

Celebrating Chocolate

A SELECTION OF IRRESISTIBLE CHOCOLATE RECIPES FOR ALL OCCASIONS



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CHOCOLATE ALMOND CAKE

So simple yet so delicious. This gluten free cake will be a crowd pleaser at your next get together.

Serves: 12

200g dark chocolate (70% cocoa)

200g unsalted butter

250g brown sugar

4 eggs

250g almond meal

1 tsp natural vanilla extract

½ tsp almond essence

1 Preheat oven to 170°C. Melt the chocolate and butter gently, then whisk in the brown sugar and eggs. Fold the almond meal, vanilla and almond essence, then pour into a line 24cm cake tin. Bake for 35-40 minutes, until just firm. Cool on a wire rack.





WHITE CHOCOLATE - CHERRY CHEESECAKE

Serves: 12

250g Shredded Wheaten biscuits, crushed

125g unsalted butter, melted

500g cream cheese*

100g sour cream

4 eggs

2 egg yolks

150g caster sugar

2 tsp vanilla paste

150g white chocolate, melted and cooled

2 cups frozen cherries, halved

1 Preheat oven to 150°C. Mix the biscuits and butter, then press into the base and sides of a lined 22cm cake tin. Refrigerate until firm.

2 Combine the cream cheese, sour cream, eggs, yolks, sugar and vanilla in a food processor and purée until very smooth. Add the chocolate and pulse to combine. Pour into the biscuit base. Scatter the cherries on top. Place a tray of water on the bottom of the oven, then bake for 45-55 minutes, until just firm. Cool on a wire rack.

CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES WITH MILK CHOCOLATE FROSTING, RASPBERRY POWDER AND GRATED MINTS

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

Serves: 12

¾ cup self-raising flour

¾ cup caster sugar

¾ cup cocoa powder

375g unsalted butter

75g dark chocolate

¼ cup vegetable oil

2 tsp vanilla paste

1 tsp apple cider vinegar

2 eggs

2 cups icing sugar, sifted

150g milk chocolate, melted and cooled

100ml cream

freeze-dried raspberries and grated mints, to garnish

1 Preheat oven to 180°C. Combine the flour, caster sugar and ½ cup cocoa in a bowl. Put 125g butter in a small saucepan with the dark chocolate, oil, 1 tsp vanilla and vinegar, heating gently until the chocolate and butter are melted. Beat into the flour mixture with the eggs, then spoon into 12 lined cupcake moulds. Bake for 18-20 minutes, until firm to touch. Cool on a wire rack.

2 Combine the remaining butter, icing sugar, remaining cocoa and remaining vanilla in the bowl of a stand mixer and beat with the paddle attachment on medium speed for 10 minutes, until very light. Fold in the milk chocolate and cream. Pipe onto cupcakes and top with crumbled raspberries and grated mints.



DOUBLE-CHOC PECAN BROWNIES

Rich, indulgent and generous. No, this isn't a dating site, it's just an accurate description of the perfect brownie. And here it is!

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 40 minutes

Serves: 12

1 cup caster sugar

½ cup dark brown sugar

¾ cup Dutch cocoa powder*

¼ cup plain flour

¼ cup coconut flour

125g unsalted butter

2 Tbsp hazelnut oil

2 eggs

2 tsp vanilla paste

125g white chocolate, chopped into chunks

100g pecans, toasted and chopped

1 Preheat oven to 165°C. Combine the sugars, cocoa and flours in a large bowl, stirring to mix well. Melt the butter gently, then allow to cool. Whisk the oil, eggs and vanilla into the butter, then stir gently into the flour mixture.

2 Fold in the white chocolate and pecans, then spoon into a lined 27cm x 17cm slice pan and bake for 25-30 minutes, until just firm. Cool in the tin.

COOKS' NOTES: *Dutch (or 'Dutch-process') cocoa is an alkalinised form of cocoa that is darker in colour, richer in flavour, and dissolves more easily.

WHITE CHOCOLATE MACADAMIA SLICE

Perfect for your next afternoon tea this gluten free slice is irresistible and very moreish.

60g gluten-free self-raising flour

60g gluten-free plain flour

200g brown sugar

50g desiccated coconut

150g unsalted butter

395g can sweetened condensed milk

3 Tbsp golden syrup

2 tsp natural vanilla extract

300g macadamias, toasted

500g white chocolate

2 Tbsp vegetable oil

pink food colouring

1 Preheat oven to 160°C. Combine the flours, sugar and coconut in a large bowl and mix well. Melt 100g butter and pour in, then squeeze firmly until the mixture just sticks together. Press into the base of a lined 20cm x 30cm slice and bake for 15 minutes, until light golden and just set. Remove from the oven.

