

## Zuccotto Fiorentino

### For the Cake

1 cup flour  
5 large eggs  
1 cup sugar  
2 teaspoons vanilla  
1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar  
Pinch salt

### For the Sugar Syrup

1 cup sugar  
1/2 cup cold water  
1/4 cup dark rum  
2 tablespoons Grand Marnier

### For the Spongecake

Butter and flour an 8-inch springform.

Separate 5 large eggs. Beat the egg yolks in a bowl with 2 teaspoons of vanilla until they are thickened. Gradually add 3/4 cup of granulated sugar, and continue to beat until the mixture creates a slowly dissolving ribbon when dropped from the beater.

In a separate bowl, beat the egg whites until foamy. Beat in 1/8 teaspoon of cream of tartar and a pinch of salt. Continue to beat until soft peaks are formed, then gradually add the remaining 1/4 cup of sugar. Beat until the egg whites are stiff.

Incorporate 1/3 of the egg-white mixture into the beaten egg yolks. Sift 1/3 cup of the flour into the mixture and fold in carefully. Continue folding in the remaining egg whites and flour alternately, ending with the flour.

Pour the batter into the prepared springform and bake in the middle of a 350° oven for about 45 minutes, until a tester comes out clean. Cool the cake on the rack for 10 minutes, then carefully remove from the springform. Allow to cool fully. (The cake can be made ahead and frozen until you are ready to make the fillings.)

### For the Sugar Syrup

Dissolve 1 cup of sugar in 1/2 cup of cold water. Boil, stirring frequently until the syrup is clear. Allow it cool thoroughly. Stir in 1/4 cup of dark rum and 2 tablespoons of orange liqueur (preferably Grand Marnier).

### Fillings and Molding

Rub a dome-shaped bowl, 8-inches in diameter at the opening, with flavorless vegetable oil. Carefully cut the spongecake into three even layers.

### For the Fillings

3 cups heavy cream  
5 ounces chocolate, 70% cocoa  
1/4 cup hazelnuts  
1/4 cup confectioners' sugar  
1 teaspoon gelatin  
5 tablespoons Grand Marnier  
2 tablespoons dark rum  
Zest of 1 orange

Chop  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of roasted hazelnuts. If you can't find pre-blanched hazelnuts, roast them in a  $350^{\circ}$  oven for a few minutes until the skins blister. Then rub them in paper towels to remove as much skin as possible before chopping.

Shave 2 ounces off the edge of slightly warm 70% chocolate with a vegetable peeler. Chill the shavings. Zest 1 orange.

In a small bowl, sprinkle 1 teaspoon of gelatin over 1 tablespoon of cold water to soften for about 5 minutes. Set the bowl in a small pan of simmering water, and stir until the gelatin is dissolved. Let it cool, then stir in 3 tablespoons of Grand Marnier and 1 tablespoon of dark rum.

In a cold bowl, beat  $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups of heavy cream until soft peaks are formed. Then gradually beat in the  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of confectioners' sugar, the orange zest, and the gelatin-liqueur mixture until stiff peaks are formed. Fold in the cold shaved chocolate.

Brush the cut side of the top layer of the cake with  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the syrup and press the layer top-side-down into the oiled bowl. Spread the whipped-cream and shaved chocolate mixture and smooth evenly over the the top layer of cake.

Brush the middle layer of cake on both sides with half the remaining syrup, and gently press the layer on top of the whipped-cream and shaved chocolate mixture. Refrigerate.

Melt 3 ounces of bittersweet chocolate with  $1\frac{3}{4}$  cups of heavy cream in a bowl set over simmering water. Stir constantly until the chocolate has melted completely into the cream. Refrigerate the mixture in the bowl until very cold, and chill the beater.

Remove the chocolate/cream mixture from the refrigerator, add 2 tablespoons of Grand Marnier and 1 tablespoon of dark rum, and beat until stiff peaks are formed. Fold in the chopped hazelnuts.

Spoon this cream evenly over the middle layer of the spongecake. Brush both sides of the last slice of spongecake with the remaining syrup, and gently press cut-side down on top of the chocolate cream. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

Remove the zuccotto from the refrigerator and carefully run a thin blade or knife around the edge. Submerge the bowl in a sink of hot water for about 10 seconds. Invert the bowl on a serving plate. If the zuccotto doesn't slide out easily, submerge in the hot water for another few seconds.

The modern version of the dessert is often made to resemble the dome of the Duomo, the major cathedral in Florence. To achieve a simulation of this look, sift a heavy layer of confectioners' sugar over the the dome of the cake.

Then cut out a template of 8 panels of parchment paper, removing every other panel. Place the template over the sugared cake, and sift cocoa over the exposed sections.