

DAVID LEBOVITZ

Lora Brody's Bête Noire

Ten Servings

I saw somewhere that someone made this cake using all bittersweet chocolate, replacing the unsweetened chocolate with bittersweet chocolate. So if you can't find unsweetened chocolate, you could give that a go. But for a true bittersweet experience, I'd go with unsweetened chocolate.

Note that this cake is quite soft and may prove challenging to get a neat slice from, which is fine with me, as the unctuous texture is worth the few scattered crumbs on the plate.

1 cup (200g) plus 1/3 cup (65g) sugar

1/2 cup (125ml) water

8 ounces (225g) bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped

4 ounces (115g) unsweetened chocolate, finely chopped

Pinch of salt

8 ounces (225g) unsalted butter, cubed

6 large eggs (or 5 extra-large eggs), at room temperature

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter the bottom and sides of a 9-inch (23cm) cake pan. (I used a glass-bottom springform pan, which makes serving the cake easier, but you can use a regular springform pan or a standard cake pan.) If using a springform pan, wrap the outside of the cake pan, across the bottom and up the sides, with a sheet of aluminum foil to prevent water from getting in. If using a standard cake pan, line the bottom with a circle of parchment paper.

Set the cake pan in a larger pan, such as a roasting pan, that you'll use as a water bath, and set aside.

2. Put 1 cup of sugar and the water in a medium saucepan. If using a glass thermometer, clip it to the pan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat and cook until the temperature is 220°F (104°C). (I cooked mine to 225°F/107°C, and it was fine. If you do cook it too much over that, add a little water, which will lower the temperature, then heat it back up

to the right temperature.) If you don't have a thermometer, boil the syrup for about 3-4 minutes, until it's the consistency of warm maple syrup.

3. Turn off the heat and stir in the chopped chocolates, mixing until smooth. Add a pinch of salt and then mix in the butter, stirring until smooth. If the mixture needs it, feel free to give it a few brisk stirs with a whisk to smooth it out.
4. Put the eggs and the remaining 1/3 cup of sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and whip at high speed until the mixture has tripled in volume and is thick, 10 to 15 minutes.
5. Remove the bowl from the mixer and gradually fold in the melted chocolate, reaching down to the bottom of the bowl to make sure everything is getting incorporated. (In the original recipe, the chocolate is added to the eggs with the mixer on low speed, which you're welcome to do, but I like to finish batters like this by hand.)
6. Scrape the batter into the prepared cake pan. Fill the roasting pan with very hot water so it reaches halfway up the outside of the cake pan. Bake the cake for 25-35 minutes, until a sharp paring knife inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean. Mine baked for 30 minutes, but start checking it at the 25-minute mark.
7. Remove the cake from the oven, and from the water bath, and let cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a sharp knife around the outside of the cake to loosen it from the pan, then remove the sides of the springform pan.
8. If you've baked the cake in a standard cake pan, let the cake cool completely (although the original recipe said you should do this while the cake is still warm, after the 10-minute cooling period, I would wait until the cake has mostly cooled and "set"), then set a baking sheet over the cake. Simultaneously turn over the cake in the pan and the baking sheet. Lift off the cake pan and peel off the parchment paper. Place a serving platter, serving side down, over the cake then turn both over at the same time. Remove the baking sheet.

Serving Notes

-I baked mine in a glass-bottom springform pan, so I served it right off the base. The cake is quite moist, and it's best to manipulate it as little as possible.

-This is a **very** soft cake. The best way to cut the cake is to dip a sharp knife in very hot water, wipe the blade clean, and make the first cut. Repeat the process, dipping the knife in hot water and wiping the blade clean between each subsequent slice. Conversely, you can heat the blade of the knife with the flame of the blowtorch or gas stove before slicing, wiping it clean, and rewarming it with the flame between each slice.

-If you'd like, you can sprinkle the top of the cake with powdered sugar or sift a mix of cocoa powder and powdered sugar over the top.

-Serve the cake with whipped cream or ice cream, or on its own.

Storage: The cake is best, and lightest, the day it's baked. It can be kept for a few days at room temperature but will get denser.