2 Pour the sweetened condensed milk into a medium saucepan with the golden syrup, vanilla and remaining butter. Set over a moderate heat and bring to the boil. Simmer for 5 minutes, until beginning to thicken, then mix in the macadamias and spread over the base. Return to the oven for 20 minutes, until browned on top, then set aside to cool completely.

3 Mix the chocolate and oil in a heatproof bowl and set over a saucepan of barely-simmering water. Once melted, pour over the slice, reserving ½ cup. Tint the remaining chocolate with pink food colouring, then place as drops on the white chocolate. Swirl with a knife, then tap the pan several times to flatten. Set aside to cool completely. Slice and serve.





MALTED CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES WITH PRALINE AND MANDARIN

Preparation time: 20 minutes + freezing

Cooking time: 5 minutes

Makes: 48

300ml thickened cream

2 Tbsp glucose syrup

zest of 2 mandarins, white pith removed

2 Tbsp malted milk powder

400g dark chocolate, chopped

150g milk chocolate, chopped

¼ cup almond praline, finely chopped

1 cup Dutch cocoa powder

1 Combine the cream glucose syrup and mandarin zest in a small saucepan and set over a moderate heat. Bring to a simmer, then set aside for 10 minutes. Simmer again then whisk in the malted milk powder.

2 Put 200g dark chocolate and the milk chocolate in a heatproof bowl. Strain the cream mixture over, then whisk until smooth. Pour into a tray, fold in the praline, and refrigerate until firm. Form into rough teaspoon-shaped pieces, then freeze for 2 hours.

3 Melt the remaining dark chocolate, then dip the truffle pieces. Freeze for 20 minutes. Toss in cocoa, then shake off the excess. Store frozen, then allow to come to room temperature before serving.

SALTED CARAMEL CHOCOLATE CHUNK COOKIES

Addiction – that really should have been the name for this recipe, because that is what it does. Honestly, it is the all time perfect biscuit. Sceptical? Bake a batch and make up your own mind.

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Makes: 24

250g unsalted butter, softened

1½ cups dark brown sugar

½ cup raw caster sugar

2 tsp vanilla paste

1 egg

2 egg yolks

2 Tbsp treacle

2 cups plain flour

¼ cup coconut flour

½ tsp baking powder

300g dark chocolate, chopped into chunks

2 tsp sea salt flakes

1 Preheat oven to 170°C. Combine the butter, sugars and vanilla in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat with the paddle attachment on medium speed for 5 minutes, until light. Add the egg, yolks and treacle, beating until smooth.

2 Sift in the flours and baking powder, then mix gently. Fold in the chocolate and salt.

3 Divide into 30 pieces and form into balls on two lined trays (allowing for spreading during baking). Bake for 15-17 minutes, then cool on the trays.





CHOCOLATE PUMPKIN- SPICE LOAF

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 45 minutes

Serves: 12

150g unsalted butter, at room temperature

300g dark brown sugar

3 eggs

200g self-raising flour

3½ Tbsp cocoa powder

1 cup almond meal

2 tsp mixed spice

2 tsp ground cinnamon

½ cup sour cream

2 tsp vanilla paste

150g dark chocolate, melted and cooled

1 Preheat oven to 180°C. Combine the butter and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat with the paddle attachment on medium speed for 5 minutes, until very light. Beat in the eggs, one at a time.

2 Mix the flour, cocoa, almond meal and spices in one bowl, then fold in gently, alternating with the sour cream and vanilla. Mix in the chocolate, then spoon into a well-buttered and floured 1½L loaf tin. Bake for 35-40 minutes, until a skewer can be inserted and removed cleanly. Cool briefly, then invert to turn out. Cool on a wire rack.



EASTER EGG SLICE

Tasty chocolate slice with an easter touch, which can be adapted to suit any time of the year with a change of topping. Why not try chopped nuts or coconut.

250g unsalted butter
200g brown sugar
1 egg
2 tsp natural vanilla extract
¾ cup plain flour
½ cup cocoa powder
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
¾ cup desiccated coconut
1½ cups pure icing sugar, sifted
1 Tbsp milk
2 cups mixed Easter eggs

1 Preheat oven to 170°C. Melt 175g butter, then beat with the brown sugar, egg and 1 tsp vanilla. Sift the flour, ¼ cup cocoa and bicarbonate of soda together, then fold in until smooth. Mix in the coconut, then spoon into a lined 27cm x 17cm slice pan. Bake for 25-28 minutes, until just firm to touch, Allow to cool on a wire rack.

