

March Spice Club:

Black Cocoa



The history of black cocoa dates back to 1828 when Coenraad Johannes van Houten developed the process of making Dutch processed cocoa powder. Black cocoa is a form of ultra Dutch-processed cocoa that has been treated with an alkalizing agent to neutralize its natural acidity. This process produces a cocoa powder with a much darker color, less bitter taste, and a mellow flavor compared to regular cocoa powder. Black cocoa is often used to give baked goods a darker color and is a great way to make black colored frosting.

Be careful when wearing light colored clothing when baking with black cocoa, it may stain.

Fudge-Glazed Creamy Peanut Butter Cake

King Arthur Test Kitchen, KingArthurBaking.com

CAKE

1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon Instant ClearJel or cornstarch
⅓ cup Dutch-process cocoa or black cocoa
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon espresso powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
2 large eggs, at room temperature
⅓ cup vegetable oil
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½ cup + 2 tablespoons water

ICING

1 cup semisweet or bittersweet chocolate, chopped
6 tablespoons heavy cream or whipping cream
½ cup chopped salted peanuts, for garnish, optional

FILLING

¾ cup peanut butter, creamy or chunky
2 cups confectioners' sugar or glazing sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
⅓ cup milk or heavy cream

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease and flour (or grease, then line with parchment, then grease again) an 8" round cake pan. Note: This pan needs to be at least 2" tall; if you have a non-standard, shorter 8" pan, substitute a 9" round pan.

To make the cake: Whisk together the dry ingredients. Add the eggs, oil, and vanilla, beating until smooth. Gradually add the water, beating until smooth. Pour the batter into the prepared pan.

Bake the cake for 35-38 minutes (about 25 minutes if you're using a 9" pan), or until a cake tester inserted into the center comes out clean. Cool the cake in the pan for 15 minutes, then turn it out of the pan to cool completely on a rack.

To make the icing: Combine the chocolate and cream in a microwave-safe bowl, and heat until the cream is hot, and the chocolate soft. Stir to melt the chocolate completely, reheating very briefly if necessary. Set aside and allow the icing to rest for 30-45 minutes, or until it's thickened enough to be spreadable.

To make the filling: Beat together the peanut butter, sugar, and vanilla until crumbly, then add the milk or cream, beating until smooth. Add additional milk or cream, if necessary, to make a spreadable filling.

To assemble the cake: Slice the cake in half horizontally, to make two layers. Place one piece, cut side up, on a serving plate. Spread with the filling. Top with the second piece, cut side down. Spread the top and sides of the cake with the icing. Garnish with chopped peanuts.

Overnight Chocolate Chia Seed Pudding

Minimalist Baker, MinimalistBaker.com

“Simple, 6-ingredient chocolate chia seed pudding that’s naturally sweetened and so thick and creamy. Loaded with nutrients and perfect for breakfast, a snack, or dessert!” *Gluten-free and vegan*

¼ cup black cocoa powder or unsweetened cocoa powder

3-5 tablespoons maple syrup

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon, *optional*

1 pinch sea salt

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

1 ½ cups unsweetened almond milk (or light coconut milk for creamier texture!)

½ cup chia seeds

To a small mixing bowl add cocoa powder (sift first to reduce clumps), maple syrup, ground cinnamon, salt, and vanilla and whisk to combine. Then add a little dairy-free milk at a time and whisk until a paste forms. Then add remaining dairy-free milk and whisk until smooth.

Add chia seeds and whisk once more to combine. Then cover and refrigerate overnight, or at least 3-5 hours (until it’s achieved a pudding-like consistency). It may also be helpful to give the mixture an extra whisk/stir once it has been in the refrigerator for 30-45 minutes.

Leftovers keep covered in the fridge for 4-5 days, though best when fresh. Serve chilled with desired toppings, such as fruit, granola, or coconut whipped cream.