

Bûche de Noël with meringue mushrooms
AF DuPage Baking Demonstration
December 3, 2022 11:00 am
Presented by Chef Chris Thielman & Karen Thielman

Servings: 8 servings

Special Equipment needed: Rimmed half-sheet pan (13" x 18"), parchment paper or silicone baking sheets, medium bowl, saucepan, large bowl, stand mixer or electric mixer with wire whip attachment, whisk, offset spatula, small microwave safe container for the gelatin, 2 cookie sheets, 14 or 16 inch pastry bag, #804 plain pastry piping tip, leaf piping tip, cake comb or fork, paddle attachment for mixer

Ingredients:

Frosting

170 grams semisweet chocolate, chopped

170 grams heavy cream

1/8 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

85 grams unsalted butter, at room temperature (European-style preferred)

Cake

Cooking spray for the baking sheet (example: Pam cooking spray)

5 large eggs, at room temperature

100 grams granulated sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

60 grams all-purpose flour

28 grams good quality cocoa powder (example: Valrhona)

21 grams cornstarch

1 teaspoon espresso powder (optional)

1 teaspoon baking powder
50 grams vegetable oil
85 grams buttermilk, at room temperature
Light layer of additional granulated sugar for assembly
Dusting of confectioners' sugar (if desired)

Filling

230 grams heavy cream
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
½ teaspoon unflavored powdered gelatin
2 Tablespoons COLD water to bloom the gelatin
17 grams granulated sugar
170 grams mascarpone cheese, at room temperature

Meringue Mushrooms and Buttercream for leaf decorations - see ingredient list and methods at the end of this recipe.

Method:

Preheat the oven to 360°. Line a rimmed half-sheet pan (13" x 18") with parchment OR a silicone baking sheet. Apply cooking spray on the parchment/silicone sheet and pan.

To start the frosting: Place the chopped chocolate in a bowl.

Heat the cream in a saucepan or in the microwave until it begins to almost boil. Pour the cream over the chocolate, let sit for 2 to 3 minutes, then stir until the chocolate is completely melted. Set this chocolate ganache aside to cool to room temperature while you make the cake.

To make the cake: In a large bowl, beat the eggs until pale for 30 seconds with an electric or stand mixer using a wire whip attachment, then beat in the sugar, salt, and vanilla.

Beat until the mixture is thick and the whisk leaves tracks in the bowl and triples in volume, about 3 minutes.

While the eggs are beating, sift together the flour, cocoa, cornstarch, espresso powder (if using), and baking powder.

When the egg mixture is ready, sift a third of the dry ingredients into the bowl and gently fold in **by hand**. It's OK if the batter is streaky and not fully combined at first.

Repeat twice more until all the dry ingredients have been incorporated.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the oil and buttermilk, then fold into the batter, mixing just until combined.

Pour the batter into the pan immediately and lightly smooth the top with an offset spatula, spreading the batter all the way to the edges of the pan.

Bake the cake for 12 to 14 minutes, or until the top springs back when lightly pressed.

Remove the cake from the oven and let it cool in the pan for 5 minutes. Loosen all of the outside edges with a butter knife. Add a thin layer of granulated sugar to the top of the cake and quickly flip the cake onto a piece of parchment paper.

To make the filling: Whip the cream until very soft peaks form. Mix in the vanilla.

In a very small microwave-safe container SLOWLY sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon of unflavored powdered gelatin over 2 tablespoons of cold water and let stand for 10-15 minutes, then microwave the mixture in 5-second increments until the gelatin is dissolved and liquefied. **Do Not Overheat this mixture!**

Using a wire whip, slowly add the gelatin mixture to the whipped cream.

In a separate bowl, stir the granulated sugar into the mascarpone. Using a whisk, fold in 1/4 cup of the mascarpone/sugar mixture at a time into the whipped cream (overwhipping mascarpone can make it grainy).

To finish the frosting: Once the chocolate ganache has cooled to room temperature, transfer it to a mixing bowl and add the salt and vanilla.

Using an electric hand mixer or a stand mixer with the whisk attachment, beat the ganache on low speed and slowly add the butter in three additions.

Once all the butter has been added, increase the speed and whip until fluffy, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed.

Note: If the mixture is not whipping, you may need to briefly do this step on an ice water bath since it needs to be slightly chilled to whip correctly.

To assemble: Spread the filling onto the cooled cake, leaving 1" on one of the long ends uncovered (as you roll the cake, the filling will spread to cover this part). Starting with the other long edge, gently roll the cake into the form of a cylinder, using the parchment paper as an aid. Once rolled, cover in parchment paper or plastic wrap and chill for a few hours or preferably overnight.

When ready for final assembly, place the cake roll, seam-side down, on a large dish or platter.

