

MOCHA YULE LOG

Serves 12

Prepare the Chocolate Sponge Cake.

Prepare the Mocha Butter Cream.

Prepare the Meringue Mushrooms.

Prepare the Sugar Syrup.

Whip the prepared Mocha Butter Cream to spreading consistency.

Place the cooled sheet of Chocolate Sponge Cake on a sheet of parchment paper or plastic wrap.

Add the dark rum to the cooled Sugar Syrup. Using a small pastry brush, evenly coat the sponge cake with the syrup.

Cover the sponge cake with a 3/8 inch layer of the Mocha Butter Cream with the aid of a spatula.

Roll the cake over itself to form a roll. Wrap and refrigerate for at least one hour before assembling the Yule Log.

Remove the rolled cake from refrigerator. Slice off two 1/2 to 3/4 inch sections from each end of the roll.

Frost the log completely with the Mocha Butter Cream.

Place the 2 slices of cake onto the log approximately 2 inches from either end. Frost the top and the sides of the slices to form the look of cut branches.

Dip a fork into hot water, press lightly into the frosted log, and run the length of the log to form the look of bark. Decorate the "cut branches" and ends of the logs in a circular pattern to form "rings".

Refrigerate cake. Decorate, as suggested below, just before serving.

Dust lightly with powdered sugar to give the impression of frost or snow, if desired.

Decorate the log with several Meringue Mushrooms. The mushrooms may be dusted with cocoa powder to achieve a more authentic look.

CHOCOLATE SPONGE CAKE

Makes one 10 inch cake

6 large eggs, separated
½ cup cornstarch
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons powdered cocoa
1 2/3 cup sifted confectioners sugar
4 tablespoons warm tap water
½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
pinch of sea salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Separate the eggs, making certain that none of the yolk mixes with the whites.

Sift the cornstarch, flour, and powdered cocoa.

Whip the yolks and 1 cup of sugar at high speed for 5 minutes, until the mixture whitens and forms a ribbon.

Reduce the mixer speed to low and pour in the water and vanilla. Immediately fold in the cornstarch, flour, and cocoa. Set aside.

Whip the egg whites with a pinch of salt in a separate bowl. Start at low speed; then increase speed as the whites begin to rise. Continue whipping while gradually adding the remaining 2/3 cup of sugar until the whites form soft peaks. Do not overwhip.

Gently fold the yolk mixture into the whites with the aid of a rubber spatula. Pour the batter into a 3 inch deep, well-buttered and floured 10 inch cake pan.

Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 25 minutes. Test by inserting a skewer or toothpick into the cake. The cake is done if the skewer comes out clean.

Turn out the cake immediately and cool completely before using.

MOCHA BUTTER CREAM

1 cup heavy whipping cream
1 ½ cups evaporated cane juice or sugar
1/8 teaspoon sea salt
2 tablespoons instant espresso or instant coffee powder
1 pound (4 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into pieces, at room temperature
6 large egg yolks

Combine the whipping cream, sugar, salt, espresso, and 1 stick of butter in a heavy saucepan. Place over high heat and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat.

Beat the egg yolks in a glass or stainless steel bowl with a wire whisk. Slowly, pour the hot liquid into the beaten eggs, whisking constantly. Pour the mixture back into the saucepan and place over high heat. Return to a boil, stirring continually. Remove from flame and transfer to the bowl of your electric mixer.

Whip on high speed for 5 minutes to aerate and cool the mixture. Reduce speed to low and add the remaining 3 sticks of slightly softened butter, 1 stick at a time, until completely blended. Resume whipping on high speed for another 7 to 10 minutes, until the frosting is fluffy and achieves a spreadable consistency. If after 10 minutes the frosting remains too liquid, chill for 5 to 10 minutes and rewhip.

HINT:

Prepare the butter cream in advance and store in a sealed container. Keeps for three days in the refrigerator and one month in the freezer. Defrost in the refrigerator overnight and whip until fluffy when ready to use.

MERINGUE MUSHROOMS

Serves 12

12 egg whites
pinch of sea salt
1 ¼ cups evaporated cane juice or sugar
1 tablespoon grated orange rind
1 tablespoon grated lemon rind
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

TO PREPARE THE MERINGUE:

In a large mixing bowl, combine the egg whites and the pinch of salt. Beat with an electric mixer at high speed until the egg whites turn a foamy white. Add the sugar, a few tablespoons at a time, and continue beating until the meringue mixture forms stiff glossy peaks.

Reduce the speed of the mixer to low and add the grated orange and lemon rinds and the vanilla extract. Do not overbeat.

TO FORM THE MUSHROOMS:

Line a sheet pan with parchment paper.

Place meringue in pastry bag with a standard tube. To create the stems, squeeze 1 ½ inch straight lines of meringue onto the parchment paper. To form the mushroom crowns, hold the pastry bag 1 inch over the parchment paper and perpendicular to the pan and squeeze a dollop of meringue, about the size of a half dollar, from the pastry tube.

Bake in 225 degree oven for 4-5 hours until the meringues are dry.

TO ASSEMBLE THE MUSHROOMS ON YULE LOG:

Indent the bottom of the crowns with a blunt edge such as a butter knife.

Carefully place the stems into the Butter Cream like birthday candles. Gently place the crowns on top of the stems. Dust with cocoa powder if desired.

SUGAR SYRUP

Makes 1 ½ cups

½ cup evaporated cane juice or sugar

1 cup water

1 tablespoon flavoring if desired (see Hint below).

Combine the sugar and water in a small saucepan and boil over high heat. Remove from flame and allow to cool. Stir in flavoring, if desired. The syrup may be prepared in advance and stored, covered, in the refrigerator.

HINT:

Just about any liqueur or fruit juice may be mixed with the sugar syrup and used as a flavoring.

Fruit and liqueur flavors may be mixed as well as matched.