Chestnut Chocolate Torte

Though sinfully rich, the torte is not overly sweet. It can be made in stages: the cake one day, the frosting the next. But refrigerate it before and after serving. The chestnut puree is best if freshly made and eaten.

**Chestnut puree:**

- 1.5 pounds fresh chestnuts [or 1 1/4 15.5 oz (439 gram) cans chestnut puree]
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup rum
- 2 teaspoons each: vanilla and rum extract
- 6 squares (6 ounces) semisweet chocolate
- 1 tablespoon shortening

**Cake:**

- 1 2/3 cups sifted cake flour
- 3/4 cup each: sugar, sifted cocoa
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 6 egg yolks
- 2/3 cup water or cold coffee
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 5 to 6 drops red food color, optional
- 6 egg whites
- 1/8 each: cream of tartar, salt
- 3/4 cup sugar
Buttercream frosting:

- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1/4 cup corn starch
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups milk
- 1 pound unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup rum
- 2 teaspoons rum extract

1 for chestnut puree

Put chestnuts in a large sauce pan; cover with water and heat to boil. Simmer 1 1/2 hours, changing the water once. Drain: cut chestnuts in halves with scissors, and remove meat from shell. Press chestnuts through sieve [should do even if have canned puree]. Stir in sugar, rum, and vanilla and rum extracts until blended. Set aside 1 1/2 cup for chestnut paste for the buttercream frosting and 1/2 cup paste to be sieved on top of the cake for garnish. Use the remaining 1/2 cup for chestnut decorations. Using 1 tablespoon for each, shape into 8 chestnuts. Put chocolate and shortening in the top of a double boiler; heat until chocolate is melted. [Watch consistency of mix if use canned puree, may be too running for dipping] Dip chestnut decorations in chocolate to coat half way. Put on wax paper until set. Set aside remaining chocolate to add to the buttercream frosting.

2 for the cake

Stir together cake flour, sugar, cocoa, and baking powder. Combine egg yolks, water, oil, vanilla extract, and red food color. Stir into dry ingredients. Beat 1 minute. Beat egg whites, cream of tartar, and salt until soft peaks form. Gradually add sugar, beating until stiff peaks form. Fold into cake batter. Divide into 2 greased 9-inch round cake pans and one greased 9-inch pie pan. Bake at 325 degrees 25 to 30 minutes, or until cakes test done. Let stand in pan 5 minutes; remove to wire rack to cool.
3 buttercream sauce

While the cakes are cooling, prepare buttercream frosting. Combine 1/2 cup of the sugar, eggs, cornstarch, salt, in the top of double boiler. Stir in milk until smooth. Heat and stir until custard is thick. Make sure is thick before adding remaining sugar. Stir in remaining 1 cup sugar. Cool. Beat butter with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in cooled custard, then rum and rum extract. Set aside 1 cup of frosting to pipe around torte. Beat 1 1/2 cups of reserved chestnut paste into the rest of the butter cream. Add reserved chocolate. Let cool until thickens for easy spreading.

4 to assemble

Split two 9-inch cake layers into halves. Trim sides off the layer baked in the pie pan to make a 7 inch cake layer; split this 7-inch layer in half. Set aside trimmings to be used in assembling cake. Put one 9-inch layer on cake plate; over it spread 3/4 cup chocolate buttercream. Repeat with remaining three 9-inch layers. Top with one 7-inch layer. Over it spread 1/2 cup butter cream. Arrange cake trimmings on center of layer. [This means combine together to make an even HIGHER layer of the pieces so that the RING is not kept as a ring, but is cut up and made into a small top layer]. Spread 1/4 cup butter cream over trimmings. Top with remaining cake layer. Frost top and sides of cake with the remaining chocolate frosting. Using a potato ricer, “rice” reserved 1/2 cup chestnut paste, press over top and sides of cake [idea is to put chestnut puree “sprinkles” all over, a sieve will work except for the pressing part]. Garnish with chestnut decorations. Using pastry tube tipped with a star tip, pipe reserved 1 cup buttercream around the edge of cake and decorate top and sides. Chill until ready to serve.