
Raspberry Charlotte

Makes 1 Cake

Cake Base and Ladyfingers

- 4 egg whites
- 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar (120 grams)
- 4 egg yolks
- 1 cup of flour (120 grams)
- pinch of cream of tartar
- small amount of powdered sugar

Special Equipment

- A pastry bag with a round nozzle tip approximately 1/2" to 3/4" in diameter. The larger the nozzle, the bigger the ladyfingers.
- A round stainless steel ring mold, 8" diameter x 2 1/2" height. If you can't find the exact size, the recipe can be easily adapted to any size mold; simply adjust the size of the ladyfingers accordingly. Leftover mousse can be piped into small sherry glasses and served with fruit.
- A cardboard cake round, 8" diameter. You can buy cardboard cake rounds from craft stores or cake decorating stores, but I make my own from recycled cardboard. I use my ring mold to trace the template onto the cardboard, and then I cover the cardboard with plastic wrap. It doesn't have to look pretty, it will be discarded later.
- If you have a kitchen scale, use it. I've provided imperial measurements but I prefer the accuracy of grams, especially when baking.
- A beautiful cake platter (to show off your creation).

Cooking Instructions

Preheat oven to 365F.

Line two baking trays with parchment or a non-stick liner, such as Silpat. Place the ring mold on top of one of the lined trays.

In a large bowl, combine egg whites and a pinch of cream of tartar. With a hand-held or stand-up mixer, whip the egg whites for a few minutes at medium-low speed. Don't rush this process as whisking egg whites too quickly will produce unstable egg whites that can deflate easily. Gradually add approximately half of the sugar, increasing the speed to high just until you have a firm peak. Over-whipping the egg whites can turn beautifully glossy, frothy egg whites into a curdled mess.

Add the balance of the sugar to the eggs yolk and whisk until the yolks turn a pale yellow. You can do this by hand or by mixer.

Gently fold the yolk mixture into the meringue, until well incorporated. Then fold in the flour until it is well incorporated.

You should have a light, smooth batter. Don't be concerned if the batter is somewhat loose. It should puff up, once it's in the oven.

The mixture is now ready to scoop into a piping bag. You will find it easier to manage a piping bag if you have a narrow canister or large-mouthed glass that will hold the piping bag in place while you fill it. Simply tuck the bag into the container, tip down and roll the large end of the bag over the edge of the canister or glass. Do not overfill it.

Cake Base

Fill the ring mold (on the lined-baking tray), with 1/2" deep batter. It is easy to spread the batter evenly with your piping bag if you start in the middle and pipe a thick spiral to the edge of the mold.

Bake for approximately 10 to 12 minutes until golden.

Loosen the edges of the cake mold with a knife; carefully remove the cake base from the ring mold and place it on a rack to cool. Using a sifter or a fine-mesh sieve, lightly sprinkle the golden side with powdered sugar.

Once the cake is cooled, trim the cake into a 7 1/2" round. This will make perfect sense when you assemble the charlotte.

Ladyfingers

Pipe 4" lengths of batter, approximately 3/4" thick onto your lined baking tray, leaving at least 1/2" between each ladyfinger. Just before baking, lightly sprinkle each ladyfinger with powdered sugar.

Bake for approximately 10 – 12 minutes until golden. Carefully remove the ladyfingers from the tray with a spatula and place them on a rack to cool.

Assembling The Charlotte

Place a tray (that will easily fit into your fridge) on your work surface.

Place the cardboard cake round on the tray and place the ring mold directly on top of the cardboard. (The cardboard acts as a temporary base for the cake.)

Now, place the trimmed cake, sugar side down, directly on the centre of the cardboard. You should have a half-inch gap from the cake to the ring mold.

Line the inside of the ring (the gap) with the ladyfingers, flat sides facing in. The bottom of the ladyfingers can be trimmed slightly so that they are flat on the bottom. You will want a snug fit. Set aside, loosely covered, until the mousse is ready.

Raspberry Mousse

Ingredients

- 1 1/4 cup raspberry puree – thaw a package of frozen raspberries and puree in a food processor; strain the mixture and measure 1 1/4 cups
- 1/2 cups sugar (plus more if required)
- 1 Tbsp plus 1 tsp unflavoured gelatin
- 1 cup whipping cream, whipped until light and fluffy (do not over-whip)

Cooking Instructions

In a small saucepan, melt the sugar and the strained puree until the sugar has dissolved. If the berries are tart, you may wish to add more sugar. Add the unflavoured gelatin and mix until well combined. Set aside to cool slightly.

Fold in the whipping cream until the mixture is combined.

This mixture will be poured into the lined mold, almost to the top of the ladyfingers. (Leave a little room at the top for garnishing with fresh raspberries.)

