

TASTE WITHOUT WASTE

Panforte

Makes 1 x 20cm circular 'slab'.

Ingredients

1 cup hazelnuts (skins removed), coarsely chopped and toasted
1 cup blanched almond slivers, toasted
¼ cup mixed peel
1/3 cup dried peaches, chopped
1/3 cup dried cranberries
½ cup plain flour
1 tbsp cocoa powder
1 tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp ground allspice
¼ tsp ground white pepper (up to a ½ tsp if you're daring)
100g dark chocolate (70% is best), roughly chopped
½ cup white sugar
2/3 cup clear honey

Topping

150g dark chocolate (70% is best), roughly chopped

Method

Preheat the oven to 150C. Grease and carefully line a 20cm spring-form cake tin. For extra non-stick security (I highly recommend doing this), line the tin a second time with edible rice paper (so that it sits inside the baking paper).

In a large bowl combine the toasted hazelnuts and almonds, mixed peel, dried peaches and dried cranberries. Sift together the plain flour, cocoa powder, ground cinnamon, allspice and white pepper. Stir though the fruit and nuts, ensuring that the fruit is well coated.

Place the dark chocolate in a heatproof bowl and either melt over a pot of simmering water, stirring regularly, or in the microwave according to packet directions. Set aside.

Whisk the honey and sugar together in a small saucepan. Place over a medium to low heat and cook until melted and the sugar has dissolved, stirring all the while. Stop stirring and allow the mixture to boil until it reaches 116C (240F) when tested with a candy thermometer or until a small sample forms a soft ball when dropped into cold water.

Immediately remove the pan from the heat. Scrape the contents into the bowl of flour/dried fruit/nuts, along with the melted chocolate. Stir quickly with a wooden spoon to combine (the mixture will begin to stiffen almost immediately. You may need to work the mixture quite hard to ensure that all of the flour disappears. It will eventually!

As soon as the flour is incorporated, transfer to your prepared tin and press in with damp hands to form an even layer. Bake for 30-35 minutes or until the top is ever so slightly blistered. It will be a little difficult to tell when it is done as the chocolate will remain soft due to the heat, so go off instinct!

Set the tin on a wire rack and leave to rest for 15 minutes. Remove the wall of the cake tin and slide the cake off the tin's base and directly onto the wire rack. It's wise to remove the baking paper at the same time. The rice paper will stick to the Panforte and provide a 'protective' outer layer. Allow to cool for a further 15 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare your topping.

Topping

Place the dark chocolate in a heatproof bowl and either melt over a pot of simmering water, stirring regularly, or in the microwave according to packet directions. Pour the melted chocolate onto the centre of the Panforte and use a spatula to smooth out the chocolate so that it evenly covers the top. Leave to cool/set completely.

Once set, cut small slivers/wedges of the Panforte and dust the top with icing sugar if you wish. Wrap the remaining 'slab' tightly in cling film and store in a cool dry place. Will keep for up to 2 months, stored in this manner.

Source: Adapted from Joy of Baking.

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