

DARK CHOCOLATE MIRROR GLAZE

Makes: 500g (enough to glaze an 8-inch cake)

Time: 30 minutes, plus overnight chilling time

INGREDIENTS

206g (1 cup) sugar

142g (½ cup, plus 1½ tbsp) heavy cream

12g (4 tsp) gelatin, powdered

60g (¼ cup) water, cold

148g (⅔ cups) water, room temperature

71g (½ cup, plus 5 tsp) cocoa powder

EQUIPMENT

Spatula

Fine mesh strainer

Hand blender

Thermometer

Wooden spoon

STORAGE

Store in the fridge in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

Tip: Make this the day before you're ready to glaze your cake, as the glaze needs to set in the fridge first before using.

METHOD

In a medium pot, bring sugar and heavy cream to a boil over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves.

In a small bowl, dissolve the gelatin in 60g (¼ cup) of cold water.

In a bowl, combine the 148g (⅔ cups) room temperature water with the cocoa powder, stirring with a spatula until it becomes a uniform paste.

Stir the bloomed gelatin into the cream-sugar mixture until dissolved, then stir in the cocoa powder paste until combined. Remove the pot from the heat, and pour the glaze mixture through a mesh strainer over a heatproof bowl to remove any clumps of undissolved cocoa powder. Emulsify the mixture with a hand blender to remove any lumps, until smooth.

Cover and chill in the fridge overnight to set, until ready to use.

When you're ready to glaze your cake, remove the glaze from the fridge and heat in the microwave until it's exactly 86 to 95°F (30 to 35°C), so it's liquid and pourable and will give your cake a shiny, uniform finish. If it looks like it's slightly separated, use a hand blender to blitz it together. Make sure to tap the container a bit so that the bubbles from blending go away.

RUM SYRUP

Makes: About 500g

Time: 15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

250g (1¼ cups) sugar

250g (1 cup) water

20g (4½ tsp) dark rum

EQUIPMENT

Whisk

STORAGE

Store in the fridge in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

METHOD

In a pot, bring sugar and water to a boil while stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and stir in rum. Let cool to room temperature.

Tip: This is known as a simple syrup, which is a sugar syrup made with a 1:1 ratio of sugar to water.

CHOCOLATE CAKE FINISHING: ASSEMBLY & PRESENTATION



Makes: 1 8-inch cake

COMPONENTS

1kg biscuit

500g rum syrup

1kg dark chocolate mousse

500g dark chocolate mirror glaze, rewarmed

170 Mini Me's

Vanilla ice cream, for serving

EQUIPMENT

Cardboard cake circle

8-inch cake ring

1 sheet acetate, cut at least 2 inches wide (at least the height of the cake you want to make) and 26 inches long (the circumference of the cake ring, plus a bit of extra to overlap)

Pastry brush

2 large offset spatulas

METHOD

Place the 8-inch cake ring on a parchment paper-lined sheet pan and line the inside with the sheet of acetate.

Place the first circle of chocolate cake in the bottom of the ring on the sheet pan and brush lightly with half the rum syrup. Press the cake with your fingers while you're doing this to ensure that the cake is not soaked but damp and lightly moistened with the syrup.

Using a ladle, pour half the mousse over the cake, pressing the top gently with the bottom of the ladle to make sure the mousse is even.

Place the second cake layer gently over the mousse, then brush again with the remaining rum syrup.

Pour the remaining mousse over the cake and press again to make sure the top is even. Transfer the assembled mousse cake, on the sheet pan, to the freezer. Freeze until firm, at least 4 hours.

Remove the sheet pan from the freezer and lift off the cake ring. Peel away the acetate. Using 2 large offset spatulas, transfer the mousse cake to a wire rack set in a rimmed sheet pan.

Once the glaze is ready, position it over the center of the cake and immediately pour it all on, allowing gravity and force to cover the cake fully in the glaze. Quickly, while the glaze is still liquid, use an offset spatula to smooth the top and sides of the cake, if necessary. Let the cake stand until the glaze sets completely.

CHOCOLATE CAKE FINISHING: ASSEMBLY & PRESENTATION

Using the offset spatulas, transfer the cake to a cardboard cake circle. Holding the bottom of the cake firmly with one hand, use a paring knife to trim the glaze from the bottom so it's even and clean. Place the cake on a serving plate or cake stand.

Arrange the meringues all over the top and side of the cake so the tips are pointing outward. Eat immediately within 1 to 2 days.

Tip: The finishing touch of adding the baked meringue drops is optional. If you use the meringue drops, make sure to twist them a tiny bit when you add them to the cake to ensure they are set firmly in the glaze and won't fall off.

To serve, slice the cake into thin wedges. Place a slice on a serving plate and place a small, thumbnail-sized scrap piece of flourless chocolate cake next to the cake. Make a quenelle of ice cream, or use a scoop, and place the ice cream on top of the cake scrap to prevent it from melting and sliding around the plate.

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Before you begin making the cake, it's imperative to be prepared and **work in a clean, orderly fashion**; this is one of Chef Dominique's most important lessons for success in baking. In this cake, the egg whites must be beaten in a well-cleaned and well-dried bowl to prevent any grease or water from impeding the white's ability to incorporate air and become light and fluffy. This is very important since the egg whites will be the sole ingredient to provide lift to the batter and, thus, lightness to the cake. This cake, also sometimes called an **Italian genoise**, is a French style that eschews chemical leaveners like baking powder and soda for the mechanical lift of air trapped in the protein of the beaten egg whites. When you add sugar to these beaten egg whites, the proteins in the whites become stabilized—and sweetened, of course—forming a smooth ingredient that can be efficiently folded into batter.

While traditional chocolate mousse doesn't include **gelatin** because it's meant to be soft and eaten soon after being made, Chef Dominique incorporates gelatin into the mousse for this particular cake to stabilize it and give it a pleasing texture, even when chilled. Gelatin comes in two forms: sheets and powdered. Either can be used in place of the other (at a ratio of 3 sheets per ¼-ounce packet of powdered gelatin). If you want to add flavorings to your mousse, such as peanut butter or hazelnut paste, mix them into the milk while it's heating to ensure they dissolve evenly. Making mousse begins with making ganache. Pouring the hot milk over the chocolate helps to melt the chocolate fully so it creates a ganache with a smooth texture. Once the ganache is made, it's important to allow it to cool to room temperature so that when it is folded into the whipped cream, it does not melt

the cream, thus deflating it and knocking out all the air that helps give the mousse its light, airy texture. Consistency is key when pouring the mousse onto the cake. Use the bottom of the ladle to lightly tap the mousse, which will help create an even layer across the cake and over the top of the finished dessert. The cake will need ample time to freeze so that it sets properly so do not try to rush this step. This **step** is essential to creating the ideal texture for the mousse, which should always be served chilled. If it comes to room temperature, it can become too soft to stay in place while cutting the cake.

It is best to make the **glaze** ahead of time and keep it in the refrigerator. That way, you can re-warm and re-emulsify it when you're ready to use it, instead of waiting around for hours so that it cools to the proper consistency. The glazing process happens fast: be prepared with your cake set on a wire rack before you glaze. When you pour the glaze, pour it from the center so that the glaze flows evenly over the cake, ensuring a smooth surface. If you pour from the side and then return to the center, the glaze will set on the outsides first, then be pushed up by the new glaze, forming ripples and waves which will mar the appearance of the cake.