



MAHIN'S SUPER-CHOCOLATEY CHOCOLATE CAKE

No party is complete without dessert and the dessert that has always been synonymous with big celebrations in our house is my mother's decadent chocolate cake with an almost meringue-y crust. The cake has very little flour, so the velvety chocolate is really the star of the show. It goes beautifully with espresso or an herbaceous Amaro at the end of a meal. And if you happen to add a dollop of barely sweetened whipped cream, I guarantee no one will be mad about it.

INGREDIENTS

12 oz semi-sweet (65%) chocolate
6 tablespoons strong coffee or espresso
2 sticks of butter, cut into pieces at room temperature
6 extra-large eggs room temperature, separated
1 cup sugar
2/3 cup (3 ozs) flour

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°, grease 9-inch round springform cake pan with softened butter.

1. Melt chocolate & coffee. I do this in 30-second increments in the microwave but you can use a double boiler too. Set aside to cool
2. Cream butter and sugar until pale
3. Add egg yolks one at a time
4. Fold in sifted flour
5. Add cooled chocolate to mixture by hand
6. In a clean bowl beat egg whites until stiff but still glossy
7. Gently fold egg whites into chocolate mixture with spatula
8. Bake for approximately 30-35 minutes until top begins to crack. Do not overcook

PEPPERY PLUM COMPOTE

Charcuterie boards are one of my favorite ways to entertain - the bigger the better. They're casual and interactive and there are lots of delicious flavor combinations to uncover and share. Creamy cheeses and strong cured meats beg for bright accompaniments this deeply purple Damson plum compote. My dear friend, Laura Aviva, turned me on to this savory combination of plum and pepper and it's highly addictive. We love a couple of spoonfuls atop yogurt for breakfast, too.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lbs Damson plums
1/4 cup sugar
2 springs fresh thyme
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
3 tablespoons water

DIRECTIONS

1. Quarter and pit plums and place in non-reactive saucepan
2. Add sugar and stir and allow mixture to sit until dissolved
3. Add pepper (don't be shy) and thyme and water
4. Bring mixture to a boil then simmer for 8-10 minutes or until fruit is clear and syrup is glossy
5. Let cool. Resist temptation to spoon over vanilla ice cream