

## **Alan Coxon's Baked Chocolate Ripple Cheesecake**

Very few people I know can resist a delicious chocolate dessert especially with chocolate reputed to be both an aphrodisiac and a stimulant! My rich chocolate ripple cheesecake assures that even the most demanding chocoholic will be satisfied.

Serves: 8-12

You will need a 9" (24 cm) spring form tin

### **Ingredients**

175g (6oz) digestive biscuits

2.5ml (1/2 tsp) ground cinnamon

15ml (1 tbsp) cocoa powder

75g (3oz) unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing

### **Instructions**

Make the base first so it's ready when you need it. Put the biscuits, cinnamon, cocoa into a food blender and break down to a fine crumb. Melt the butter and pour it onto the crumb and mix it in until evenly distributed. Line a spring form tin with baking paper or butter thoroughly and scatter the crumb onto the tin gently, lightly press down and set aside or leave it in fridge.

If you don't have a food processor don't worry, just place all the ingredients into a strong plastic bag, tie the end and roll over it with a rolling pin until you have a fine crumb.

### **Alan's tip**

Use the back of your hand or the back of a spoon to press down the base crumb very lightly in the tin. Be careful not to press too hard otherwise the cheesecake base will be hard to cut and eat.

### **The Filling**

#### **Ingredients:**

275g (10oz ) 75% dark chocolate

675g (1 1/2lb) full fat cream cheese (e.g. Philadelphia)

2 large eggs

45ml (3 level tbsp) cornflour

45ml (3 tbsp) clear honey

50ml (2fl oz) brandy

250ml (9fl oz) double cream

### **Instructions**

Cooking with chocolate can be a bit tricky so try and have all your ingredients measured and prepared before you start melting the chocolate.

Melt the dark chocolate in a double boiler - a bowl over a pan of simmering water. In a separate bowl, beat together the cream cheese, eggs and cornflour and set aside 2 tblsp of the mixture to add to the white chocolate mixture later on.

Add the honey and brandy to the melted chocolate and mix well together with a wooden spoon. Set aside 2 tblsp of cream for the white chocolate and pour the rest into another pan. Whisk the warm cream into the chocolate mixture and stir well. Remove from the heat and pour over the egg and cheese mix. Stir thoroughly.

Gently pour into the prepared tin, tapping to remove any air bubbles. Pre-heat oven to 180 C / 350 F / Gas Mark 4 and make the white chocolate mix.

### **Alan's tip**

If you don't have time to melt the chocolate slowly in a double boiler, simply place it into the microwave and give it short 10 second blasts, gently stirring it in between each blast, until its melted

### **White Chocolate Ripple**

You will need

A piping bag

### **Ingredients**

100g (4 oz) white chocolate, melted

30ml (2 tbsp) orange zest

30ml (2 tbsp) Cointreau or Grand Marnier

The reserved cheese and cream

### **Instructions**

Melt the white chocolate in a double boiler, warm the set aside cream and add it to the melted chocolate. Whisk them together. Add the orange and Cointreau or Grand Marnier and stir in well with a wooden spoon. Remove it from the heat and fold in the reserved cheese until smooth. Spoon into a piping bag with nozzle attached and pipe into the dark chocolate mixture, creating a whirling pattern.

Place onto a baking sheet and bake for 45-50 mins. When cooked, leave to cool.

### **Alan's tip**

When the cake is cooked leave it in the turned off oven to cool down gently. This prevents the cake from cracking as the different types of chocolate with different melting points start to solidify at different times.

## **Accompaniment - Raspberry Coulis**

The sweet acid and fruit flavours found in raspberries works absolute wonders with this rich chocolate cheesecake. It's a marriage of flavours that I have used on numerous occasions and is an absolute must with this dessert.

### **Ingredients**

250g (9oz) raspberries  
50g (2oz) icing sugar  
30ml (2 tbsp) red wine  
5ml (1 tsp) orange zest, shredded  
60ml (4tbsp) water

### **Instructions:**

Puree the raspberries and pass through a fine sieve into a jug. Put the sugar, water and the shredded zest into a pan. Bring it to simmer and reduce for 2 minutes then add the red wine and bring it back to the boil. Simmer for a further minute. Strain, cool and serve.