The mixture should be somewhat firm; if it is too runny, it will seep through the ladyfingers and make a mess. If the mixture needs additional firming, place it in the refrigerator for the gelatin to take effect. You want the texture soft enough to pour into the lined mold, but firm enough so that it will hold its shape. If you do place it in the refrigerator, check it every now and then to make sure it has the correct consistency.

Once the raspberry mousse has been poured into the mold, place it in the refrigerator until the mousse is firm enough to cut through. (It can also be placed in the freezer, if you're pressed for time.)

To remove the mold, place a warm damp cloth on the cold metal ring to warm it, and then carefully lift the mold from the Charlotte.

With a cake platter in front of you, lift the charlotte, peel off the cardboard base, and carefully place the cake on the platter.

Decorate the top of the cake with fresh raspberries and a sprig of mint.

Stand back and admire. Your guests will be duly impressed.

Chocolate Mousse

Serves 8 to 12 (depending on the size of the container)

Ingredients

- 18 ounces good quality semi-sweet chocolate,* chopped
- 4 cups 35% whipping cream
- 1 saucepan filled with one inch of barely simmering water
- large wire whisk
- 1 dozen sherry or shot glasses

** I use Bernard Callebaut semi-sweet chocolate — 66% cocoa.*

Special Equipment

- parchment paper
- piping bag with plain tip, optional

Cooking Instructions

If you want the mousse to rise above the containers, as pictured, first make a collar by wrapping a piece of parchment or waxed paper around each container, leaving about 1" excess above the container. Secure the paper with tape or kitchen twine. Prepare your containers prior to making the mousse.

The key to this mousse is the temperature of the chocolate. It should be completely melted but not too hot. The ideal temperature is 50 degrees Celsius, which is warm, not hot, to the touch. If you have a kitchen thermometer handy, use it.

In a metal bowl that fits over the saucepan of barely simmering water, ensuring that the bowl does not touch the hot water, add the chopped chocolate and 1 cup of whipping cream. Gently melt the chocolate, stirring occasionally, until the chocolate is fully melted, but not overly hot.

In the bowl of a stand-up mixer fitted with a wire whisk, add the remaining 3 cups of whipping cream. Whisk the cream until it is thickened only. The cream should not be firm enough to hold its shape. When you remove the whisk from the bowl, the cream should drip off in thick beads.

With a whisk close at hand, pour the warm melted chocolate, all at once into the barely whipped cream. Combine with a whisk until the chocolate mousse is uniform in colour. The texture will firm as you combine the chocolate with the cream.

The mixture is now ready to pour into your containers.

If you have a piping bag, pour the mixture into a piping bag; this will help get the mousse into the glasses neatly, without any mess. Managing a piping bag is easy when you use a narrow canister or large-mouthed glass to hold the piping bag in place while you fill it. Simply tuck the narrow end of the bag into the container (tip side down) and roll the large end of the bag over the edge of the container, like a cuff, to hold it in place.

Pipe or spoon the mixture into the glasses and refrigerate until set.

Pear Chips

Ingredients

- 1 firm pear, washed
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- lemon zest (white pith removed) from ½ lemon
- a mandoline or single-blade slicer
- parchment-lined baking tray.

Cooking Instructions

Preheat oven to 200°F.

Combine the sugar, water and lemon zest in a small saucepan and heat the mixture until the sugar is completely dissolved.

Slice the pear into paper-thin slices using a mandoline or single-blade slicer/grater.

Using a pastry brush, coat both sides of each pear slice with the sugar-water solution. Place the coated slices on the parchment-lined tray, being careful not to overlap the slices.

Dry in the oven for 2 to 3 hours. To test the chips, remove the tray from the oven and allow the pears to cool for 10 minutes (away from a humid kitchen). If your kitchen is warm, place the tray of pears outside to cool them. Gently peel the pears from the parchment. If they are firm and crisp, they are ready. If not, continue to dry them in the oven for another half hour and test again.

The pear chips can be made a few days ahead of time and kept in a covered container.

Chocolate Leaves

Ingredients

- 6 ounces good quality chocolate, chopped into small pieces
- Small, firm leaves, washed and completely dried
- a parchment-lined tray

Cooking Instructions

Melt the chocolate in a metal bowl placed over a saucepan filled with one inch of simmering water. The bowl should not touch the water. When the chocolate has just melted, dip the cleaned leaves into the chocolate and place on a parchment-lined tray. Try to coat only one side of each leaf with chocolate as this will make it easier to remove. Place the leaves in the refrigerator to firm the chocolate.

Once the chocolate has firmed, carefully peel back the leaf from the chocolate.

To serve the mousse, remove from the refrigerator approximately 20 minutes before serving. Remove the parchment collar and garnish with the pear chip and chocolate leaf just before serving.