



Hallowe'en Brain Cake

The base for this cake is Devil's Food Cake, and here is a tried and tested recipe. The red food colouring used here has been an ingredient in 'America's favourite cake' since shortly after its first appearance in Southern American cookery books in the late 1800s.

If the colouring freaks you out, you could use the same amount of beetroot juice, but however you colour it (or don't) this is a rich velvety chocolate cake with a fine crumb and hint of vanilla, perfect when offset with a light cream cheese frosting and tart summer berries.

Preparation time: 40 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

Serves: 10

Ingredients

115g unsalted butter, room temperature

280g caster sugar

2 eggs

1½ tbsp red liquid food colouring

275g plain flour, sifted

30g cocoa powder, sifted

250ml buttermilk

1 tsp bicarbonate of soda

1 tsp cider vinegar

Handful of tart summer berries OR rough chopped dark chocolate

Handful desiccated coconut (optional)

Two 18cm round cake tins, greased and lined.



Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C fan assisted/gas mark 6.
2. Cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy, starting on medium and increasing to high speed – the mixture should be pale and increased in volume, about 4 minutes. Add the eggs gradually, then the food colouring, and beat until just incorporated.
3. Sift together the flour and cocoa and add half to the batter, beating to incorporate evenly and ensuring you scrape down the sides. Then beat in the buttermilk and finally the second half of the dry ingredients.
4. In a small bowl, using a clean spatula or teaspoon, mix together the bicarbonate of soda and cider vinegar (it will fizz up) and fold it immediately into the batter – do not use the mixer, just fold evenly with a spatula by hand.
5. Divide the mixture between the two prepared cake tins and level out to the edges. Bake for 20–25 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the centre comes out clean. Remove from the oven and leave to cool in the tins for 10 minutes before turning out on to a wire rack to cool completely.

Note: If you are stuck for buttermilk you can make a decent substitute by adding 1 teaspoon of lemon juice to every 250ml of whole milk – just make sure you re-measure it before adding it to a batter.

Making The Brain

Make up a Devil's Food cake as above and allow to cool completely, or substitute with your own recipe or if you like buy in one from your local bakery or other supplier.

Then you will need:

700g marzipan

Wilton gel food colour in: Ivory, Copper & Pink

A batch of mixed berry coulis or some red berry jam.

A clean paint brush.



Cut the cake into 2 even parts, and carve gently to form the shape of the two cerebral hemispheres (left and right sides of the brain). You can work from a picture of a brain on Google images.

Knead just the smallest dab of each of the colourings into the marzipan until its evenly coloured (This combination makes the best brain colour, but it would look pretty convincing still if you just used the pink).

Roll out half of the marzipan until it forms an oval 4mm thick. Cut this into even 2 pieces and wrap your brain hemispheres until they're completely coated.

Now roll the remaining marzipan into rounded strips of differing lengths but with around a 8mm diameter.

Attach these to the brain using just a brush of the coulis or jam (this will be enough to secure them in place).

Form the strips into 'lobes' – again, use a real brain as your guide or the image above.

Brush a little coulis or jam between the gaps as you wish. The bloodier the better (and tastier).

Voila!



Top Tip for working with Marzipan: If you're having trouble kneading you can blast it in the microwave for just a few seconds, or leave it somewhere warm, its will soften up. Always wrap marzipan airtight if you are going to leave it out for any period or it will dry out and crack.

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