

Maraschino Cherry Cake with Chocolate Icing

For the Cake

3 cups cakes flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1½ teaspoons baking soda
1 tablespoon cream of tartar
¾ teaspoon salt
1 cup egg whites
1½ cups buttermilk
1 teaspoon vanilla
½ pound unsalted butter
2 cups sugar
36 maraschino cherries
¼ cup maraschino cherry liquid
2 drops red food coloring

For the Icing

9 ounces bittersweet chocolate
4 cups confectioner's sugar
½ pound unsalted butter
1 large egg
2 teaspoons vanilla
2-4 tablespoons heavy cream

For the Cake

Butter 2 deep 9-inch cake pans. Line them with wax paper, and butter the wax paper. Preheat the oven to 350°.

In a large bowl, whisk together the cake flour, baking powder, baking soda, 2¾ teaspoons of cream of tartar, and the salt.

Whisk together the buttermilk, ¼ cup of the egg whites, the vanilla, and the ¼ cup maraschino cherry liquid.

Chop the maraschino cherries fine and dry with a paper towel.

Cream the butter and gradually add the sugar, beating for about 3 minutes.

On a very low speed, add ¼ of the buttermilk mixture, then ¼ of the flour mixture. Beat until they are incorporated. Then alternately continue to add the buttermilk and flour, ending with the flour mixture. Gently beat in the maraschino cherries and the food coloring.

Whip the eggs whites until foamy and sprinkle on the remaining ¼ teaspoon of cream of tartar. Continue to beat until stiff peaks are achieved.

Stir one third of the egg-white mixture into the cake batter. Then quickly, but gently, fold in the remaining egg whites. Divide the batter evenly between the two cake pans. Bake on the middle rack of the oven for about 40-45 minutes. Remove from the oven and let rest on a rack for 10 minutes. Turn the cakes out onto the rack, and let cool completely before frosting.

For the Icing

Have the butter at room temperature. Melt the chocolate in a small pan placed over simmering water, stirring until it is smooth. Keep it warm.

Put the confectioner's sugar through a sieve to eliminate any lumps, which actually saves time. Cream the butter in a mixer and gradually add the powdered sugar. Beat in the room-temperature egg, then the melted chocolate and the vanilla.

Place the bowl over a pot of simmering water and whisk for several minutes until the mixture is hot to the touch. This homogenizes the icing, but more importantly, ensures that the egg is thoroughly cooked to prevent salmonella. Chill the buttercream for 30 minutes to an hour until it reaches spreading consistency. Remove from the refrigerator and beat in enough heavy cream to get a nice texture. If it tends to curdle, just keep beating vigorously.

Place one cake layer bottom-side-up on a plate. Spread icing on top. Then place the second layer bottom-side-up on top of the first layer, and frost the sides and top of the cake.