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Boston Cream Pie

Makes 1 10 Inch Cake

The Parker House was a true pleasure to explore as we filmed for A Taste of History. Boston is a city with a fascinating, rich history—many individuals and events here were integral to the American Revolution. Unlike other desserts that have misleading names, the Boston cream pie was actually invented in Boston, at the Parker House Hotel. The chef, M. Sanzian, who was Armenian-French, created the dessert in 1856 in the hotel kitchen. The kitchen is still in use today, and the “pie” is still a popular item on the menu. As a matter of fact, Boston cream pie is so well loved in Massachusetts, it was designated the state’s official dessert on December 12, 1996.

Not a pie at all, the chocolate-glazed, custard-filled layer cake is a remake of the early American “Pudding-cake pie.”

For the Vanilla Cake

- Softened butter and flour (for the pan)
- 4 large egg whites
- 1 ¼ cups half-and-half, at room temperature
- 2 ½ cups cake flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 ½ cups (3 sticks) unsalted butter, melted
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

For the Pastry Cream Filling

- 2 cups whole milk
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 egg
- 5 tablespoons cornstarch, sifted
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract (or other flavoring of choice)

For the Chocolate Glaze

- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 8 ounces dark chocolate, cut into pieces
- 2 ½ tablespoons cocoa powder
- 2 tablespoons dark rum
- ⅓ cup corn syrup

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Make the cake: Preheat oven to 300°F. Prepare a 10-inch cake pan with butter and flour, coating all surfaces with butter and then shaking flour into the pan until all surface area is covered. Beat together the egg whites and ½ cup of the half-and-half until frothy and set aside.

Sift the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt into a large bowl. Add the remaining half-and-half, the melted butter, whole eggs, and vanilla. Beat well for a few minutes, then beat in the egg white mixture until smooth.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 30 to 40 minutes, until lightly golden and a toothpick inserted comes out clean. Transfer to a rack and cool the cake completely before assembling the finished dessert.

Make the pastry cream: In a small saucepan over medium heat, heat the milk and ¼ cup of the sugar to a simmer.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk together the egg yolks, whole egg, cornstarch, and remaining ¼ cup sugar until smooth. Add the simmering milk, ½ cup at a time, to the egg mixture, whisking continually until fully incorporated.

Return the mixture to the pan and cook over low heat, stirring constantly with a silicon spatula, until the mixture begins to thicken.

Pay close attention to the thickening mixture, and when the first boiling bubble comes through, remove the pan from the heat and whisk in the butter and vanilla.

Immediately pour the custard into a 9 by 13-inch glass or ceramic casserole dish, spread it evenly, and lay plastic wrap directly on the surface.

Refrigerate until the pastry cream has cooled completely.

Make the glaze: In a small saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat; do not allow it to brown or burn. Remove the pot from the heat, add the chocolate, and stir until completely melted. Whisk the cocoa powder and rum together in a small bowl until smooth. Add the corn syrup and whisk to combine. Add the corn syrup mixture to the chocolate mixture and stir to combine thoroughly. Cool to room temperature.

To assemble: Cut the cake in half horizontally. Place the bottom half on a cake stand or plate. Spread the thoroughly chilled pastry cream onto the bottom layer. Place the top half of cake on the filling. Pour the room-temperature chocolate glaze over the cake, allowing it to drip down the sides. Store in refrigerator until ready to serve.



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