



BLACK FOREST CAKE WITH SWEET POACHED CHERRIES

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

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 at room temperature for up to 4 days.
- The day *before* the cake is being served, I bake the cake layers and frost the cake.
- The day-of is the ideal time to add toppers like buttercream decorations or fresh blooms so that it all looks fresh.

NOTE: For layer cakes, it is best to minimize doming during baking. I do this by wrapping two strips of very wet kitchen towels (cut to the height of your cake pans) around your pans just before putting into the oven. Soak them with enough tap water to be thoroughly saturated but not dripping all over.

INGREDIENTS

For the vanilla Swiss meringue buttercream:

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 (leave it out at least 3 hours or overnight)

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 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
- 1/2 C (120ml) grapeseed or vegetable 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

For the chocolate ganache:

- 1/2 C (120 ml) heavy cream
- 2/3 C (110g) dark chocolate chips or bar chopped into small pieces

For garnishing (optional):

- 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 mixture reaches 115f and sugar grains are completely dissolved, which you can feel by rubbing a bit of it between your fingers.
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 and flour 3 x 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.

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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 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. Set the cherries and the syrup aside to cool fully before using. To prepare, you can divide the cherries into roughly two equal portions which will go in between the cake layers, but pull out a few cherries from each pile into a third pile to use for decorating the top of the cake, if you want.

Make the chocolate ganache:

13. Put the chocolate in a small bowl (large enough to hold the chocolate plus the cream after it's heated). Heat the heavy cream in a small saucepan over medium heat until scalded. Pour over the chocolate and allow it to sit for a minute, then stir until well combined. If you are making this ahead, refrigerate and gently reheat in the microwave for 10 seconds at a time on high, checking and stirring until pouring consistency is achieved.

Assemble the cake:

14. 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 - I elected for a semi-naked cake look. Slowly pour chocolate 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 with the reserved cherries, brownies (if using), a dusting of confectioner's sugar and fresh flowers (if using). Enjoy!

Base chocolate cake recipe adapted from [Add A Pinch](#).