



Heaven scent

Valentine chocolate recipes
perfumed with herbs, spices
and flower essence

RECIPES AND PHOTOGRAPHS ALASTAIR HENDY

Ginger and fennel bitter chocolate thins

15 minutes + chilling

● Makes about 24 ● **Easy**

Easy and the perfect homemade after-dinner sweet fix.

250g dark chocolate
30g unsalted butter, softened
3 tsp golden syrup

3 tsp stem ginger in syrup, finely chopped
3 tsp fennel seeds, crushed

1 Melt the chocolate in a bowl over a pan of boiling water and stir in the remaining ingredients. Pour onto a tray lined with greaseproof paper and smooth it out to a thin layer.

2 Chill until set. Cut into neat squares or break into shards.

PER SERVING 68 kcals, protein 0.6g, carbs 7.7g, fat 4g, sat fat 2.3g, fibre 0.3g, salt 0.03g

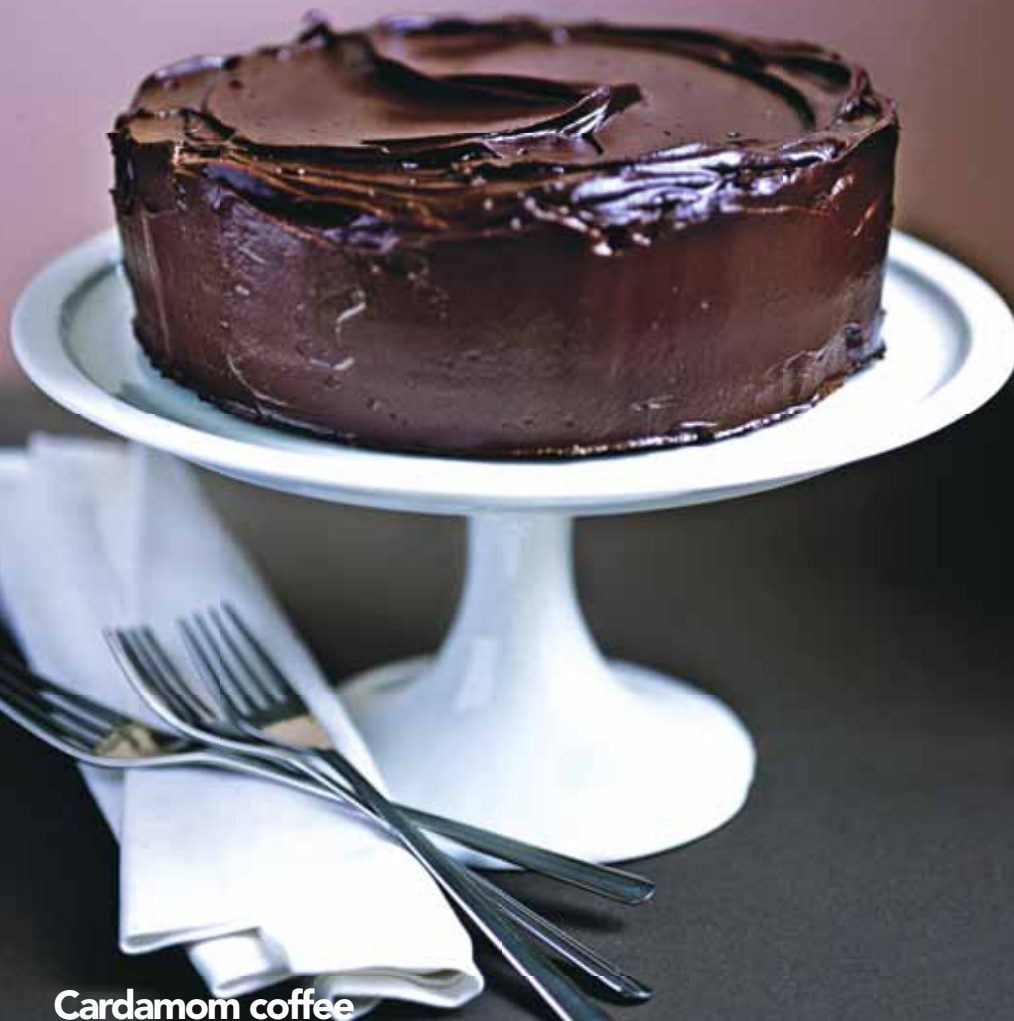
Try a white chocolate, rosemary and sea salt version

1 Melt 250g white chocolate and stir in 1-2 tsp of salt flakes and 2 tsp very finely chopped dried rosemary.

2 Pour onto a tray lined with greaseproof paper, smooth it out to a thin layer. Chill until set. Break into shards.

PER SERVING 62 kcals, protein 0.9g, carbs 6.8g, fat 3.6g, sat fat 2.1g, fibre 0g, salt 0.24g





Cardamom coffee mud cake

1 hour 45 minutes • Serves 12 • **Easy**

Cardamom-steeped coffee is Middle Eastern, and a marvel. Baked together in a chocolate cake, they make chocolate heaven.

