



## BLACK FOREST CAKE WITH SWEET POACHED CHERRIES

*Recipe makes one 3-layer 8" cake, or serves approx 12-15 people.*

### NOTES + MAKE AHEAD TIPS (*Full Recipe Follows*):

**What "Room Temperature Butter" means.** For the Swiss Meringue Buttercream, the butter should be at a "cool" room temperature. So, depending on your climate and season, you may not want to leave the butter out overnight as I tend to do (we live in a cold climate)! The safest is to stick a food thermometer into a piece of butter - it should be around 60f. On hotter days, this could mean taking the butter out of the fridge just 20-30 minutes before using. I mention this because people struggle with curdled SMB and butter temperature would be one of the main reasons.

**Kirsch, Maraschino or other Cherry Liqueur.** This recipe not exactly a traditional Black Forest Cake but I ought to mention, if you like, add Kirsch or Maraschino or other cherry liqueur to the poached cherry filling. Add 2 tbsp of it to the sugar syrup while poaching the cherries.

**(Optional) Trick to Minimize Doming of the Cake Layers.** Totally optional, I cut a couple of strips of an old kitchen towel to the height of the cake pans. Wrap them around the cake pan and safety-pin to fit snugly. Take them back off and fill the cake pans with the batter. Soak the the towel strips under running water and squeeze lightly but leave just short of dripping. Wiggle the very wet strips around the cake pans once more (carefully so as not to split any batter) and put into oven for baking. The steam from the wet strips create more even heat inside the oven during baking, resulting in minimal or no doming in the middle of the cake layers! Check out the images in this post for evidence ☺

**Make Ahead.** I prefer to stagger the work required to make a layer cake, or else I find it too daunting a task.

- I always begin with the Swiss meringue buttercream which can be kept in a cool room temperature for up to 4 days. You may refrigerate as well, but take out to room temperature and beat again before using.
- The day *before* the cake is being served, I bake the cake layers and frost the cake. For cakes with fruit filling like this one, make sure the filling is well-drained.
- The day-of is the ideal time to add toppers like buttercream decorations, fresh cherries or fresh blooms so that it all looks fresh.



## INGREDIENTS

*For the vanilla Swiss meringue buttercream (makes enough for “semi-naked” cake style):*

- 6 large (180g) egg whites
- 1 1/2 C (300g) granulated sugar
- 1 1/3 C (160g) confectioner's sugar
- 2 1/4 C (512g) unsalted butter, room temperature (see note above re: butter temperature)
- 1 tbsp vanilla bean paste or pure vanilla extract
- Pinch salt

*For the chocolate cake layers:*

- 2 C (250g) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 1/3 C (245g) granulated sugar
- 3/4 C (65g) unsweetened Dutch-processed cocoa powder or raw cacao powder
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 C (240 ml) whole milk, at room temperature (can sub plant-based milk of choice)
- 1/2 C (120ml) neutral oil of choice (I use avocado oil)
- 2 large eggs, whisked, at room temperature
- 2 tsp (10ml) vanilla extract
- 1 tsp espresso powder or instant coffee granules
- 1 C (240 ml) boiling water



*For the stewed cherries:*

1/3 C (60g) granulated sugar

1/3 C (80 ml) water

1 lb pitted sweet or black cherries, fresh or frozen, separated

(Optional: 2 tbsp cherry liqueur – see head note above)

*For the chocolate ganache:*

1/2 C (120 ml) cream or coconut cream, plus splashes more to adjust consistency for dripping

1/3 C (50g) dark chocolate chips or bar chopped into small pieces

*Ideas for garnish (optional):*

- Fresh cherries
- Chocolate curls
- Chocolate fudge brownies, cut into small cubes
- Confectioner's sugar, for dusting
- Fresh flowers of your choice (make sure they're not poisonous, obviously, and I recommend wrapping the stems with clear plastic wrap before inserting into the cake)

## METHOD

### **Make the vanilla Swiss meringue buttercream:**

1. Over a double boiler, whisk in granulated sugar and egg whites, stirring and moving everything around constantly, until sugar grains are completely dissolved, which you can feel by rubbing a bit of it between your fingers. If you have an instant thermometer, the mixture should be between 120f and 160f.
2. Pour mixture into metal bowl of your stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Whip on high until thick, glossy and white (very firm peaks), about 4 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, sift confectioner's sugar. Once the egg whites are done, turn the stand mixer to the lowest speed and add the confectioner's sugar all at once. Let the whisk turn a few times to settle the sugar before increasing mixer speed to medium-high and whisking until everything is even.



