise the oven to 200C (180C fan-assisted)/390F/gas mark 6 and bake until brown on top.

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