

BLACK PEPPER, DARK CHOCOLATE AND SOUR CHERRY BREAD

This text and recipe is posted with permission from *The New Sugar & Spice: A Recipe for Better Baking* written by Samantha Seneviratne and published by Penguin Random House.

From the author: I think you'll be surprised when you taste this cake. Dark chocolate and cherries are obviously delicious together, but the black pepper adds a little smoky heat to mingle with the jammy fruit and bitter chocolate chunks. The idea for combining the three came to me after a glass of dark red wine. Try a warm slice with a glass of your favorite.

Oaktown note: We love using Single-Origin Kampot Black Pepper in this recipe. The flavor of Kampot pepper is truly special, with light, sweet citrus notes, a touch of roasted coffee and a lingering pepper finish.

Serves 8

Ingredients:

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature, plus more for greasing the pan
2 cups (9 ounces) all-purpose flour, plus some more for dusting the pan
1 1/2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
3/4 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1/2 cup sour cream, at room temperature
1/4 cup whole milk, at room temperature
3/4 cup (4 ounces) dried whole tart cherries, chopped
2 1/4 ounces semisweet chocolate (50 to 60 percent cacao), chopped (about 1/2 cup)
Sanding sugar, for sprinkling (optional)

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350F. Butter and flour a 4 1/2 by 8 1/2-inch loaf pan.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, pepper, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. In a large bowl, with an electric mixer, beat the butter and sugar on medium speed until pale and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, scraping down the bowl between additions, and the vanilla. Add half of the flour mixture and beat on low speed until just barely combined. Add the sour cream and the milk and beat briefly, then add the remaining flour mixture and beat just until combined. Fold in the cherries and chocolate.

Spoon the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top. Sprinkle with the sanding sugar. Bake until golden brown and a thin skewer inserted into the center comes out with moist crumbs attached, 50 to 60 minutes. Let cool on a rack for 15 minutes, then flip the loaf out of the pan, turn it right side up, and let it cool completely. I prefer eating this bread warm, the day that it's made.

Store leftovers, well wrapped, at room temperature for up to 2 days, or frozen for up to 1 month.

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