2 Combine the remaining butter, icing sugar, remaining vanilla and remaining cocoa in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat with the paddle attachment on medium speed for 5 minutes, until very light. Beat in the milk. Spread onto the cooled slice, then scatter with Easter eggs.



HOT CROSS BUN RING CAKE WITH SPECKLE EGGS

Chocolate, hot cross buns, Easter eggs, does it get any better?!

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Serves: 10

4 hot cross buns

½ cup dark rum

6 egg yolks

125g raw caster sugar

300ml hot milk

4 leaves gelatine, soaked in cold water

400g dark chocolate, chopped

300ml double cream

150ml thickened cream

1½ cups mini speckle eggs, chopped

1 Slice the hot cross buns into fine slices, then press into the sides of a 1½ L ring-shaped cake mould. Drizzle with rum, then refrigerate for 30 minutes.

2 Combine the yolks and sugar in a bowl and whisk until very light. Fold in the milk, then cook in a medium saucepan over a low heat until just thickened. Whisk in the gelatine, then strain through a fine sieve.

3 Melt the dark chocolate and fold in. Cool until just thickened. Whip the double cream and thickened cream to soft peaks and fold in. Spoon into the mould then refrigerate for 2 hours, until firm.

4 Unmould the cake, arrange on a platter, then surround with speckle eggs.





CHERRY - RIPE FILLED EASTER EGGS

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 5 minutes

Makes: 12

2 cups pitted cherries

1 cup golden caster sugar

4 eggs

½ cup cherry brandy

200g dark chocolate, chopped

200ml thickened cream

2 Tbsp desiccated coconut

1 tsp coconut essence

4 drops red food colouring (opt.)

12 x 8cm (medium) chocolate easter eggs

shaved coconut, to garnish

1 Combine the cherries and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar in a medium saucepan and set over a moderate heat. Simmer for 10 minutes, then purée until smooth. Set aside to cool completely. Put the eggs, brandy and remaining sugar in a bowl and set over a saucepan of simmering water, whisking constantly until thickened.

2 Melt the chocolate, then cool slightly. Fold into half the egg mixture with half the cream. Mix the cherries and coconut essence with the remaining egg mixture and cream, as well as the desiccated coconut and food colouring if using.

3 Gently marble the mixtures together, then load into a piping bag. Cut the tops off the easter eggs with a sharp knife, then pipe the mixture in. Chill for 2 hours, until firm. Garnish with shaved coconut.

CHOCOLATE - CARROT EASTER TORTE

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 45 minutes

Serves: 10

2 cups self-raising flour
2 cups raw caster sugar
2 cups cocoa powder
½ tsp fine salt
1½ cups buttermilk
½ cup vegetable oil
2 eggs
1 Tbsp vanilla paste
1 cup boiling water
4 medium carrots, grated
500g unsalted butter, at room temperature
800g icing sugar, sifted
100g marzipan
orange and green food colouring
5 x 7cm chocolate eggs, halved
honey cake crumbs*, to garnish
shaved chocolate, to garnish

