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Bittersweet Ganache Cake

Makes one 6-inch layer cake, or 4 – 6 individual cakes

This moist, dense chocolate cake, poured over with a bittersweet chocolate ganache, is the best thing you've ever eaten. We pair chocolate with chocolate but with such surprising variation in texture and flavor it never becomes overwhelming.

The glaze on this cake is so glossy it rivals the sheen of patent leather. To get the same finish as we do at Miette, you need an immersion blender – and a bit of practice with glazing. Don't worry about using too much ganache; it's extremely reusable, so you can always reclaim the extra that rolls off the cake. It's better to pour too much than not enough.

Although I have said that I strongly prefer most of our cakes in the 6-inch size, this is one cake that is just as elegant made in a 9-inch pan. I've even made it as large as 14 inches without losing any of its appeal; in fact, it becomes grand. I love to serve it topped with lightly whipped cream or any ice cream

Ingredients

1 Double Chocolate Cake (below)
About 2 cups Chocolate Ganache (below)
Ribbons (optional)

Preparation

1. Make the Double Chocolate Cake as directed, and make sure it is cool inside and out. (if frozen, let thaw in the refrigerator, 3 to 4 hours). If time demands, you can thaw on the countertop, 1 to 2 hours).
2. Place the cake on a wire rack set over a rimmed baking sheet or jellyroll pan. Clear a space in your refrigerator large enough for the cake on the baking sheet.
3. Read this step very carefully, paying special attention to every detail, most of which are designed to prevent air from entering the ganache; it is the most important step for this cake. Scoop the ganache into a microwave-safe bowl. (If the ganache was made earlier and has been chilled to a solid, first microwave on high for 1 minute. Stir very gently so as not to agitate the chocolate, which would introduce air). Microwave at 10-second intervals, gently stirring between each, until the ganache is mostly liquid. Have ready an immersion blender, which you will use to make the glaze very smooth and pourable. Add about 2 tablespoons very hot water to the ganache, and let the water sit on top.

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Insert the head of the blender, while it is off, into the ganache very slowly at a 30-degree angle; you do not want to trap any air in the compartment of the head. When the head of the blender is submerged, upright the blender to a 90-degree angle and turn it on. Begin to make gentle circles, never up and down and never breaking the surface, until the chocolate is very shiny and smooth, 3 to 5 minutes. Be patient, as you will need more time than you think. When you begin to see a shine develop, you think you are done, but go on a little longer.

4. Pour the glaze over the cake, beginning at the edges and spiraling to the middle. This helps to ensure an even coat all over the cake. Rap the tray lightly on the table to settle the glaze. Refrigerate until set, about 45 minutes.

5. Repeat the glazing step once more, scraping up the extra ganache from the baking sheet and making sure to repeat the process above to restore the glaze to its shiniest level. Be sure the cake is thoroughly and evenly coated with glaze. Refrigerate as before to set up and harden, approximately 45 minutes. Make sure you let the first layer set thoroughly. If not, the second coat will cause the first to ripple. To transfer the cake to a cake board and then onto the presentation plate or platter, heat the blade of a knife in hot water and carefully go around the outside perimeter of the cake, then insert a large spatula under the cake edge and lift, making sure not to rip the chocolate from the rack before transferring the cake to the cake board and the presentation plate or platter. Use the sharp knife to carefully trim off the excess ganache around the outside perimeter of the cake, wiping down the cake board with the edge of a damp cloth. (Scrape any remaining ganache off the baking sheet and save it for another use).

6. Wrap the ribbon around the base of the cake, and secure one end to the other with a dot of ganache. Wipe the board clean of all ganache streaks. This cake needs to be served at room temperature. Serve at once, or hold at room temperature for up to 4 hours. For longer storage, refrigerate for up to 2 days and remove from the refrigerator 4 hours before serving.

[Note: To make a 9-inch cake, prepare a 9-inch contour pan as directed for the 6-inch pan. Pour the Double Chocolate Cake batter into the pan until it comes up to 1/2 inch from the edge of the pan. (You will have some leftover batter; discard or use for a few Double Chocolate Cupcakes or mini cakes in ramekins). Bake at 350 degrees F until the top springs back when lightly pressed and a tester inserted in the center comes out clean, 55 to 60 minutes. Assemble as directed, using about 3 cups ganache].

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Double Chocolate Cake

Makes two 6-inch cakes

[Note: Only one cake is required for the Bittersweet Ganache Cake; make two and freeze the second one, or bake as one 9-inch cake, or bake as individual cakes in ramekins or as cupcakes].

Made with both melted dark chocolate and cocoa powder, this chocolate cake is rich, complex, and bittersweet – a perfect match for sweet frostings, which is how you'll find it paired in our Tomboy Cake, Bittersweet Ganache Cake, and Old-Fashioned Cake. As with the other base cakes, this recipe yields two 6-inch cakes, so you can have one on hand in your freezer to decorate anytime.

This cake is infallibly moist. Part of the reason for its fine-crumb texture is that we strain the batter through a sieve to remove any lumps before pouring it into the pans. Straining out the lumps rather than trying to stir them into the batter prevents overmixing and leads to a dense cake. We also sift the cocoa before dusting the pans, a technique that will give the exterior finish of your cakes a lovely smooth patina.

