

Chocolate, Cherry, Almond Torte

Servings: 10 to 12

This torte features chocolate, cherries, both toasted ground almonds and almond paste. It is nutty and rich, rich, RICH! A chocolate ganache glaze takes it over the top, which makes it the perfect finish to a celebratory meal. It is my family's favorite Christmas time desert, and soon to be yours!

Special Equipment

- A 9 or 10 inches springform pan
- A large, rimmed baking sheet
- A double boiler
- Mixing bowls
- A simple food chopper or food processor
- A hand mixer or Stand mixer
- A wire cooling rack
- A cake dome

Ingredients

Chocolate Cherry Torte

- 1 (16-ounces) can pitted sour cherries, drained
- 2 ounces slivered almonds
- 2/3 cup sifted all-purpose flour
- 6 ounces good-quality sweet chocolate (preferably Maillard brand)
- 3 tablespoons freshly ground breadcrumbs
- 12 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus more for greasing baking pan, softened at room temperature
- 2/3 cup granulated sugar
- 3 eggs, at room temperature
- 1/4 teaspoon fine salt

- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pure almond extract
- 2 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 1 (8-ounces) can almond paste

Chocolate Cherry Torte Ganache

- 8 ounces good-quality sweet chocolate (preferably Maillard brand)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 to 2 teaspoons good-quality instant espresso coffee, for richer chocolate flavor (Espresso enhances chocolate's flavor much as vanilla does; using 1 teaspoon will simply enhance the flavor, while 2 teaspoons will lend a hint of mocha to the cake.)

Chocolate Cherry Torte Garnish (optional)

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream, chilled, to whip for garnish
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Directions

Make Chocolate Cherry Torte:

1. Adjust oven rack to center position and preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Place almonds in a large, rimmed baking sheet. Roast in the preheated oven until the almonds have a nutty aroma and are lightly toasted, 6 to 8 minutes. Remove and set aside to cool.
3. Place roasted almonds in a food processor and process until finely ground or the texture of coarse cornmeal, 15 to 30 seconds. Transfer to a bowl and mix with the sifted flour. Set aside.
4. Buttered the sides and bottom of a 9 or 10-inch springform pan. Add the breadcrumbs and shake to coat well. Shake out excess and set aside.

5. Put chocolate in the bowl of a double boiler and set over saucepan of simmering water; stir until chocolate is melted and smooth. Remove bowl from over water; cool to lukewarm, about 10 minutes.
6. In the bowl of the electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat the butter until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Add sugar and beat until light and creamy, about 3 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add two of the eggs one at time; beat to combine. Beat in salt, vanilla, and almond extract. Gently, fold chocolate into eggs mixture. Mix in the almonds flour mixture. Beat in the remaining egg.
7. Pour mixture into prepared springform pan. Arrange cherries close together, in concentric circles from the outside to the center. The entire surface should be covered with cherries. As you add the cherries press them gently into the batter so only a small portion of cherries show. Bake torte until cake tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 50 minutes to one hour. Do not overbake it. (The torte will look dry on top.)
8. Remove springform ring. Transfer the torte to a wire rack to cool completely.
9. Sprinkle a flat surface with powdered sugar. Work almond paste to make a flat, round the length of the torte's diameter and about 1/16 inch thick. If the round tears, you may patch it.
10. Cut the round into a round to fit torte exactly. Cover torte with it. Set aside.

Make ganache:

1. Put chocolate, cream, and espresso coffee powder in the bowl of the double boiler. Set bowl over saucepan of simmering water and stir until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth.
2. Remove bowl from over water; let stand until ganache

- cools slightly but is still pourable, about 5 minutes.
3. Place cooled torte on a wire rack set over rimmed baking sheet to catch drippings. Pour 1/2 cup ganache over top of torte. Using offset spatula, quickly spread ganache over top and sides of torte. Freeze torte for 3 minutes.
 4. Remove torte from fridge and pour remaining ganache over top of torte. Working quickly but gently and grasping pan bottom and rack together, slightly tilt rack with torte from side to side, allowing ganache to flow evenly over top and down sides of torte, smooth sides with offset spatula.
 5. Chill torte until ganache is set, about 1 hour. Cover with a cake dome. Refrigerated overnight.
 6. Let stand at room temperature 45 minutes before serving.
 7. To serve, cut torte into wedges. For cleanest slicing, use a sharp knife dipped in hot water and wiped dry. Repeat dipping knife in hot water and wiping dry for each slice.
 8. If garnishing with whipped cream, top wedges with a dollop of whipped cream and serve.
 9. Refrigerate any leftover torte, covered, for up to three days

Whipping the Optional Cream:

1. Using stand mixer fitted with whisk, whip cream, sugar, and vanilla on medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to high and whip until stiff peaks form, 1 to 3 minutes.