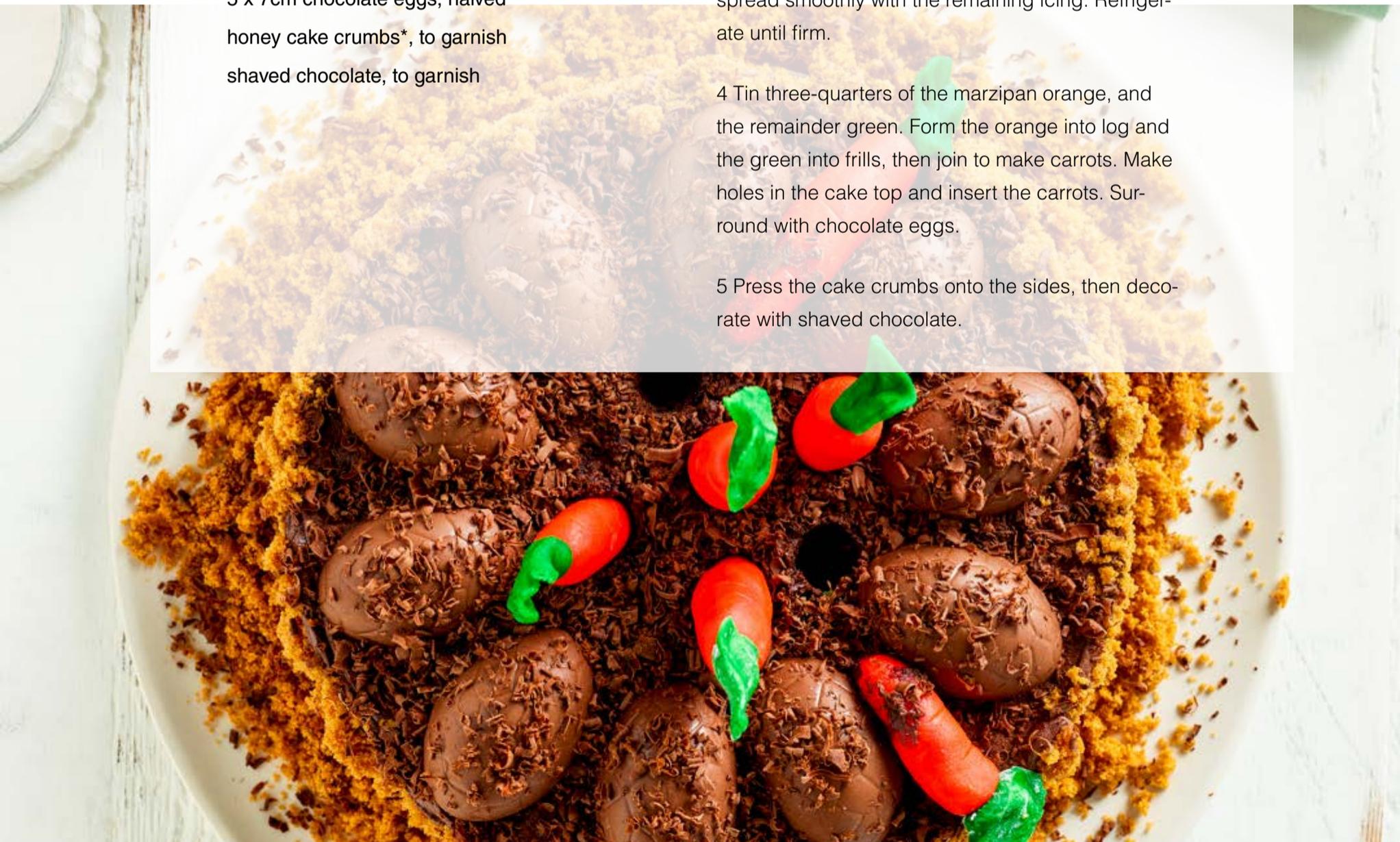
1 Preheat oven to 180°C. Combine the flour, sugar, half the cocoa and salt in a bowl and mix well. Add 1 cup buttermilk, oil, eggs and half the vanilla, then whisk until smooth. Mix in the boiling water. Fold in the carrots, then spoon into two lined 23cm cake tins and bake for 35-0 minutes, until firm to touch. Cool on a wire rack.

2 Combine the butter, cocoa and remaining vanilla in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat with the paddle attachment on medium speed for 5 minutes. Add the icing sugar and remaining buttermilk and beat for 5 more minutes, until very light.

3 Trim the cakes flat, then spread one with 1½ cups icing. Place a second cake on top, then spread with a thin coat of icing. Refrigerate until firm, then spread smoothly with the remaining icing. Refrigerate until firm.

4 Tin three-quarters of the marzipan orange, and the remainder green. Form the orange into log and the green into frills, then join to make carrots. Make holes in the cake top and insert the carrots. Surround with chocolate eggs.

5 Press the cake crumbs onto the sides, then decorate with shaved chocolate.





CHOCOLATE EASTER BUNNY CAKE

Serves: 10

300g plain flour
150 self-raising flour
75g cocoa powder
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
400g dark chocolate (70% cocoa)
375g unsalted butter
6 eggs
600g caster sugar
75ml vegetable oil
200ml buttermilk
60ml strong coffee
1 Tbsp natural vanilla extract
750g cream cheese
240g icing sugar, sifted
2kg white rolling fondant
food colours
2 cup plain chocolate biscuits, crushed
¼ cup walnuts, finely chopped

1. Preheat oven to 180°C. Sift the flours, cocoa and bicarbonate of soda into a large bowl. Melt the chocolate and butter gently, then allow to cool slightly. Combine the eggs and caster sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat with the whisk attachment on high speed of 5 minutes, until very light.

2. Fold in the chocolate mixture, oil, buttermilk, coffee and 2 tsp vanilla, then spoon in the flour mixture. Spoon into three lined 20cm cake tins for 45-50 minutes, until a skewer can be inserted and removed cleanly. Cool completely on a wire rack.