## **The Science**

### **Where chocolate comes from....**

Chocolate comes from the cocoa bean. The beans go through a long process and you end up with what's called chocolate liquor, that's then pressed to extract most of the fat which is the cocoa butter. Cocoa butter is white and soapy and doesn't smell or taste very chocolatey but it gives chocolate its texture, and lovely mouth-feel. As well as the cocoa butter, you end up with what they call 'cake', and when that's processed you end up with cocoa powder. That's the thing that really has the concentrated chocolatey flavour. Good cocoa powder that you buy for making cocoa that you drink, is just about 100% of this cocoa powder - so it's almost pure 'cake'.

### **Choosing good chocolate**

A really good quality chocolate has a high proportion of cocoa solids, say over 50%. I prefer dark, bitter chocolates, with 75% or more cocoa solids, but they're not to everyone's taste. But whatever you prefer, when you're looking for a good chocolate - you can do the 'Five Senses Test':

**Look** at it. It should have a glossy shine and an even, unblemished surface. A good quality chocolate contains lots of tiny fat crystals that reflect light from the surface - hence the glossy appearance.

**Listen** to the way it snaps. It should snap cleanly. Cheap chocolate, and also white chocolate, gives a dull thud, more like plasticine breaking. But the high cocoa butter content of a good chocolate forms a crystalline structure, which gives a nice crisp sound. If vegetable oils have been added - they're not crystalline at room temperature and make the chocolate more 'bendy'.

**Smell** a piece of the chocolate. It should smell sweet but not overpowering. It's a bad sign if there's no smell. It's worth keeping your chocolate away from things that have strong smells, because the fat in chocolate absorbs odours easily.

**Touch** a piece - hold it in your hand for a while. It should feel silky and smooth and, since chocolate melts just below body temperature, it should start to melt after a while.

**Eat** a piece. Finally! It should melt quickly in your mouth. It shouldn't be grainy. And it should have a good long finish, without leaving greasy residues, which are a sure sign there's vegetable oil around. The way chocolate melts in the mouth is one of its real delights. For it to change state, from solid to liquid, it needs some heat energy, which it takes from your mouth to make it melt. So it actually cools your mouth down a little as you eat it. So, as well as that delightful change from solid lump to thick, molten goo, you get an unexpected cooling sensation. No wonder people love it so much.

#### **Melting chocolate....**

When you melt chocolate always do it over a double boiler and do it very gradually, because cocoa powder burns at only 60 degrees C. The water in the double boiler is boiling at 100 degrees C, so you can still burn the cocoa powder if you leave it for too long. The water in the pan shouldn't touch the base of the bowl. It should be the steam that melts the chocolate, as this will heat the bowl more slowly than boiling water.

#### **Adding liquids....**

When you add liquids containing water to melted chocolate you easily end up with a seized up mess, because the fat and water just don't mix easily. It has to be done gradually. One way to make sure that the mixing is gradual is to start off with the liquid in the bowl, in this case the cream, and add the chocolate before you start heating. The chocolate just melts slowly, and it mixes in a bit at a time, and you can avoid all that trouble! This really does work, and has saved me untold chocolatey traumas.

#### **Wooden spoons...**

Using a wooden spoon rather than a metal spoon also helps as cold metal can start to make the chocolate re-solidify. When it solidifies the chocolate is actually forming tiny crystals. Chocolate is special in that it forms 6 different kinds of crystal structure. The most stable one, number 6, is what you end up with when chocolate is old - the white bloom on the surface. It's just formed by cocoa butter at the surface of the chocolate re-crystallising in the stable form. Form 5 is the way we're used to finding chocolate. All of

the 6 forms are edible, so you can eat the white bloom on old chocolate. It's just that form 5 seems to be one we find appealing and is the easiest to make.