

Dark Chocolate Orange Mocha Cake

Poetry & Pies

prep time: 30-35 minutes

steep time: 1 hour

bake time: 25-30 minutes

total time: 2 hours, 5 minutes (including time to make the buttercream; excludes time to make candied orange slices)

servings: 12-16



Ingredients

for the dark chocolate orange mocha cake

- 2-3 large oranges
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole milk
- $1\frac{2}{3}$ cups sugar
- $1\frac{2}{3}$ cups flour, spooned and leveled
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cups unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup avocado, grapeseed, or vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup hot, strong, good quality coffee*
- 3 ounces semisweet or dark chocolate chips or chopped baking chocolate

for the filling

- 1 cup (232g) cold heavy whipping cream**
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (45g) powdered sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon (6g) vanilla extract
- optional: $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (2g) orange [extract](#) or [emulsion](#)**

to assemble

- 1 batch [chocolate orange buttercream](#)
- 1 batch [candied orange slices](#) (make the day before--optional but so fun!)

Instructions

1. Make the [candied oranges](#) ahead of time, up to a week ahead, and store in an airtight container in the fridge until ready to use.
2. First, be sure to wash the oranges with fruit and vegetable wash or diluted white vinegar to remove wax, dirt, and pesticides, since you'll be using the zest. Use a [vegetable peeler](#) to peel the zest of 2-3 oranges, trying to avoid getting a lot of the pith (white part). Juice half of one of the oranges (save remaining fruit or juice for another bake or to get your vitamin C boost!).
3. Steep the zest. Place the peeled zest and milk in a small saucepan. Over medium heat, bring the milk to a simmer, stirring constantly to avoid scalding it. Once simmering, remove from heat and set aside. Stir frequently for the first few minutes after removing it so it doesn't form a skin. Let steep 1 hour. *This is a great time to take your butter and eggs out to warm up as well as to heat and steep the heavy cream and soften the butter for the [buttercream](#).*
4. When milk is nearly ready, lightly butter and flour (or spray with [baking spray](#)) two 8" or 9" or three 6" cake pans and line with [parchment](#) or [silicone rounds](#) and preheat the oven to 325F/165C.
5. Once the milk has steeped and has a good orange flavor, strain the milk to remove the zest, pressing on the orange pieces to get all of the flavor out (this helps get a bit of the natural oils as well, which yields a more orange-y flavor). Add enough fresh orange juice to equal 1 cup milk and juice. Stir and set aside for 5-10 minutes while you prep the rest of the ingredients and make your coffee (make sure you're able to keep it hot or else wait until you need it to prepare it).
6. Sift then whisk together the sugar, flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in the bowl of your stand mixer or a large mixing bowl. Don't skip the sifting! Fit to the mixer with the paddle attachment.
7. Vigorously whisk the eggs, oil, vanilla, and milk/juice for about 30 seconds until very well combined.
8. Combine very hot coffee and chocolate chips. Stir vigorously until chocolate is melted. While whisking constantly and quickly, very, very slowly pour the coffee into the other wet ingredients.

9. With the mixer on low, slowly add the wet ingredients to the dry. Once combined, immediately turn off the mixer and scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl. Beat on medium for exactly 2 minutes.
10. Divide evenly between your prepared cake pans Bake at 325F/165C for 25-30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the middle of each cake comes out with just moist crumbs. Be sure to check both cake layers, as one may bake slightly faster than the other. Check early, around 20 minutes, as bake time varies by oven and climate.
11. Let cool in pan 5-10 minutes then remove to cool completely. While cakes cool, make the [buttercream](#).
12. When the cake layers are completely cool, make the whipped cream. Place all of the ingredients in a large mixing bowl or the bowl of your stand mixer (chilled, if possible). Using a handheld mixer or the whisk attachment of your stand mixer, beat on medium until frothy then turn up to high until stiff peaks just begin to form. Do not over mix. You'll know it's done when it *just barely* starts to look matte in appearance.
13. To assemble the cake, it is recommended to cut each cake layer in half *if you only used two cake pans*, so that you can fill it with a thin layer of whipped cream that won't slide. Use a large serrated knife and cake turner to do this. This is optional.
14. Assemble the cake by piping a ring of buttercream around the bottom layer of cake. (Optionally, you can spread thin layer of buttercream on the cake before piping the ring.) Spread some whipped cream within the ring of buttercream, no taller than the ring itself. Do not let the whipped cream be taller than ½ inch, as this will cause the cake to slide and/or split. Repeat this until all layers of cake are stacked.
15. Gently cover cake in a thin coat of frosting and refrigerate 20 minutes to set the frosting and keep the layers from sliding. Once the frosting is firm, cover in desired amount of frosting.
16. Decorate with [candied oranges](#), as desired.

Enjoy!

Keep the cake refrigerated until ready to serve. To serve, leave at room temperature for 20-30 minutes, if desired. Keep leftovers fresh by placing a piece of plastic wrap right up against cut edges, sealing it against the buttercream, then placing the entire cake in an airtight container or covering with more plastic wrap.

**If you are unsure about how to make your coffee strong enough, you could dissolve 1 tablespoon instant coffee or espresso in boiling water to get a bold coffee taste.*

***If you'd like to create an orange flavored whipped cream (optional—it's still delicious with plain whipped cream), you can steep the whipped cream with the peeled zest of 1-2 oranges. I suggest doing this for 12-24 hours in the fridge, as cold-steeping is better if you're planning to make whipped cream. This will create a more natural orange flavor than extract or emulsion. If you choose to do this, omit the orange extract or emulsion, as both will be too overpowering.*