

March, Leprechauns and the Easter Bunny

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It's a well-known fact that Leprechauns have a sweet tooth. To satisfy their sugary cravings, you'll find them deep in the forest baking a never ending cascade of cookies from their tiny kitchen tucked inside a hollow tree.

They also have a passion for beloved Guinness so it should come as no surprise that their sweet tooth satisfying specialty for St. Patrick's Day would be a Guinness spiked chocolate cake piled high with Irish Mist frosting. Be still my colleen heart.

A close confidant of the Leprechauns is the Easter Bunny who sneaks gorgeous chocolates, marshmallow chicks and jelly beans into Easter baskets.

March this year is their yummy collaboration. Let's get into the kitchen.



Guinness Chocolate Cake

It's not every day I eat a whole cake but a fork full every time I pass the fridge adds up. I am smitten. This is the most delicious cake I've ever eaten!

It's hard to imagine a beer flavored chocolate cake but this is not just any beer. This is Guinness after all. Guinness adds unbelievable depth to the chocolate while coaxing the Irish Mist liqueur to tickle the frosting. Great the day it's made. Better the next. And, it's the easiest cake you will ever make!

Makes 1 (8 inch - 2 layer) cake

Serves 10 to 12

Uses 2 (8 inch) cake pans plus baking parchment

Store iced cake in the fridge bringing it to room temp for serving

INGREDIENTS

1 1/3 cups unbleached all purpose flour
1 cup sugar
1/4 cup cocoa
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup vegetable oil
2 teaspoons vanilla
1 (11.2 oz. or 12 oz.) bottle room temperature Guinness Stout

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cut 2 circles of baking parchment to fit the pan bottoms. Grease the pans or coat with baking spray. Place 1 parchment circle into each greased pan pressing to stick then lightly grease the parchment or mist with baking spray. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, sift flour, sugar, cocoa, baking soda and salt. Mix to blend. Whisk in oil, vanilla and Guinness. Divide batter evenly between prepared pans. Bake in preheated oven till a toothpick comes out clean – about 35 minutes for 12 oz. Guinness. (About 30 minutes for 11.2 oz. Guinness.) Remove from oven. Cool 15 minutes. Invert. Remove parchment and discard. Invert again to cool, top side up.

Irish Mist Frosting

Think there's too much liquid? Don't worry. It all comes together in the end and fluffs like whipped cream.

Fills and frosts one (double layer) 8 inch cake

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 sticks butter (softened)
4 1/2 cups sifted powdered sugar (measure then sift)
3/4 teaspoon salt
9 Tablespoons Irish Mist Honey Liqueur (Yes, 9)
Garnish – 1 to 2 teaspoons cocoa

DIRECTIONS

1. Using a heavy duty mixer, cream butter, sifted powdered sugar and salt. Stir in liquor. Gradually increase speed then beat on high for 3 minutes. Set your timer. Don't guess.
2. To frost cake place 1 layer on serving dish - top side up. Spread generously with frosting. Add second layer – top side up. Ice cake with remaining frosting. Sift a little cocoa here and there over the top to garnish.



Homemade Filled Easter Eggs

Hopping ahead to Easter... I had a delicious dream the other night in which the Easter Bunny filled my basket with the most scrumptious, homemade, chocolate eggs. Luscious homemade chocolate eggs – some filled with chewy coconut and others filled with creamy, dreamy peanut butter.

Think making homemade Easter candy is too much trouble? This little recipe will change your mind forever.

Easy. Yummy. Impressive. A fun project to do with the kiddies or grands.

In less time than you think, you can whip up gorgeous, homemade, filled Easter eggs that are better tasting, fresher and cost a lot less than any you can buy. Better be quick like a bunny and hop to it!

Each recipe fills one large egg mold (5 1/2 X 3 3/4 inches) or multiple smaller ones depending on size. Available on Amazon or specialty baking sections of craft stores.

Store finished eggs in the fridge in an airtight container up to 2 weeks. (They'll dry out rather than spoil.) Freeze for longer storage.

CHEWY COCONUT FILLING

If you love Mounds or Almond Joy, you're gonna LUV this!!

INGREDIENTS

2 cups flaked, sweetened coconut (the regular packaged kind - lightly packed)
1/2 cup light corn syrup

DIRECTIONS

Stir well. Cover. Let sit at room temperature for 3 hours (or refrigerate overnight) before using so the coconut can soak up the corn syrup.

CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER FILLING

Peanut butter cup fan? This one's for you!!

INGREDIENTS

8 oz. powdered sugar (sifted)
2 sticks butter (softened)
1/3 cup plus 1 Tablespoon white vegetable shortening (think Crisco)
1 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup plus 1 Tablespoon smooth peanut butter (regular commercial type - not fresh ground, natural or the kind you have to stir.)

DIRECTIONS

- Using a heavy duty mixer, combine all ingredients on low then increase speed to high and beat 4 minutes. Set a timer. It's longer than you think. Don't under beat.
- Cover (so it doesn't dry out) and set aside while making the chocolate shell.

THE CHOCOLATE SHELL

Makes 1 egg shaped shell

(5 1/2 X 3 3/4 inches with a volume of 1 1/4 cups)

INGREDIENTS

1 1/4 cups confectioners coating discs (also called candy melts - any flavor or color)
Chocolate chips used for cookies are not recommended

DIRECTIONS

- Microwave 3/4 of the chocolate till almost melted - about one minute. Chocolate may not look melted but will be soft. Do not overheat. Stir till smooth.
- Immediately pour chocolate all at once into the (ungreased) mold. Using the back of a coffee spoon, spread the chocolate evenly to coat the entire mold.
- Refrigerate 5 minutes then freeze till firm - about 5 minutes more.

FILLING THE SHELLS

- When chocolate is firm, spoon in the filling. Leave a bit of head space to accommodate additional chocolate to seal the bottom of the egg.
- Melt remaining chocolate as before. Pour all at once onto filling. Spread quickly to cover filling, making sure the chocolate seals the edges. Return to freezer till very cold – about 20 minutes. Invert onto a flat surface and pop out of mold.
- If the egg doesn't come out easily, it's not cold enough. Return to freezer then try again. **L**



I thought making chocolate candy was difficult because it required tempering. Why is your recipe so easy?

Confectionery coating! Think of it as chocolate without the cocoa butter. Chocolate with cocoa butter requires tempering (heating and cooling) to stabilize it. Since confectionery coatings have little or no cocoa butter, they're melt and go!