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by Liz Robb

Chocolate and Orange Brownie Hearts

Ingredients

190g good quality dark chocolate
190g butter 45g cocoa powder 90g plain flour 80g dark orange chocolate 3 large eggs 200g golden caster sugar 1 large orange For the topping: 160g dark chocolate 150g double cream Mixed candied peel

Preparation

1. Chop 190g of dark chocolate and the same amount of butter into small pieces and place them in a pyrex bowl. Bring water in a saucepan to a gentle simmer and place the bowl over it, making sure that it is not touching the water. Stir constantly until the chocolate and butter have completely melted and mixed, then remove from the heat and allow to cool whilst you continue with the other ingredients.
2. Lightly grease a 22cm square cake tin and line the bottom with baking parchment then preheat the oven to 180 degrees, 160 degrees fan oven.
3. Next, sift the cocoa powder and the flour together into a bowl. Chop the dark orange chocolate into very small pieces, scatter it into the bowl and mix with the cocoa and flour. Set to one side.
4. Break the eggs into a large bowl and whisk lightly. Add the caster sugar a little at a time, whisking to combine. Using an electric whisk, beat the mixture at high speed until it thickens and increases in volume
5. this will take at least 5 minutes and probably more like 10.
6. Tip the melted chocolate and butter into the whisked eggs and sugar, then fold it in very gently so that you retain the air in the mixture. Next, sprinkle the sifted flour, cocoa and orange chocolate on top and lightly fold into the mixture. Finally, take the zest and juice of the orange and again combine them with the mixture by briefly and gently folding them in.
7. Spoon the mixture into the tin and ensure that it is evenly spread and level on the top. Bake in the preheated oven for about 30 minutes, but check 5 minutes before to see if it is done. Remove from the oven and allow to cool, then chill in the fridge, overnight if possible.
8. To make the topping, chop the chocolate into small pieces and place them in a pyrex bowl. Bring water in a saucepan to a gentle simmer and place the bowl over it, making sure that it is not touching the water. Pour in the cream and stir constantly until the chocolate and cream have completely melted and combined into a thick smooth topping, then remove from the heat.
9. Remove the brownie from the cake tin. Using a heart shaped cutter, cut out the required number of brownies. Carefully spread the edges and then the top of each brownie with the topping, then sprinkle with candied citrus peel.

Cooks Note

These scrumptious brownies, covered in a dark chocolate topping, flavoured with orange and sprinkled with candied citrus peel, are crusty on the top and squidgy in the middle, and really rich and chocolatey!

Cut into heart shapes, they make the perfect homemade Valentine's Day gift for someone special.

This recipe is enough to make 6 large heart shaped brownies, but you could just make two hearts and cut the rest into many more smaller slices; be warned, it is extremely rich and filling! And don't waste the scraps left from cutting the hearts, they are lovely to nibble as a treat with a cup of coffee.

You can, of course, use the chocolate of your choice, perhaps milk or white chocolate, and

omit the orange, although I think the juice helps to keep the brownies moist.