4. While the mixer is still running on medium-high, add the room temperature butter in about 2 to 3 fast additions.

5. Add the vanilla and mix until thoroughly combined.

6. Switch to the paddle attachment and blend on low speed until the buttercream is smooth, about a minute. *The buttercream can be stored, covered, at room temperature for up to 4 days.*

#### **Make the chocolate cake layers:**

7. Preheat the oven to 350f. Lightly grease three 8" round cake pans. Line each with a circle of parchment paper.

8. In a large bowl or the bowl of your stand mixer, measure out the flour, sugar, unsweetened cocoa powder (or cacao powder), baking powder, baking soda and salt. Whisk or paddle to combine.

9. In a separate bowl, measure out the milk, oil, eggs and vanilla extract. Mix well to combine. Add into the bowl with the dry ingredients.

10. Measure out a cup of boiling water and add the espresso powder or instant coffee granules, stirring to dissolve. At low speed if using a stand mixer, pour the coffee in and beat on high for about a minute to add air.

11. Divide batter into the 3 prepared cake pans.

*\*\*See head note regarding tips to minimize doming during baking. \*\**

Bake for about 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center emerges dry with a few crumbs clinging on. As all ovens differ, check the cake for doneness earlier rather than later. An over-baked cake is sure to be a dry cake. Cool 10 minutes on a wire rack, then unmold from cake pan to cool rest of the way. If you used the wet towel strips, you should not need to level the cake. The above right image shows how flat the cakes come out. If you did not use the wet strips and your cakes dome, wait until they are fully cool before leveling with a long, serrated knife.

#### **Make the poached cherries:**

12. While the cake layers are baking, place the water and sugar (and cherry liqueur, if using) in a small saucepan over low heat. Bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally until the sugar is dissolved. Add the cherries and bring to a gentle simmer, stirring occasionally to coat them evenly in the sugar water. Simmer for a few minutes and strain the cherries over a colander, reserving the sugar syrup to brush on the cake layers later. You can put the syrup back in the pan and set it over medium heat to reduce some, up to half the original amount. Set the cherries and the syrup aside to cool fully before using. If the cherries are large, cut them into halves. To prepare, you can divide the cherries into roughly two equal portions which will go in between the cake layers.



### **Assemble the cake:**

13. Starting with the first cake layer, lightly brush the top and all the way around the side with the reserved cherry syrup. With buttercream in a piping bag fitted with a fairly large tip (or a hole cut in one corner of the bag), pipe frosting all the way around the edge of the cake to create a 'dam'. Don't worry about being neat, it will all get covered. Evenly space the first portion of poached cherries and fill in gaps with more buttercream piped from the bag. Smooth the buttercream over with an offset spatula or long knife, adding more buttercream if needed to create an even surface. Place on the next cake layer and repeat the above steps with the syrup, buttercream and cherries. Place the final cake layer on top. For best results, crumb-coat the entire cake first. This means spreading a thin layer of buttercream and letting it set in the fridge for 15 minutes before doing the final frosting. This helps minimize cake crumbs being dragged to the surface. After 15 minutes in the fridge, finish frosting the cake to your preference. The amount of buttercream in this recipe is enough for a semi-naked cake style. Place the cake back in the fridge while you prepare the ganache.

### **Make the chocolate ganache:**

14. Put the chocolate in a small bowl (large enough to hold the chocolate plus the cream after it's heated). Heat the cream in a small saucepan over medium heat until scalded but not boiling. Pour over the chocolate and allow it to sit for a few minutes, then stir until well combined. Let it cool slightly. To get an idea of the dripping consistency, check by using a spoon to dribble some down the side of the inside of your bowl. Add drops more of cream if needed to thin to desired consistency. Use a spoon to drip chocolate on the top of the cake OR slowly pour the ganache over the top of the cake allowing drips over the edge (you may use the tip of a spoon to nudge and encourage it to drip in certain places). Let the ganache cool and set fully before you garnish to your heart's content.

Enjoy!

*The base chocolate cake recipe is adapted from [Add A Pinch](#).*