

The Hours Chocolate Cake

Serves 10-12

Hands-on Time 40 minutes (plus cooling)

Baking Time 40 minutes

Ingredients

- 360g dark chocolate (minimum 70%, divided)
- 560g unsalted butter (softened, plus extra for greasing)
- 100g cocoa powder (plus extra for dusting)
- 430g caster sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 325g plain flour
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 1/4 tsp salt (plus a pinch)
- 330ml full-fat milk (divided)
- 6 tsp vanilla extract (divided)
- 65ml double cream
- 700g icing sugar
- 1/2 portion buttercream (optional, for decoration)

Equipment

- Microwaveable bowl
- Microwave
- Spoon
- Scissors
- Baking parchment
- 2 x 20cm fixed or push-bottom cake tins
- Mixing bowl
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Wire rack
- Electric whisk
- Palette knife
- Piping bag and nozzle (optional)

Method

1. Prepare the cake tins

- Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C (fan)/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
- Cut two circles of parchment to fit the bottoms of the tins.
- Grease the tins with butter, line with parchment, and grease the parchment.
- Dust the tins with cocoa powder, tapping out any excess.

2. Melt the chocolate

- Add 250g dark chocolate to a microwaveable bowl. Microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted. Set aside.

3. Make the cake batter

- In a mixing bowl, cream together 185g butter and the caster sugar.
- Beat in the eggs one at a time.
- Fold in 50g cocoa powder, plain flour, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda, and salt.
- Add the melted chocolate, 285ml milk, and 4 tsp vanilla extract. Fold until combined.

4. Bake the cakes

- Divide the batter evenly between the prepared tins and smooth the tops.
- Bake on the middle shelf for 40 minutes.
- Let the cakes cool in the tins for 15 minutes, then turn them out onto a wire rack. Remove the parchment and let them cool completely.

5. Make the icing

- Melt 110g dark chocolate in a microwaveable bowl as before.
- In a clean bowl, whisk together 375g butter, 50g cocoa powder, and icing sugar until fluffy.
- Add a pinch of salt, 45ml milk, double cream, melted chocolate, and 2 tsp vanilla extract. Whisk until light and fluffy.

6. Assemble the cake

- Place one cake on a serving plate and spread one-third of the icing on top.
- Invert the second cake and place it on top of the icing.
- Cover the top and sides of the cake with the remaining icing, smoothing it with a palette knife.
- Chill the cake if decorating with buttercream.

Tips

- For a professional finish, use a piping bag with a star nozzle to create decorative borders or flowers.
- If using buttercream for decoration, divide it into portions and colour with gel food colouring (e.g., yellow and blue for a themed design).

Enjoy!