

Chocolate Cake with Cream Cheese

Restaurant Loca Luna
Little Rock, Arkansas

*Awarded 'Chef of the evening' at the OCWS May Mini Tasting 2008.
Submitted by Armen Shahbazian*

12 to 16 Servings

CAKE

1 cup sliced almonds, lightly toasted	½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup chopped pecans, lightly toasted	3 ½ cups powdered sugar
1 18.25 ounce box German chocolate cake mix	1 8-ounce package cream cheese, cut into pieces, room temperature
1 ¼ cups water	
1/3 cup vegetable oil	
3 large eggs	

ICING

1 ¾ cups powdered sugar	¾ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
5 tablespoons whole milk	1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter

CARAMEL TOPPING

½ cup purchased caramel-flavored topping or dulce de leche topping
or 17 ounce jar Mrs. Richardson's Butterscotch caramel from grocery store.

PROCEDURE FOR CAKE:

1. Butter a 13 x 9 x 2-inch cake pan (silicone or silicone-lined pans work especially well). Sprinkle ½ cup almonds and ½ cup pecans over bottom of pan. Combine cake mix, 1 ¼ cups water, oil, and eggs in large bowl. Using electric mixer beat at low speed until mixture is moistened, about 30 seconds. Beat at medium speed 2 minutes. Pour batter into pan.
2. Preheat oven to 350°.
3. Melt butter in medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Gradually stir in powdered sugar (mixture will form clumps); stir in cream cheese. Whisk until smooth, about 1 minute. Pour cream cheese mixture in large ribbons atop cake batter in pan. Using knife, swirl mixture into batter (do not over-mix).
4. Bake cake until tester inserted into center (in cake part only) comes out clean, about 50 minutes (bottom of cake may be moist).
5. Cool cake in pan on rack.
6. **PROCEDURE FOR ICING:** Mix sugar and cocoa in medium bowl. Bring milk and butter to simmer in heavy medium saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low; add powdered sugar mixture and whisk until melted. Add chocolate chips and whisk until smooth. Mix in vanilla.
7. Drizzle warm icing over cake.
8. Sprinkle remaining ½ cup almonds and ½ cup pecans over cake and press down gently.

When cooled, pour the caramel in bands over the nuts. ENJOY!!!