

BLACK FOREST CAKE aka Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte

This cake for me screams frozen gateaux that we would eat at Christmas when we were younger. Not sure if it is the nostalgia I love about this cake or the actual flavour combination that I love more. You know me, I adore a good filthy cake, and this is exactly that. We've got a deliciously moist chocolate sponge soaked in a kirsch syrup, sandwiching cherries and vanilla bean whipped cream and finished with a generous coating of shaved dark chocolate and topped with fresh cherries. Unbuckle those belts, let's feast.

Recipe Makes: 4 x 18 cm / 7 inch sponges

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SPONGE

330 g '00' / Plain Flour*
15 g Baking Powder*
170g Cocoa Powder*
660g Light Muscovado
Pinch of Sea Salt
3 Large Eggs
1.5tsp Vanilla Bean Paste
300g Vanilla Yoghurt
150ml Vegetable Oil
330ml Freshly Brewed Coffee

CHERRY FILLING

400 g Cherries, destoned
25 ml Kirsch Syrup

TO FINISH

125 g Dark Chocolate**
12 Cherries, fresh & whole

WHIPPED CREAM

750 ml Double/Whipping Cream
2 tbsp Kirsch Liquer, optional
40 g Icing Sugar*
1.5 tsp Vanilla Bean Paste

* sifted

** grated

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- Preheat the oven to 150°C Fan/340F/GM 3 and grease and line 4 x 7 inch/18 cm cake tins.
- For the **sponge**, add all the dry ingredients to a bowl and use a whisk to mix until combined.
- In a separate bowl, add all the wet ingredients and again, use a balloon whisk to mix until everything has emulsified (aka come together and is one smooth liquid).
- Pour the wet mix into the dry and use the balloon whisk to begin mixing. Switch out to a rubber spatula and use to clean the sides and bottom of the bowl to make sure there are no flour pockets. When there are no visible streaks of flour left, evenly distribute the batter between the four tins.
- Pop in the oven and **bake** for 30 to 32 minutes.
- Remove from the oven and allow the sponges to sit in the tins cooling for 10 minutes before turning out onto individual sheets of clingfilm/saran wrap. Before wrapping the sponges, allow them to sit for 5 minutes to air their bottoms (sounds weird but trust me on it) and allow any excess moisture to dry off. Wrap the sponges (not too tightly, let them breathe a little) and leave to completely cool.

METHOD CONTINUED

- Whilst your sponges are cooling, drain your **cherries** (if you are using pitted but keep the reserved syrup) and finely chop up (this is preference but i prefer a neat slice and you'll get a neat slice with finer chopped cherries, as opposed to whole/halved).
- Once your sponges have cooled, trim any domed tops off using a serrated knife (storing the surplus in Tupperware and using for your ice-cream and chocolate trifle pots). Use a pastry brush to liberally brush the tops of the sponges with the cherry syrup/kirsch.
- Make the **whipped cream** by adding all the ingredients into a stand mixer bowl. Using the whisk attachment, mix on a low to medium speed until you just hit medium peak. You don't want to mix any further otherwise your cream will be too stiff and run the risk of splitting. You want this to be silky smooth whilst having a bit of body to it.
- **Construct** the cake by placing your first soaked sponge onto your serving plate. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ of the cream onto the first layer and use an offset palette knife or back of a spoon to spread into an even layer.
- Add $\frac{1}{3}$ of your chopped cherries into the middle, leaving a 1cm gap from the outer edge. Gently press the cherries in before placing your second sponge on top.
- Repeat the cream and cherry process.
- Add the final sponge on top and use the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cream to crumb coat and final coat. Make sure you reserve a small amount at the end to pipe your rosettes on top. Place the cream coated cake into the fridge to set for 30 minutes.
- Grab your bar of chocolate, use the flat side to scrape a sharp knife across (be careful) to shave.
- Gently press the shavings into the side of the cake and top the cake with the remaining chopped cherries, again leaving a 1cm gap around the edge.
- Transfer any remaining cream into a piping bag with a nozzle of your choice fitted and pipe around the outer edge, framing the chopped cherries.
- Nestle the fresh cherries (stems on cause #aesthetics) into the cream and place in the fridge until serving.
- Slice with a hot knife and enjoy.