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 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.