Ingredients

1-1/2 cups (7.5 ounces) all-purpose flour
1-1/4 cups (4.5 ounces) natural unsweetened cocoa powder
1-1/2 teaspoons baking soda
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
2 ounces 70 percent cacao chocolate, coarsely chopped
1 cup boiling water
1 cup buttermilk
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 large eggs, at room temperature
1/2 cup vegetable oil
2-1/4 cups (16 ounces) sugar

Preparation

1. Liberally butter two 6-by-3-inch regular or contour cake pans and dust with sifted cocoa powder. Tap out the excess cocoa.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
3. Sift together the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, and salt into a bowl and set aside.

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4. Put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl and pour the boiling water over it. Whisk until the chocolate is melted. Let the mixture cool for 15 minutes.
5. In a separate bowl, whisk together the buttermilk and vanilla. Set aside.
6. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whisk the eggs on high speed until foamy, about 2 minutes. Reduce the speed to low and slowly pour in the oil, whisking until combined, about 30 seconds. Raise the speed to medium and whisk until fully incorporated, about 30 seconds longer.
7. Reduce the speed to low and slowly pour the cooled chocolate mixture into the egg mixture. Slowly pour in the buttermilk and vanilla mixture. Add the sugar and whisk until the batter is smooth and liquid, about 2 minutes.
8. Stop the mixer, Remove the bowl and add the sifted dry ingredients and mix until just incorporated, preferably by hand, lifting and folding in from the bottom center. Using a rubber spatula, scrape down the sides of the bowl and mix again just briefly by hand. The batter may still look a little lumpy, but stop mixing.
9. Pour the batter through a medium-mesh sieve into a large measuring cup or bowl to remove any lumps. Press against the solids in the sieve with a rubber spatula to push through as much batter as possible, then discard the lumps. Divide the batter between the prepared pans. Bake until the tops spring back when lightly pressed and a tester inserted in the centers comes out clean, 45 to 50 minutes.
10. Transfer to wire racks and let cool in the pans for about 20 minutes. When the cakes are cooled enough to handle the pans but still a tad warm to the touch, carefully run an offset spatula around the edges of the pans to loosen them, then invert the cakes onto the racks and remove the pans. Let cool for about 20 minutes longer. Wrap the cakes tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate to ensure that the interiors are completely cooled before decorating, at least 1 hour or for up to 3 days. To freeze, wrap tightly in a second layer of plastic and store in the freezer up to 2 months.

Note: We use natural cocoa powder not Dutch-processed, as the Dutch-processed cocoa has been treated with an alkalizing agent that heightens the color but gives it a milder flavor. For this recipe, it is important to use natural product such as Scharffen Berger to attain a deep, dark chocolate flavor.

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Chocolate Ganache

Makes about 3 cups

[Note: For this cake recipe requires 2 cups of ganache; the below recipe makes 3 cups of ganache. Adjust accordingly, or freeze the extra].

We make about 20 pounds of chocolate ganache every week at Miette as it is used in or on many of the things we make as a glaze for the Bittersweet Ganache Cake and Éclairs; as a filling for the Chocolate Truffle Tart and our Parisian Macarons; as a frosting for the Bumblebee Cake; and swirled into French Buttercream to make a chocolate variation.

Miette's recipe for this exquisite, velvety ganache is based on a recipe by Robert Linxe in the cookbook from La Maison du Chocolat in Paris, *La Maison du Chocolat: Transcendent Desserts by Legendary Chocolatier*, which is why we call it the "MDC" in the bakery. We use chocolate with the 62 percent cacao. Guittard and Scharffen Berger are our preferred brands, but feel free to try any chocolate to your taste.

Ingredients

10 ounces 62 percent cacao chocolate, chopped
2/3 cup (2.5 ounces) sifted powdered sugar
3/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon heavy cream
2 large egg yolks
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature

Preparation

1. Combine the chocolate and powdered sugar in a heatproof bowl.
2. In a saucepan over medium heat, bring the cream to a gentle simmer. Pour the hot cream over the chocolate and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Nest the bowl over a pan of simmering water to make a bain-marie. Heat, stirring, until all of the chocolate is melted and the mixture is smooth. Remove the bowl from the heat.
3. Whisk the egg yolks in a small heatproof bowl. Pour about 1/2 cup of the melted chocolate mixture into the yolks while whisking, to temper them. Pour the tempered mixture back into the pan of chocolate and whisk to combine. Add the butter and stir until smooth. Pour the hot ganache through a fine-mesh sieve into a clean heatproof bowl.
4. Use the ganache immediately, or transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks. Ganache does not freeze well.

When ganache is chilled, it quickly hardens to a solid. To reheat for pouring or spreading, scoop it into a microwave-safe bowl and microwave on high for 1 minute. Next, microwave on 50 percent power for 10-second intervals, stirring between each, until the ganache reaches the desired consistency. You will usually need to add 1 or 2 tablespoons of hot water to loosen a cold ganache. For more specific instructions, see individual recipes.