

Chocolate Cloud Cake

<http://userealbutter.com/2012/02/05/chocolate-cloud-cake-recipe/>

Classic Home Desserts by Richard Sax

8 oz. good quality bittersweet chocolate, chopped (I used 67% Valrhona)
1/2 cup (8 tbsps) unsalted butter, cut into pieces, room temperature
2 whole eggs
4 eggs, separated
1 cup sugar
2 tbsps cognac or Grand Marnier
zest of an orange, grated
2 cups heavy whipping cream, chilled
2 tbsps sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/2 tsp almond extract
unsweetened cocoa powder or shaved chocolate for garnish

Oven 350°F. Line the bottom of an 8-inch springform pan with a round of wax or parchment paper. Don't butter the pan (I know, this made me nervous, but it works out fine). Melt the chocolate in a double boiler, a bowl set over a hot water bath, or on half-power in the microwave for a minute at a time (stirring in between each minute). Whisk the butter pieces into the chocolate until melted. In another bowl, whisk the two whole eggs with the four egg yolks and half of the sugar until blended. Whisk the warm chocolate mixture into the eggs and then add the cognac or Grand Marnier and the orange zest. In a large bowl, beat the four egg whites until foamy and slowly add the remaining half cup of sugar and continue beating to soft peaks. I used a stand mixer with balloon whip attachment. Fold a quarter of the egg whites into the chocolate mixture to temper it (the chocolate is quite thick and the whites are delicate, so we try to incorporate a small amount first to loosen the chocolate up before folding in the rest). Gently fold the remaining whites into the chocolate until it is uniform in color.

Pour the batter into the pan and smooth the top. Bake until the top of the cake is puffed up and the center no longer jiggles. This took me about 35 minutes. Take care not to overbake the cake. Let the cake cool in the pan on a cooling rack. The center of the cake will subside – this is intended. When the cake is cooled, loosen the cake from the sides of the pan with a knife and release the sides of the pan. I carefully slid my cake off the pan base onto the cake stand, although I couldn't remove the parchment without possibly destroying the cake. Just before serving the cake, whip the cream, sugar, vanilla and almond extracts in a stand mixer to soft peaks. Fill the crater of the cake with the whipped cream. Garnish with a dusting of cocoa powder or sprinkling of shaved chocolate. (I added candied blood orange peels too.) Serves 8-12.