

# ROMANIAN AMANDINA AKA CHOCOLATE CAKE

All i can say about this cake is – wow. Wow in every way. Wow, she is a LOT of effort. Wow, it was hard trying to find a good recipe online. Wow, it took me a few attempts. And lastly, WOWOW does it taste good. An Amandine is a Romanian chocolate layered cake made up of a super soft chocolate sponge soaked in a rum syrup, sandwiching a chocolate buttercream, topped with chocolate fondant icing, and finished with some piped chocolate decoration. Chocolate 3 ways you say?? Sign me up.

Recipe Serves: 2 x 20 by 30 cm / 8 by 12 inch baking trays

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## SPONGE

4 Large Eggs  
40 g Plain/AP Flour, sifted  
10 g Cocoa Powder, sifted  
40 ml Vegetable Oil  
40 ml Full Fat Milk  
1 tsp Vanilla Bean Paste  
2/3 tsp White Wine Vinegar  
60 g Caster Sugar

## SYRUP

125 ml Water  
15 ml Rum  
20 g Honey  
1 tsp Instant Coffee

## CHOC CREAM

3 Large Eggs, yolks only  
150 g Caster Sugar  
15 g Cocoa Powder, sifted  
50 ml Whole Milk  
200 g Unsalted Butter

## CHOC ICING

140 ml Water  
250 g Caster Sugar  
40 g Honey/Golden Syrup  
10 g Cocoa Powder  
½ tsp Vanilla Bean Paste  
50 g Icing Sugar, sifted

## DECORATION

75 ml Double/Heavy Cream  
75 g Dark Chocolate, chunks

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- For the sponge, crack open the eggs and separate the yolks and whites in two large bowls.
- Add the flour, cocoa powder and vegetable oil into a small bowl and whisk until smooth.
- Transfer this mix into the bowl with the egg yolks, alongside the milk and vanilla bean paste. Mix until smooth and leave to one side.
- Preheat your oven to 170°C/340°F/Gas Mark 3 and LIGHTLY grease and line 2 x 20 by 30 cm / 8 by 12 inch baking tins (you want sides to be neatly lined).
- Add the white wine vinegar and a third of the caster sugar to the egg white bowl.
- Whisk them on a low to medium speed until the white begin to foam up. Pour in a 2nd third of sugar to the bowl and whisk again until the whites are no longer foamy or bubbly.
- Add the remaining sugar to the whites and continue whisking until you reach medium peaks.

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- Transfer a third of the whisked whites into the egg yolk mix and fold in until thoroughly combined. Give this a good mix to help loosen the batter.
- Gently fold in the loosened egg yolk mix to the whites until everything has been added and no visible white streaks remain.
- Carefully divide and pour the batter into your 2 lined baking tins and use an offset palette knife or back of a spoon to level out.
- Pop into the oven and bake for 22 to 24 minutes. Remove the tray from the oven and allow the sponge to chill in the tin for a few minutes before turning out onto a cooling rack and removing the baking paper.
- Allow the sponge to cool for a further 10 minutes before covering in clingfilm/saran wrap and leaving to cool completely.
- Whilst the sponges are baking/cooling, make the syrup by adding all the ingredients to a pan and place over a medium heat. Bring to a near boil before removing from the heat and allowing to cool.
- Make the chocolate cream filling by adding the egg yolks and sugar to a mixer bowl. Use the paddle attachment to mix on a high speed for 4 minutes until the yolks are light in colour and doubled in volume.
- Add the cocoa powder to the yolks and mix until combined.
- Pop the milk into the microwave for 30 seconds to heat before gently pouring it into the yolks with the mixer on low speed.
- Once all the milk has been added, mix again on high. Transfer everything to a saucepan and place over a low heat. Stir continuously until the mix has thickened.
- Remove from the heat and add the butter. Stir well until melted and then use a balloon whisk to vigorously whisk to avoid the mix splitting. Transfer to a shallow tray and cover with some clingfilm and leaving to completely cool (I left mine overnight).
- Once set, use an electric hand whisk or transfer contents to a mixer bowl and use the whisk attachment to whip the cream until lighter in colour and thickened to a firm but spreadable consistency. Leave to one side.
- To construct, place one of the sponges onto a serving board/chopping board. Use a pastry brush to liberally brush over the cooled coffee rum soak.
- Transfer all the chocolate cream on top of the sponge and use an offset palette knife to smooth for an even layer.

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- Brush the remaining soak over the second sponge before placing on top of the chocolate cream (syrup side down). Pop in the fridge to set.
- Use a hot knife to evenly divide the sponge (I went for 6 on the long edge and 4 on the short for small bite size pieces).
- Pop back in the fridge whilst you make the chocolate fondant. Add the water and sugar to a saucepan and place over a high heat. Bring to the boil before reducing the heat and allowing it to simmer for 15 minutes.
- Remove from the heat and stir in the honey/golden syrup.
- Place the saucepan into a bowl of ice cold water and stir until thickened – fyi, this takes a long time and is a gym workout so be ready for a sweat.
- Once considerably thick (honey sort of consistency), add in the cocoa powder and icing sugar and mix until smooth and glossy.
- Transfer to a piping bag. Grab the sliced cake and place onto a cooling rack, spaced apart. Pipe a good amount of chocolate fondant (or you could spoon it on) on top of each square – fyi I counted to 12 for each one when piping for even distribution (I have problems, I know).
- Pop back into the fridge to set.
- Whilst that is setting, make the whipped chocolate ganache for the decoration (optional but does look pretty). Add the cream to a pan and place over a gentle heat. Bring that to a near boil (look for the steam coming off it) before taking off the heat and adding the dark chocolate. Leave to sit for a minute or two before mixing until smooth.
- Leave the ganache to cool before using an electric hand whisk to whip. This will gradually become lighter in colour and texture, as well as thickening the ganache making it perfect pipeable consistency. As soon as the mix holds a medium peak, stop mixing.
- Transfer to a piping bag with a nozzle fitted (I used Wilton 131) and pipe a rosette on top of each square to finish.

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- Once cooked, place the bowl back onto the stand mixer and use the whisk attachment to mix on a high speed until you have a thick, glossy and stiff meringue.

- Switch over the whisk attachment to the paddle (if you are doing this with a handheld electric whisk, ignore this and keep going) and pop the mixer onto a medium speed. Add the diced fridge temp butter to the bowl in stages. NOTE: The fridge temp butter helps to reduce the temperature of the meringue, meaning no sloppy, soupy buttercream.

- Once that has been added, go in with the room temp buttercream bit by bit. Once you start adding this, the consistency of the BC will go from A to Z real quick. The texture will become firmer and it will resemble buttercream more so as you know it.

- After all the butter has been added, now is the time to go in with your additions of vanilla bean paste and melted white chocolate. NOTE: Make sure the white choc is completely cooled before you add it otherwise it will cause the chocolate to clump and harden as it mixes with the cold buttercream.

- Turn the speed down to the lowest and let it mix and do its thing for about 15 minutes. It'll go from clumpy to silky smooth with minimal air bubbles, making it perfect for coating the cake. NOTE: if you want to use this recipe to stack a cake, then use the buttercream before you let it mix for 15 mins to ensure it is sturdy enough.

- Crumb coat the cake with the buttercream and pop back into the fridge for another 30 to set.

- Use the remaining buttercream to smother, smush and decorate as you wish. Leave in the fridge to set and top with some florals if you wish.

- Remove the cake an hour before serving to relax before slicing and serving with a hot knife.