





EASY BIRTHDAY CAKE

(OR FOR ABSOLUTELY ANY OCCASION)

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour

Serves: 24

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

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.