3. Put the cream cheese, icing sugar and remaining vanilla in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat with the paddle attachment on medium speed for 10 minutes, until very light. Slice the cakes in half, then spread all except one with icing and stack up, finishing with the plain cake. Spread the remaining icing over the outside and chill until firm.

4. Roll 1¼ kg icing to a large disc 4mm thick and drape over the cake, feathering until smooth. Trim the excess. Mix 250g fondant with a range of green tints and use to form large grass pieces for the sides of the cake and small leaf pieces for decorative carrots. Tint 80g fondant orange and form into small decorative carrots, then attach the leaf tops.

5. Tint 1 Tbsp fondant light purple and set aside. Tint the remaining fondant pale grey to form a large ball for the bunny body and two smaller elongated pieces for feet. Decorate the bottoms of the feet with three small pink circles and a pink oval. Finish with a small white ball for the tail.

6. Attach the green leaves to the sides of the cake. Scatter a mixture of the biscuits and walnuts over the top, then decorate with carrots. Place the bunny in the centre as if digging in the biscuit dirt.

EASY BIRTHDAY CAKE (OR FOR ABSOLUTELY ANY OCCASION)

Whether it's birthdays, bar mitzvahs, weddings or graduations, there are so very many occasions in our life that need a perfect cake. This is the easy recipe that will get you out of trouble every time. And remember, you can mix and match the decorations to suit the event.

500g unsalted butter, softened
3 cups caster sugar
1 cup dark brown sugar
8 eggs
2 tsp natural vanilla essence
2 tsp almond essence
4 cups self-raising flour
1 cup cocoa powder
600ml buttermilk
4½ cups pure icing sugar, sifted
2 tsp natural vanilla extract
125g dark chocolate, chopped
3 Tbsp salted butter, diced
1 Tbsp golden syrup
200g white chocolate
fruit, to decorate

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour

Serves: 24

1 Preheat oven to 180°C. Divide 250g unsalted butter, caster sugar, dark brown sugar, eggs, vanilla essence, almond essence, self-raising flour, cocoa and buttermilk into two parts. Place one part of butter and sugars in the bowl of a food processor and purée for 3 minutes, until light. Add the eggs and essence and purée until smooth. Sift in the flour and cocoa, then pour in the buttermilk. Purée until a smooth batter forms. Transfer to a bowl, then repeat with the remaining ingredients.

2 Stir the two batters together, then spoon into four lined 20cm cake tins and bake for 25-30 minutes, until a skewer can be inserted and removed cleanly. Cool on a wire rack

3 Place the remaining unsalted butter in the bowl of an electric mixer with the icing sugar and vanilla extract. Beat with the paddle attachment on high speed for 10 minutes, until very light. Spread ½ cup of icing onto each cake, then stack up. Spread 1½ cups icing around the cake, smoothing with a palette knife, then refrigerate until firm.

4 Spread the remaining icing over the cake, smoothing with a palette knife. To finish, dip the palette knife in warm water and smooth one final time. Refrigerate until the icing is firm.

5 Combine the chocolate, salted butter and golden syrup in a heatproof bowl and set over a saucepan of simmering water until just melted. Drizzle over the edges of the cake, then refrigerate until set.

6 Melt the white chocolate, then pour into the bottom of a lined 20cm cake tin and refrigerate until set. Turn out, then arrange on top of the cake. Decorate with fruit.



SPIDER CUPCAKES

Spooky spider cupcakes make a great Halloween or birthday party treat. When made with store bought cupcakes the kids will be impressed in no time!

150g white chocolate, melted
125ml cream
200g dark chocolate, finely chopped
6 vanilla cupcakes
¼ cup chocolate sprinkles
48 chocolate mint sticks
¼ cup round liquorice allsorts, sliced
mixed chocolate buttons, to decorate

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: nil

Makes: 6

1. Pipe the white chocolate in a web pattern on dark serving plates. Boil the cream, then whisk in 150g dark chocolate to make an icing. Dip the cupcakes, chill briefly, then dip again. Top with chocolate sprinkles. Melt the remaining dark chocolate.

2. Cut the chocolate mint sticks to create two pieces out of each, one twice the length of the other. Place the cupcakes on the plate and insert the smaller pieces into the cupcakes to create the start of the legs, then dip one end of the longer piece into the melted chocolate and join the smaller piece. Cool until set.

3. Place two liquorice slices on each for eyes, then decorate with chocolate buttons.





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