12 cardamom pods, seeds removed and pods discarded; 200ml strong coffee; 200g dark chocolate; 200g unsalted butter; 3 eggs; 80ml soured cream; 400g golden caster sugar; 170g plain flour; 1 tsp bicarbonate soda; 30g cocoa powder

MUD ICING

400g dark chocolate
100g unsalted butter
1 tbsp golden syrup

1 Butter and line a 23cm springform cake tin and set the oven to 160C/fan 140C/gas 3.

2 Lightly crush the cardamom pods and put them in a small pan with the coffee. Simmer gently for 10 mins, until reduced

to around 120ml. Melt the chocolate with the butter and stir in the cardamom-flavoured coffee. Beat the eggs with the soured cream and sugar until combined, then stir this into the chocolate mixture. Sift the flour, bicarbonate of soda and cocoa into the chocolate egg mixture and fold in.

3 Spoon the cake batter into the tin and level the top. Bake for 1 hour 15 mins or until cooked through (test with a skewer or small, sharp knife, it should come out clean). Once cooled a little, turn out onto a wire rack to cool completely.

4 For the mud icing melt the chocolate, then mix in the butter and the golden syrup until smooth and remove from the heat. Leave to cool until spreadable.

5 Slice the cake into 2 layers, spread 1 cut surface with some of the chocolate mixture and sandwich together. Brush any crumbs off the cake and then spread the remaining icing around the sides and top. Leave to set.

PER SERVING 675 kcals, protein 6.2g, carbs 80.8g, fat 38.6g, sat fat 22.7g, fibre 2g, salt 0.46g



Earl Grey chocolate mousse with orange blossom cream

25 minutes + chilling • Serves 4 • **Easy**

200g 70% dark chocolate, plus extra to make chocolate shavings
2 tbsp Earl Grey tea (leave a tea bag in water for 5 mins)
4 eggs, separated
20g icing sugar
1/2 – 1 tbsp orange flower water
100ml double cream, well chilled

1 Melt the chocolate with the tea in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Stir it occasionally, then remove the bowl and leave the mixture to cool a little. Beat the egg yolks into the chocolate.

2 Using an electric whisk, beat the whites until stiff, then fold into the chocolate mixture. It's best to mix in a big spoonful thoroughly first then fold in the rest. Spoon the mousse into 4 cups or glasses and chill overnight.

3 Tip the icing sugar into a large bowl and whisk in the orange flower water, then while whisking, slowly pour in the cream, and continue to whisk until the mixture forms soft peaks. Spoon the cream on top of the mousses, and sprinkle with the chocolate shavings to serve.

PER SERVING 517 kcals, protein 11.7g, carbs 28.4g, fat 40.4g, sat fat 19.7g, fibre 2.9g, salt 0.23g



Java spice chocolate cake with roasted coffee cream

1 hour • Serves 10 • **Easy**

Proper grown-up chocolate cake with a trip to the spice islands thrown in.

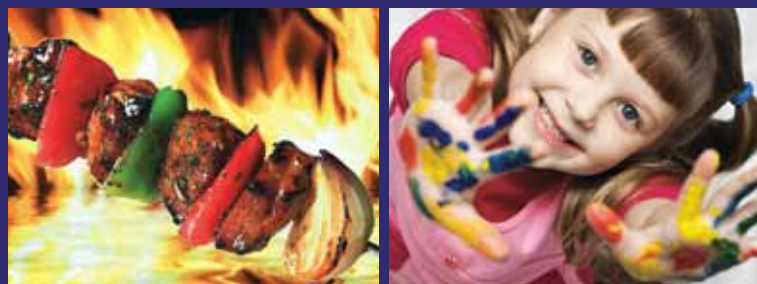
60g cocoa powder, plus extra for dusting
1 tsp ground cloves
3 tsp ground cinnamon
a good grating of nutmeg
100g unsalted butter
220g golden caster sugar, plus 1 tbsp
3 medium eggs
180g plain flour
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
1 tsp baking powder
400ml double cream
1 1/2 tbsp roasted coffee beans, finely ground

1 Heat the oven 180C/fan 160C/gas 4. Butter and line the base and sides of 2 x 18cm loose-bottomed cake tins with baking parchment. Mix the cocoa powder, ground cloves, cinnamon and nutmeg. Reserve 3 tsp, and mix the rest with 200ml boiling water. Cream the butter with the sugar in an electric mixer or food processor until pale, then beat in the eggs. Sift in the flour, bicarbonate of soda and baking powder into the mixture and fold it in. Fold in the spiced cocoa mixture.

2 Divide mixture between tins and smooth the surface. Bake on middle shelf for 25 mins or until cooked through – test with knife (it should come out clean). Turn out and cool on a wire rack.

3 Whip the cream with the 1 tbsp sugar and stir through the ground coffee. Use to sandwich the 2 cakes together and sprinkle the reserved spiced cocoa powder on top.

PER SERVING 492 kcal, protein 4.7g, carbs 44g, fat 34.2g, sat fat 18.6g, fibre 1.3g, salt 0.52g



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