



Cuizoo Cooking School

December 7, 2019

Happy Holidays!

Italian Yule Log Cake, Meringue Mushrooms, Chocolate Almond Truffle Pinecones

Italian Tiramisu Yule Log Cake

Serves 8-10

Recipe adapted from epicurious.com

Cake:

1/2 cup sifted cake flour (not self-rising; sift before measuring), plus additional for dusting pan
5 large eggs, separated, left at room temperature for 30 minutes
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar, divided
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
1/2 stick (1/4 cup) unsalted butter, melted and cooled
2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar

Espresso syrup:

1/2 cup espresso or very strong black coffee
2 tablespoons sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract (Can substitute 1 T of Cognac or brandy too)

Filling:

8 ounces mascarpone cheese
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon vanilla extract (Can substitute 1 tablespoon Cognac or brandy too)
1/2 cup chilled heavy cream

Ganache:

12 ounces bittersweet or dark chocolate (60-70%), finely chopped
3/4 cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons light corn syrup

Decoration:

Meringue Mushrooms
Chocolate Almond Truffle Pinecones
Unsweetened cocoa for dusting
Confectioners' sugar for dusting
Rosemary, Cranberries, or other garnishes

Special Equipment

A 15- by 10- by 1-inch rimmed sheet pan (aka jelly-roll pan; small offset spatula (optional, but really helpful); long rectangular or oval platter or wooden serving board

1. Make cake:

- Heat oven to 350°F with rack in middle. Butter pan and line bottom and sides with 1 sheet of parchment paper. Butter paper and dust with additional flour, knocking out excess.
- Beat together yolks, vanilla, and 1/2 cup sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer at high speed until thick and pale and mixture forms a ribbon that takes 2 seconds to dissolve when beaters are lifted, 5 to 8 minutes in a stand mixer or 8 to 12 minutes with a handheld. Sift half of flour over yolks and fold it in gently but thoroughly, then sift and fold in remaining flour.
- Beat whites with salt and cream of tartar in a large metal bowl with cleaned beaters at medium speed until they just hold soft peaks. Beat in remaining 2 tablespoons sugar, 1/2 tablespoon at a time, and continue to beat until whites just hold stiff peaks.
- Fold 1/4 of whites into yolk mixture to lighten, then fold in remaining whites gently but thoroughly.
- Stir 1/2 cup batter into melted butter in a small bowl until combined, then fold butter mixture into batter gently but thoroughly. Spread batter evenly in sheet pan and rap once on counter to help eliminate air bubbles.
- Bake until top of cake springs back when gently pressed with finger and it is just slightly golden, about 10-14 minutes.
- Sift top of hot cake evenly with confectioners' sugar and cover cake with a clean kitchen towel (not terry cloth) followed by a baking sheet. Holding sheet and cake pan together with oven mitts, flip cake onto cloth on baking sheet. Carefully peel off and discard parchment paper.
- With a long side nearest you and using towel as an aid, roll up cake in towel, jelly-roll style, keeping it wrapped in towel. Cool cake completely, seam-side down in towel, on a rack.

2. Make espresso syrup:

- Bring espresso and sugar to a boil in a small saucepan, stirring until sugar dissolves, then boil until reduced to a scant 1/4 cup. Remove pan from heat and stir in vanilla extract/Cognac, then cool to room temperature.

3. Make filling:

- Slowly mix mascarpone for a few seconds in a large bowl with an electric mixer until loosened.
- Beat heavy cream with sugar, cinnamon, and vanilla extract/Cognac in another bowl at medium speed until it just holds stiff peaks. Stir 1 cup of whipped cream into mascarpone mixture to lighten it. Fold remaining whipped cream in gently to combine.