To simulate a branch, cut a 4" piece of the cake at a 45° angle and place the angled edge against the larger log. Square off the pointed end of the larger log and place that slice on the top of the cake to make another "branch." (optional)

Spread or pipe the frosting all around the outside of the cake roll in a layer at least 1/4" thick. Score the frosting with a cake comb or a fork with widely spaced tines to make it look like bark. Decorate with meringue mushrooms, leaves and imitation holly leaves.

Refrigerate, lightly covered, until ready to serve. Just before serving, dust the top with confectioners' sugar if desired.

Meringue Mushrooms

Yield: this recipe yields about 25 mushrooms, but only about 10-12 are required for the decoration

Ingredients:

½ cup egg whites

¼ teaspoon cream of tartar OR 3 drops of lemon juice OR 3 drops of white vinegar

¼ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 cup granulated sugar

1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder

4 ounces imitation coating chocolate or melting wafers (Ghirardelli brand used)

Method:

Preheat the oven to 225°. Line 2 cookie sheets with parchment paper or aluminum foil or silicone baking sheets.

In a large glass or metal bowl, use an electric mixer to whip the egg whites until foamy. Add cream of tartar (OR lemon juice OR white vinegar), salt, and vanilla. Continue whipping and gradually sprinkle in the sugar making sure that it does not sink to the bottom. Continue whipping until the mixture holds stiff, shiny peaks.

Place a round pastry tip into a pastry bag, and fill the bag half way with the meringue.

To pipe the mushroom caps, squeeze out round mounds of meringue in varied sizes onto one of the prepared cookie sheets. Pull the bag off to the side to avoid making peaks on the top.

There will be two different styles of stems, long and squat in varied sizes.

For the long stems, squeeze out lines of meringue onto the other cookie sheet, then pull the bag straight up.

For the short stems, squeeze out a drop of meringue, then pull the bag straight up. The meringue should resemble candy kisses.

Do not worry about making all of the pieces exactly the same. The mushrooms will look more natural if the pieces are different sizes.

Dust the mushroom caps lightly with cocoa using a small sifter or strainer.

Bake for 2 hours in the preheated oven, or until the caps are dry enough to easily remove from the cookie sheets. Set aside to cool completely.

Melt the imitation coating chocolate or melting wafers in a metal bowl over simmering water, or in a glass bowl in the microwave, stirring occasionally until smooth.

To assemble the meringue mushrooms, poke a small hole in the bottom of a mushroom cap with a paring knife. Spread chocolate over the bottom of the cap. Dip the tip of a stem in chocolate, and press lightly into the hole. When the chocolate sets, they will hold together. Repeat with remaining pieces.

Buttercream

Ingredients:

1 cup unsalted butter, softened at room temperature for 1 hour

3 1/2 to 4 cups SIFTED confectioners' sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 to 2 Tablespoons heavy cream or whole milk

Green food coloring

Method:

In the bowl of an electric mixer with a paddle attachment, beat the butter on medium speed for a couple minutes, or until smooth.

Turn the mixer to low, and gradually add in the confectioners' sugar. Once incorporated, increase the speed to medium-low and mix until combined.

With the mixer back on low, add in the vanilla and cream (or whole milk) and mix until combined. Add green food coloring to the desired hue.

Whip until creamy. You may need to adjust with a little more liquid or sugar depending on how thick a consistency you desire.

Place a leaf piping tip into a pastry bag, and fill the bag half way with the buttercream.

To pipe leaf shapes onto the Bûche de Noël, form the base of the leaf by squeezing firmly, then slowly pulling the tip upward. Release the pressure on the pastry bag as you form the tip of the leaf.

Chefs Notes:

I ordered these cake decorations on Amazon.

Edible Wafer Paper Leaf Cake Decoration

https://www.amazon.com/Cupcake-Birthday-Decoration-graduation-Anniversary/dp/B0B3948WS3/ref=sr_1_3?crid=V81P2DTYPTZM&keywords=Edible+Wafer+Paper+Leaf+Cake+Decoration&qid=1668638805&srefix=edible+wafer+paper+leaf+cake+decoration%2Caps%2C101&sr=8-3

Christmas Holly Berries Faux Berry Flowers with Green Leaves

https://www.amazon.com/Christmas-Arrangement-Floating-Centerpiece-Decorations/dp/B099358LKX/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2H4SREDO689LJ&keywords=Christmas+Holly+Berries+Faux+Berry+Flowers+with+Green+Leaves&qid=1668638864&srefix=christmas+holly+berries+faux+berry+flowers+with+green+leaves%2Caps%2C120&sr=8-1

Or you can make your own chocolate holly-shaped decorations with this type of candy mold.

https://www.amazon.com/ADXCO-Christmas-Silicone-Chocolate-Decorations/dp/B0B8FZSRYQ/ref=sr_1_11?crid=7ELIGUR39LSP&keywords=food%2Bgrade%2Bchristmas%2Bholly%2Bdecorations&qid=1668718759&srefix=food%2Bgrade%2Bchristmas%2Bholly%2Bdecorations%2Caps%2C110&sr=8-11&th=1