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BUDAPEST COFFEE CAKE

Makes 12 portions

This is one of the most popular recipes in all of my books. I have received love letters and a variety of proposals and propositions all because of this cake. Watch out.

NUT FILLING

¾ cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder (preferably Dutch-process)
2 to 3 tablespoons currants or raisins, coarsely chopped
3½ ounces (1 cup) walnuts, finely chopped

CAKE BATTER

3 cups sifted unbleached all-purpose flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
1½ teaspoons baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
6 ounces (1½ sticks) unsalted butter
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1½ cups granulated sugar

3 large eggs
2 cups sour cream

GLAZE

2 cups confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 to 3 tablespoons hot milk

For the filling:

In a small bowl, stir the brown sugar, cinnamon, and cocoa to mix thoroughly. Stir in the currants or raisins and then the walnuts, and set aside.

For the batter:

Adjust rack one-third up from the bottom of the oven. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Butter a 10-inch (12- to 14-cup capacity) Bundt pan. (This is best baked in a Bundt pan, but a tube pan of similar size may be substituted.) Even if the pan is nonstick, it should be buttered for this recipe.

Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Set aside. In large bowl of electric mixer, beat the butter to soften it a bit. Add the vanilla and granulated sugar and beat for a minute or two. Add the eggs individually, beating until thoroughly incorporated after each. Scrape the bowl with a rubber spatula as necessary to keep the mixture smooth, and beat briefly at high speed for a minute or so until the mixture is very smooth.

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On lowest speed, alternately add the sifted dry ingredients in three additions and the sour cream in two additions, continuing to scrape the bowl as necessary with the rubber spatula and beating only until smooth after each addition.

Spread a thin layer of the batter in the bottom of the pan. Sprinkle very generously with about one-third of the nut filling. Continue making layers, four of the batter and three of the filling. The top layer should be batter. It will take a bit of patience to spread the batter thin. It will be easier if the batter is placed on by many spoonfuls and then spread with the back of the spoon, instead of just being dropped on in two or three large amounts.

Bake for about 1 hour, until a cake tester comes out dry and the top feels firm and springy. Be sure it is done. Remove from oven. Leave the cake in the pan for 5 minutes, no longer. The cake should be hot when the glaze is applied.

For the glaze:

In a small bowl, with a rubber spatula, mix the sugar with the vanilla and about 2 tablespoons of the hot milk. Very gradually add more milk, just a bit at a time, using only enough to make a semifluid mixture about as thick as thick cream sauce

Cover the cake with a rack and invert over a large piece of wax paper or aluminum foil. Remove the pan. Immediately pour on the glaze – just pour it on quickly, don't spread it or work over it – and let it run down the sides unevenly.

When the glaze has set, use a large spatula to transfer the cake to a cake plate. Serve the cake while still slightly warm or after it has cooled completely – even the next day.



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