4. Make ganache:

- Put chopped chocolate in a large bowl. Heat cream in a small saucepan over medium heat until it just comes to a boil, then pour over chocolate and let stand 3 minutes. Stir slowly with a whisk until smooth. If bits of chocolate remain unmelted, set bowl over a pan of barely simmering water and heat, stirring gently, until completely smooth, and remove from pan. Stir in corn syrup. Chill, stirring a couple of times, until it thickens to an easily spreadable consistency, about 15 to 20 minutes.
5. Assemble yule log:
- Gently unroll cooled cake on a baking sheet, keeping it on towel, then arrange baking sheet so that long side of cake that was inside roll is nearest to you. Brush all of cooled espresso syrup all over surface of cake. Spread filling with offset spatula evenly over cake, leaving a 1/2-inch border all around. Starting from long side nearest you, roll up cake without towel, leaving it seam-side down on baking sheet. Gently brush off any excess confectioners' sugar.
 - Cut a 1 1/2-inch-long diagonal slice from each end of roll and reserve. Transfer cake, using 2 metal slotted spatulas as aids, seam-side down on platter. Using ganache as "glue," attach end pieces, diagonal sides down, on top and side of log to resemble branches.
 - Spread ganache all over roll and branches with offset spatula, making it resemble tree bark (see Cooks' notes). Dragging a fork along the ganache makes realistic bark.
 - Arrange a few meringue mushrooms and pinecone truffles, if using, around Yule log, and very lightly sift a little cocoa over log and mushrooms first, followed by a little confectioners' sugar to resemble a light dusting of snow.
 - Decorate with additional rosemary, cranberries, or anything that you desire!

Cooks' notes:

- Brands of mascarpone vary in consistency. BelGioioso, a widely distributed brand, is as thick and dense as cream cheese, while other brands can be looser.
- Yule log can be made 1 day ahead and chilled, loosely covered with plastic wrap. Bring to room temperature before serving.
- If ganache becomes too firm to spread, remelt it by setting bowl over a saucepan of barely simmering water and stir gently until smooth. Chill ganache again, if necessary, to get it to a spreadable consistency.

Chocolate Almond Truffle “Pinecones”

- 1 cup Heavy Cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract (Can use 1 T Amaretto instead)
- 1/4 teaspoon almond extract
- 18 ounce chocolate chips
- 1 cup sliced and toasted almonds for decorating
- Pinch of salt

Heat the heavy cream with a pinch of salt in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat. Add the chocolate chips and stir until melted and thoroughly combined. Stir in extracts and place in a bowl. Refrigerate the chocolate mixture until it sets, at least 4 hours. It will be a very firm ganache. Scoop out a chunk of the ganache and shape into a flattened cone. Starting at the base of the cone, insert the pointed ends of almond slices into the chocolate, working in circles to create a pine cone. Store in the refrigerator and soften slightly at room temperature to serve.

Meringue "Mushrooms"

3 large egg whites
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
Pinch of salt
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/2 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder (preferably Hershey's; not Dutch-process)
3 ounces bittersweet or semi-sweet chocolate, melted (see Cooks' notes)

Special Equipment

Stand mixer; large pastry bag fitted with 1/2-inch plain round tip (or a large ziploc with 1/2-inch tip cut off); 2 large baking sheets; small offset spatula (optional, but helpful)

1. Heat oven to 200°F with racks in upper and lower thirds. Line 2 large baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Beat egg whites with cream of tartar and salt in bowl of stand mixer on high speed until they just hold soft peaks. Beat in sugar, 2 tablespoons at a time, beating well after each addition, and continue to beat at high speed until meringue is very stiff, about 2 minutes. Beat in vanilla and beat again until very stiff.
3. Sift cocoa over meringue, and fold it in gently but thoroughly.
4. Spoon meringue into a pastry bag fitted with tip. Holding bag vertically, about 1/2 inch above baking sheet, pipe meringue into 25 mounds, ranging in size from about 1 1/2 to 2 inches in diameter, to resemble mushroom caps.
5. Still holding pastry bag vertically, pipe remaining meringue vertically into 25 "stems," 1 1/4- to 1 1/2 -inch-long lengths (make different lengths), making each base about 1 inch in diameter and tapering top end by pulling up on bag. (Pipe extra caps and stems with any remaining meringue in case of breakage.)
6. With a finger dipped in water, gently tamp down any peaks of meringue on caps to make a smooth mushroom cap.
7. Bake, switching position of sheets halfway through, until mushrooms caps are crisp and firm to touch, about 1 hour 45 minutes.
8. Turn off oven, then leave meringues in oven, with door closed, 30 minutes to dry. Slide parchment with meringues from baking sheets onto racks to cool. Cool completely.
9. With tip of a sharp paring knife, cut a small hollow the diameter of the tapered top of mushroom "stem" in center of the underside (flat side) of each mushroom cap.
10. Spread chocolate generously over flat bottom of a cap with offset spatula or back of spoon, then insert narrow end of stem. Let cap rest, stem end up, on a tray or baking sheet. Attach remaining stems to remaining caps, and let stand, stem ends up, at cool room temperature until chocolate is set, about 1 hour.

