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Dark Chocolate Cupcakes with Mexican Chocolate Glaze & Almond Brittle

FOR THE ALMOND BRITTLE

- ½ cup sliced almonds
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. corn syrup
- 2 tbsp. water
- Generous pinch of kosher salt

- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp. espresso powder
- Generous pinch of kosher salt
- Scant ¼ tsp. cayenne
- ¼ tsp. ground ceylon cinnamon

FOR THE CUPCAKES

- ½ cup + 6 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 6 tbsp. Dutch-process cocoa powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ½ cup buttermilk
- ¼ cup grapeseed or vegetable oil
- ½ tsp. pure vanilla extract
- ½ cup hot water
- 1½ tsp. espresso powder
- 1 large egg

FOR THE GLAZE

- 1 oz. unsweetened chocolate
- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 tbsp. light corn syrup
- 6 tbsp. heavy cream

TO MAKE ALMOND BRITTLE: Toast sliced almonds at 300° F until light brown and fragrant, 8 minutes. In medium saucepan, combine sugar, corn syrup, water, and salt, making sure to brush down sides of pan to keep sugar crystals from forming. Bring to boil then reduce heat and cook on medium-high without stirring until mixture begins to appear golden amber. (Once you get some color on the sides of pan, swirl sauce to evenly distribute caramel.) When entire mixture is golden amber, turn heat off and immediately add toasted almonds, stirring with spatula to combine. Spread evenly onto greased baking sheet and allow to cool completely. Once cool, break into 15 pieces and set aside.

TO MAKE CUPCAKES: Preheat oven to 350° F. Line two 12-inch muffin tins with 15 paper liners so there are 7 liners in one tin and 8 liners in other.

(Be sure to distribute liners evenly in each tin.) In large bowl, sift together flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. In medium bowl, whisk together buttermilk, oil, vanilla, hot water, and espresso powder. Add egg and whisk thoroughly to combine. Slowly add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and whisk until smooth. Drop 3 tablespoons batter in each of 15 paper liners. Bake 18 to 20 minutes, until wooden toothpick inserted in center of cupcake comes out clean. Allow to cool in pans 20 minutes.

TO MAKE GLAZE: In small saucepan, combine chocolate, butter, and corn syrup. Melt over low heat and whisk to combine. Stir in heavy cream, sugar, vanilla, espresso powder, and salt. Bring mixture to boil over medium heat; cook 5 minutes until thickened then remove from heat. Whisk in cayenne and cinnamon. Cover and let stand 10 minutes to cool.

To serve, remove cupcakes from pan and top each with spoonful of glaze and piece of almond brittle.

Makes 15 Servings

LET THEM EAT CAKE

SPOIL YOUR SWEETHEARTS WITH DELECTABLE DESSERTS FROM RESTAURATEUR AND COOKBOOK AUTHOR MALIKA AMEEN.
BY AMANDA CARGILL

PHOTOGRAPHS: OPPOSITE PAGE, NILOFAR HASHMI; THIS PAGE, VANESSA REES, ROOST BOOKS.

Meet the Author!

Malika Ameen is a Chicago-based pastry chef and owner of Aigre Doux. She has appeared on numerous TV shows, including *The Martha Stewart Show* and NBC's *TODAY* show, and was a cheftestant on the inaugural season of Bravo's *Top Chef Just Desserts*. Her first cookbook, *Sweet Sugar Sultry Spice: Exotic Flavors to Wake Up Your Baking*, includes selections from Ameen's favorite and most popular desserts.



Mango and Cream Meringue Cakes

FOR THE MERINGUE CAKES

- 20 medium-size fresh kaffir lime leaves
- 2 egg whites at room temperature
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. cream of tartar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup confectioners' sugar, sifted

FOR THE MANGOES

- 2 mangoes
- 2 tbsp. granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice, freshly squeezed
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. lemon zest, finely grated
- 2 tbsp. toasted unsweetened finely shredded or desiccated coconut

FOR THE CREAM

- 1 cup heavy cream
- Confectioners' sugar, to garnish

Preheat oven to 200° F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper.

