

Seasons Cake

Inspired by Persephone

About the show

Inspired by Persephone, I have come up with 'Seasons Cake' encompassing the different seasons and gods that represent them. Demeter's half represents spring and new growth with a light orange sponge decorated with fondant cherry blossom flowers and filled with whipped cream. Hades' half represents the underworld and the darkness of winter with a rich Devils Food Cake covered with chocolate ganache and chocolate covered mint leaves. Based on a Greek myth, Persephone describes how the seasons may have come into being. When Persephone, daughter of Zeus and Demeter, is abducted by evil uncle, Hades, god of the underworld, Demeter in her anger withdraws her power away from the earth, leaving it barren. Persephone is tempted to eat a pomegranate seed from the Underworld in her despair and therefore seals her fate to be no longer free to live above earth. Her father, Zeus, decrees that although Persephone must now spend half the year in the Underworld, to appease Demeter and make the earth fertile again, she can also spend half the year as she has always lived. And so the seasons are born.



Notes on the recipe

This cake is a showstopper, perfect for any special celebration, whatever the season, giving your guests the chance to choose between the two flavours! Although the recipe has a lot of ingredients and steps, it isn't complicated to make if you take your time, as it just involves baking two different cakes which are later made into one.



Ingredients

Hades' Devils Food Cake

For the cake

50g good quality cocoa powder, sifted
100g light brown sugar
250ml boiling water
125g soft butter, plus extra to grease the cake tin
150g caster sugar
225g plain flour, sifted
1/2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
1/2 tsp baking powder
2 tsp vanilla extract
2 eggs

For the ganache

125g good quality dark chocolate
120ml double cream

For the decoration

100g good quality dark chocolate
Large mint leaves, about 20

Demeter's Orange 'Spring' Cake

For the cake

225g soft butter, plus extra to grease the tin
225g self-raising flour, sifted
1 level tsp baking powder
100g caster sugar
100g light brown sugar
4 eggs

Finely grated zest of 2 oranges

For the drizzle

Juice of 2 oranges
25g caster sugar
100ml double cream, whipped

For the decoration

White Fondant Icing, about 50g (depending on the amount of flowers)
Pink gel food colour
Icing Sugar

Equipment

20cm spring form round cake tin
Greaseproof paper
Baking trays
Multiple mixing bowls
A wooden spoon
A whisk
A small saucepan
A pastry brush
A spatula
A skewer or cake tester
A wire rack
A cake stand or serving plate
A sharp bread knife
A small flower cutter
A rolling pin



How to make the bake

1. A day or two before you want to serve the cake, make a start on the decorations.

2. To make the chocolate covered leaves, wash the mint leaves, press them flat and dry with kitchen roll. Melt the chocolate over a small saucepan of boiling water before using a pastry brush to coat each leaf with a thin layer of chocolate. Place them on a baking tray lined with greaseproof paper and leave in the fridge to set.

3. To make the fondant cherry blossoms, knead a small amount of white fondant with pink gel food colour until it is a light pink. Roll out the coloured fondant with a rolling pin to about 1 cm thick and cut out as many small flower shapes as you can. Mould each flower around your thumb to form a cup shape before setting aside on another greaseproof paper lined baking tray. To colour the centre, use a skewer to put a small blob of gel food colour in the middle of each flower and spread the centre out slightly with the tip to make spidery lines coming out to each petal. When you have coloured and shaped them all, leave them to one side to dry out completely.



4. When you want to make the cake, preheat the oven to 180°C and butter and line the cake tin with greaseproof paper. To make the chocolate devil's food cake, sieve the cocoa powder with the light brown sugar into a mixing bowl. Pour over the boiling water, whisk together and leave to one side. In a separate bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the vanilla extract and mix, then beat in one egg at a time followed by a spoonful of flour, to stop the mixture from curdling. When the eggs are well incorporated, use a spatula to fold in the remaining flour, baking powder and bicarbonate of soda before finally adding in the cocoa and water mix, little by little, till you are left with a runny chocolate mix.

5. Pour the mix into the prepared tin, level off with the back of the spatula before baking for 45 - 50 minutes until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Don't worry if the top is cracked as you will level it off later!

6. While the chocolate cake is in the oven, make a start on the orange cake. Put all the ingredients into a mixing bowl and beat well with a wooden spoon until you have a smooth cake mix. When the chocolate cake is baked, take out of the oven and leave to cool in the tin for 5 - 10 minutes before transferring onto a wire rack. Gently wipe before greasing and re-lining the tin with more greaseproof paper and pour in the orange cake mix, then bake for another 45 - 50 minutes until it is a light golden brown and a skewer comes out clean. When the orange cake is baked, leave to cool on the wire rack while you make a start on the fillings.

7. To make the chocolate ganache, heat the cream gently in a small saucepan until little bubbles start to appear around the side. Break up the chocolate in a bowl and pour over the hot cream to melt it. Stir with a spatula till the chocolate has fully melted.

8. To make the drizzle, juice the oranges you zested earlier and add to the caster sugar in the small saucepan. Boil together for 5 - 10 minutes until it looks syrupy in texture.

9. To assemble the finished cake, take the chocolate cake and level off with the bread knife to make a flat surface. Then divide down the centre vertically, rather than horizontally and place one half on the serving plate. Cover with half the ganache before placing the other cake half on top to make what looks like half a cake. Use the remaining ganache to cover the top of the cake before placing on the chocolate leaves.

10. Cut the orange sponge down the centre, as you did with the chocolate cake and place on the other side of the serving plate. (ESB Top Tip : To separate the sponges, you can place a small piece of greaseproof paper between them to make sure they don't touch!) Brush the bottom half of both halves of cake with drizzle before filling with half the whipped cream and putting the second half of cake on top. Cover with the remaining cream and the fondant blossom flowers.

11. Serve at any celebration to revel in the change of seasons and give your guests the choice between two different flavours!