



CHOCOLATE CAKE

200g unsalted butter, chopped
200g dark chocolate with 70% cocoa solids
1 tbsp powdered instant coffee
1 tsp vanilla extract
½ cup plain flour
½ cup self-raising flour
¼ tsp bicarb of soda
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup caster sugar
¼ cup cocoa
3 eggs
1/3 cup buttermilk

1. Grease and line a 20cm round cake pan and preheat oven to 160 degrees Celsius or 140 degrees fan forced.
2. Place butter and chocolate in a heavy-based saucepan. Combine coffee and ½ cup water, then add this and the vanilla to the pan. Stir on LOW heat for 3-4 minutes until smooth. Do not overheat.
3. Combine flours, bicarb, sugars and cocoa.
4. In another bowl, beat eggs and then stir in buttermilk.
5. Pour melted chocolate mixture and egg mixture into flour mixture, stir until combined.
6. Pour into prepared pan and bake for 1 hour and 30 minutes or until a skewer inserted comes out clean.
7. Cool in pan for 10 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack to cool completely.
8. Ice cake with Chocolate Ganache* or Chocolate Buttercream*

** NOTE **

Cake can be iced as is, or you might want to slice the cake into 2 or 3 layers, sandwiching some icing in between. To make this cake decadent and 'chocoholic', I spread chocolate ganache AND chocolate buttercream between each layer. I then coat the entire cake in buttercream and top with chocolate mirror glaze. You can make it as complex or simple as you like. At times I even double my quantity of ganache and ice the cake with ganache only – it is versatile and up to you how far you want to push the sugar load.

CHOCOLATE BUTTERCREAM

500g softened unsalted butter

4 cups icing sugar sifted

1 cup cocoa

½ cup milk (or less if you like a thicker, more dense consistency)

2 tsp vanilla extract

1. Cream butter until pale (the longer the better... this is the secret of good buttercream!)
2. Add vanilla, sugar and cocoa. With mixer on low, slowly incorporate these ingredients.
3. Once they come together, increase the mixer speed to ensure icing is smooth and combined thoroughly – adding milk to your liking.

****NOTE**** This makes a lot of buttercream – enough for sandwiching layers and applying a generous coat to the entire cake. You may want to halve these quantities if you intend on using less icing. Icing also freezes well.

DARK CHOCOLATE GANACHE

100g dark chocolate, broken into pieces

100ml thickened cream

1. Place cream in a heavy-based saucepan and heat until just at boiling point
2. Place chocolate into cream and let sit for 2 minutes
3. Stir the two together
4. Let the ganache cool to thicken to the right consistency for spreading onto your cake

****NOTE**** Double these quantities if you want to coat your entire cake in ganache. Refrigerated ganache keeps for a while. A dollop of refrigerated ganache on your cake with 20-30 seconds in the microwave is a nice way of serving a slice of this cake – add vanilla ice cream for a perfect dessert! Mmmmm... warm and gooey.

DARK CHOCOLATE MIRROR GLAZE

3 sheets of gelatin

104 ml double cream

¾ cup caster sugar

½ cup cocoa

1. Soak or 'bloom' the gelatin in a shallow dish of water for about 5-10 minutes
2. Heat ¼ cup water, cream and sugar over MED heat until sugar is dissolved (about 10 mins)
3. Remove mixture from the heat and whisk in cocoa until dissolved
4. Take the gelatin and squeeze to release excess water. Add the gelatin sheets to the warm glaze and stir until dissolved.
5. Pass the glaze through a strainer and into a pouring jug
6. Place plastic wrap on the surface of the glaze and store in the refrigerator if you are not using it.

****NOTE**** to use the glaze, microwave it for a short amount of time to bring it back to a runny consistency. Ideally the glaze works best when it is warm to the touch (approximately 45 degrees Celsius) and applying it to a cold cake – then refrigerate to set the glaze again.