Microwave kaffir lime leaves 10 seconds. Toss leaves and repeat process until they are dry and brittle, 10 to 12 times. Use coffee grinder to grind dried leaves into fine powder. Remove any stems that remain. Set lime leaf powder aside.

In bowl of stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment, whip egg whites, cream of tartar, and salt until frothy. Gradually add granulated sugar, continuing to whip until firm peaks form. In small bowl, sift together $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of lime leaf powder and confectioners' sugar. Fold confectioners' sugar mixture gently into egg-white mixture.

Spoon mixture into 6 mounds onto prepared baking sheet. Use back of

spoon to spread each mound into round meringue about 4 inches wide with slight indentation in middle. Sprinkle another $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of lime leaf powder over meringues. Bake meringues 1 hour and 15 minutes. Allow to cool completely in pan.

Meanwhile, prepare macerated mangoes: Peel and pit mangoes and cut flesh into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces. In medium bowl, stir together mangoes, sugar, salt, lemon juice, lemon zest, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon lime leaf powder, and coconut. Allow to macerate 2 hours.

Whip heavy cream in stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment until medium peaks form.

To serve, place baked meringue cakes on cake stand or in individual serving dishes. Top with dollop whipped cream, macerated mangoes, and light dusting of confectioners' sugar.

Makes 6 Servings

Crisp, creamy & tart, oh my!



Chef's Tip

Cooled meringues can be stored in an airtight container in the freezer for up to two weeks. To serve, allow them to thaw for several hours before assembling.

Angel Food Cake with Raspberry Chipotle Glaze

- 12 egg whites
- 1 cup cake flour
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups confectioners' sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cream of tartar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup fresh raspberries, to garnish

FOR THE GLAZE

- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely ground freeze-dried raspberries
- Scant $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground chipotle
- Scant $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla extract
- 5 tbsp. lemon juice, freshly squeezed

Place egg whites in bowl of stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment. Position oven rack in lower third of oven preheated to 350° F. Sift flour, confectioners' sugar, and salt onto sheet of parchment paper. Return flour mixture to sifter and repeat twice. Set aside.

Whip room temperature egg whites in mixer until frothy. Add cream of tartar and whip on medium speed until foamy. With mixer running, gradually add granulated sugar and whisk until soft peaks form. (Be careful to avoid overwhipping to point of stiff peaks, which causes cake to collapse when baking.) Turn mixer off and fold in vanilla with spatula to incorporate. Sprinkle one-quarter of flour mixture over whites and fold in with spatula. Repeat with remaining flour mixture, folding in quarter of mixture at a time. With large spoon, carefully transfer mixture into ungreased 10-inch tube pan.

Bake 40 to 45 minutes, until cake is lightly golden, springs back when touched, and wooden toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

Sweet MEETS Spicy!



Invert cake pan onto cooling rack. Let cake cool completely before removing from pan. Once removed, allow to cool additional 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, make raspberry chipotle glaze: In medium bowl, whisk together confectioners' sugar, ground raspberries, chipotle, and salt. Add vanilla and lemon juice and whisk until smooth. (The consistency should be thin enough that it pours easily but is still thick enough to spread.)

Transfer cooled cake onto plate. Pour glaze over top and, using offset spatula, quickly smooth glaze so it coats cake top and drizzles down sides of cake evenly. Garnish with fresh raspberries. Let glazed cake sit at least 1 hour before serving.

Makes 12 to 14 Servings

A BETTER WAY TO REMOVE YOUR CAKE FROM THE PAN

Once cool, remove cake by slipping metal spatula between cake and pan and slowly working tip around perimeter to release any cake sticking to pan.

Tilt pan on side and gently tap against countertop to loosen cake.

Cover open end of pan with cooling rack, invert pan onto rack, and tap pan firmly to release cake onto rack.

Allow to cool completely.

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