Cooks' notes:

- To melt chocolate, finely chop it then put it in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave at 50 percent power for short intervals (about 30 seconds), stirring after each interval, until smooth. Or, melt finely chopped chocolate in a dry metal bowl set over a saucepan of barely simmering water, stirring occasionally, until smooth.
- Meringue mushrooms can be made 1 day ahead and kept between sheets of wax paper in airtight cookie tins.

Timeline, 3 hour class

2:00-2:15 Welcome, Introductions, Wash Hands, Preheat oven to 350
2:15-3:00 Make Cake and Put in oven
(3:00-3:15 Bake Cake)
3:00-3:15 Make Ganache and Espresso Syrup and refrigerate Ganache
3:15 Remove Cake and Roll it, Cool
3:20-3:30 Make Mascarpone Filling and Set Aside
3:30-4:00 Assemble Meringue Mushrooms (chill) and Truffle Pinecones
4:00-4:30 Assemble and Frost Cake, Decorate
4:30-5:00 Eat Cake and Package Leftovers

Do Ahead:

Make Two Cakes and Cool
Shape Ganache Pinecones
Toast Almonds
Get Eggs out for cake 30 minutes ahead (1:30)

Free Time:

Decorate Cake Boxes
Trivia
Create Holiday Bakery Menus

Trivia:

1. The flavors of our yule log cake are similar to an Italian dessert called Tiramisu. What does the word tiramisu mean in Italian?
 - a. *Cheer me up
 - b. Chocolate
 - c. Pastry chef
 - d. Cake

2. The Yule Log and yule log cake history can be traced as far back as:
 - a. The 1800s
 - b. The 1400s
 - c. 1950
 - d. *The Iron Age (before the Medieval Period)

3. Original Yule Log Cakes were made to celebrate which winter holiday?
 - a. Christmas
 - b. Hanukkah
 - c. *Winter Solstice
 - d. New Years Eve

4. The Cakes were baked in the shape of a log in order to resemble what?
 - a. *The logs that people burned to celebrate the holidays and get good luck for the new year
 - b. The snowy woods in the winter time
 - c. Christmas trees
 - d. The wood that built their houses

5. After the advent of Christianity and the celebration of Christmas, many countries established their own Yule Log and Yule Log Cake traditions. In France, the yule log cake is called:
 - a. Croquembouche
 - b. Creme Brulee
 - c. *Buche de Noel
 - d. Tarte Tatin

6. Many Yule Log Cakes are made with edible decorations and things made of chocolate, meringue, and marzipan. We are not using marzipan today, but what is the main ingredient in marzipan?
 - a. Pecans
 - b. Margarine
 - c. *Almonds
 - d. Cranberries

7. When we make a Yule Log cake, we roll up a sponge cake and fill it. What is another name for a rolled sponge cake? (and a hint: it's the name of the pan we are using!)

- a. Sheet Pan Cake
- b. Pyrex Cake
- c. Roasting Cake
- d. *Jelly Roll

Timeline, 2 hour class

4-4:15 Welcome and Wash Hands

4:15-4:30 Make Ganache and Cool in Fridge, Make Espresso Syrup

4:30-4:45 Make Cake Filling and Set Aside

4:45-5:15 Assemble Meringue Mushrooms (1st and chill) and Truffle Pinecones

5:15-5:40 Assemble and frost cake

5:40 Eat and Package leftovers

Yule Log Cake History (Buche de Noel in French)

The history of the Yule log cake stretches all the way back to Europe's Iron Age, before the medieval era. Back then, Celtic Brits and Gaelic Europeans would gather to welcome the winter solstice at December's end. People would feast to celebrate the days finally becoming longer, signaling the end of the winter season. To cleanse the air of the previous year's events and to usher in the spring, families would burn logs decorated with holly, pinecones or ivy. Wine and salt were also often used to anoint the logs. Once burned, the log's ashes were valuable treasures said to have medicinal benefits and to guard against evil. Some groups claimed the ashes would protect the bearer from lightning—an important quality at a time when houses (and most of the contents in them) were made of wood.

With the advent of Christianity, the Yule log tradition continued, albeit on a smaller scale. Families may have burned a log on Christmas Eve, but smaller hearths became the norm so huge logs were impractical. Those small hearths, however, were perfect for baking cakes. We don't know who exactly made the first Yule log cake, but judging from the individual ingredients it could have been as early as the 1600s. Marzipan and meringue decorations, two of the most popular choices for Yule logs, appeared on many a medieval table. Sponge cake, which often constitutes the base of the log, is one of the oldest cakes still made today. It dates back to at least 1615, when the first known recipe appeared in Gervaise Markham's tome "The English Huswife."