

Chocolate Capri Cake

TORTA DI CIOCCOLATO CAPRESE

When I was the private chef for an Italian couple on board their classic sailing yacht, one of the dictates of the job required not repeating any dishes in my menus throughout the five-month summer contract. The owner's wife, upon her word, was the only one who could bend this rule. She requested this dessert a few times each season.

Makes 10 servings

- *12 tablespoons (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, plus a little more for buttering the cake pan*
- *8 ounces unsweetened chocolate*
- *1/2 cup (8 ounces) whole peeled almonds, toasted*
- *2 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose or Italian "00" flour*
- *6 large eggs, separated, at room temperature*
- *1 cup sugar*
- *1 tablespoon powdered sugar for dusting*
- *Whipped Mascarpone Cream (recipe follows)*

Place a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat to 300°F.

Butter a 9-inch cake pan and line the base with a circle of parchment paper. Butter the paper.

Place the butter and the chocolate in the top of a double boiler or in the microwave and melt, stirring to combine. Cool and set aside.

Grind the almonds with the flour to a flourlike consistency in a food processor. Set aside.

Beat the egg yolks with the granulated sugar on high speed until light yellow and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes.

Fold in the chocolate mixture.

Fold in the almond flour until just incorporated.

Beat the egg whites to soft peaks in a separate bowl, then carefully fold them into the batter.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan and spread in an even layer.

Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the center of the cake comes out dry. Cool completely on a wire rack.

Invert the cake from the pan to a plate, carefully remove the parchment circle, then invert back onto a serving plate.

Dust the top with confectioner's sugar.

Serve with a dollop of the espresso cream on the side.

Whipped Mascarpone Cream with Espresso

CREMA DI MASCARPONE CON CAFFE

This luscious and elegant blend of sweetened mascarpone cheese with espresso and whipped egg whites is a fantastic accompaniment to chocolate cakes and tortes. Or try it with a tablespoon of rum, cognac, or grappa instead of the espresso to serve with baked, poached, or fresh seasonal fruit, berries, and tarts. Adding a little nutmeg or grated orange zest is divine too.

Makes about 3 cups:

- 3 egg yolks (*see Note*)
- 1/4 cup sugar
- One 250-gram container (about 9 ounces) Italian mascarpone
- 2 tablespoons brewed espresso
- 2 egg whites at room temperature
- 1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1/8 teaspoon fine sea salt

Beat the yolks and sugar with an electric mixer on medium speed until the mixture is light yellow and ribbons fall from the beaters when they are lifted up.

Add the mascarpone and espresso.

Mix at low speed and blend until smooth, then at high speed until soft peaks form.

Beat the egg whites in another bowl with clean and dry beaters on low speed until foamy.

Add the cream of tartar and salt, then continue to beat, increasing the speed in increments, until stiff peaks form.

Fold the whites into the mascarpone mixture.

Keep refrigerated.

The crema can be made 3 to 4 hours before serving. If it separates a little bit by becoming thin on the bottom and still fluffy on the top, give it a gently stir to make it smooth throughout before serving.

Note: This recipe contains raw eggs. People with health problems, the elderly, or those who are pregnant should avoid consuming foods with uncooked eggs that, in rare cases, carry the potential for Salmonella infections.