

Zester Daily

Flourless Chocolate Cake Is Perfect For Thanksgiving

By: David Latt

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Thanksgiving celebrates family and traditions. Shaped by a lifetime of expectations, most people think the meal must include turkey, stuffing, gravy, cranberry sauce and sweet potatoes.

Dessert is more variable, although pumpkin pie often seems to be on the menu. In our house apple pie and bread pudding are also constants.

For this Thanksgiving, I've decided to bend tradition and bring a flourless chocolate cake to the table.

On a late summer trip to the Berkshires, I was won over by French pastry chef Jean Yves and his deliciously light, flourless chocolate cake.

Knowing I was coming to the area for a visit, he invited me to a hosted tasting at Patisserie Lenox, the cozy shop he and his wife Yulia Bougouin own and operate in Lenox, Mass..

Bringing French pastry to the Berkshires



Jean Yves, wife Yulia Bougouin and daughter Sonya at Patisserie Lenox in Lenox, Mass. Credit: David Latt

Chef Yves' pastries are exactly what one expects to find in a French bakery: light and flaky croissants, richly flavored puff pastries with a light custard filling, airy and buttery brioche, brightly colored macarons, chocolate glazed éclairs, fresh fruit tarts and elaborately decorated cakes.

What one doesn't expect in the Berkshires is a French bakery.

The area is renowned for the art and music festivals that dominate the summer season. Performances at Jacobs Pillow Dance and concerts at Tanglewood are the prominent but not the only arts celebrations in the area.

The bakeries and restaurants in Lenox are good but definitely not French. So the natural question to put to Yves is why the Berkshires?

Marriage made in the kitchen

Sitting down for coffee and a slice of his cake, Yves smiled as he talked about how he created one of his signature confections, a two-layer, flourless chocolate cake with a ganache filling.

As a young man, he worked at elegant **Le Grenouille** on the Upper East Side of New York.

The job demanded he create new desserts to satisfy an always hungry, upscale clientele. He remembered the densely flavored chocolate and thick whipped cream he employed to make rich chocolate cakes when he worked in a German bakery. He applied French patisserie techniques to those ingredients.

The result was a cake that combined the essence of chocolate and cream without being heavy. It's dense with flavor and light on the palate.

He looked down at his hands before he explained how he found himself in the Berkshires.

Having worked in New York City, in the kitchens of well-known chefs and on Long Island in his own bakeries, he freed himself from a life that was falling apart when he discovered a soulmate in a young Russian chef who was as proud of her soups as he was of his cakes, tarts and pastries.

This was a marriage made in the kitchen. Yves and Bougouin decided to raise their young daughter in the second home he had built in the woods and recast their lives in the Berkshires.

The flourless chocolate cake — topped with cocoa powder, swirls of freshly made whipped cream and hand-dipped chocolate-covered whole almonds — was one of the ways he celebrated his new life and business in Lenox.

Patisserie Lenox Flourless Chocolate Cake

Use good quality ingredients for better tasting cakes. Avoid butter, cream and chocolates made with artificial ingredients and stabilizers.

Serves 6-8

For the cake

- 6 eggs
- 12 ounces of bittersweet chocolate
- 1 cup of sugar
- ¾ cup of water
- 2 cups of whipped cream
- ¼ cup cocoa powder
- 10 chocolate-covered almonds or coffee beans or whole berries (optional)

For the ganache

- 1 cup of heavy cream
- 1 pound bittersweet chocolate
- ½ pound of butter
- 3 cups of whipped cream
- 1 cup of egg white
- 2-3 tablespoon granulated sugar

Directions to make the cake

1. Whip 6 eggs and 1 cup of sugar until you reach three times the original volume.
2. Cut chocolate into small pieces, the size of chocolate chips, or use chocolate chips.
3. Pour ¾ cup boiling water over the chocolate, mix to melt the chocolate. Let cool but not harden.
4. Mix the eggs, melted chocolate and whipped cream and gently fold them together.
5. Line two ¼ sheet pans with parchment paper.
5. Divide the mixture and pour into the pans.
6. Cook in a preheated, 350 F oven for 20 minutes.
7. Remove the cake from the oven. It may be a bit jiggly and will look as if it is not done.
8. Refrigerate overnight.

Directions to make the mousse

1. Bring the cream to a gentle boil, pour into the chocolate, mix to melt the chocolate.
2. Mix in the butter to create the ganache.
3. Whip egg whites with 2 tablespoons sugar, until the mixture peaks.
4. Sweeten the whipped cream with one tablespoon sugar.
4. Fold the egg whites into the ganache and mix in 2 cups of whipped cream at the same time.

Directions to complete the cake

1. Place the two refrigerated cakes on a work surface. Pour and smooth out ¾ of the mousse on top of one of the cakes.
2. Flip the second pan so that that cake ends up in the first pan. Remove the parchment from the top of the newly assembled "sandwich" cake.
3. Refrigerate for a couple of hours until the cake is set.
4. Put a large plate, serving platter or cutting board on top of the pan. Flip the pan so the "sandwich" cake slides out of the baking pan.
5. Take off the second parchment paper and smooth out the rest of the mousse on top of the cake.
6. Dust the cake with cocoa powder so the top is completely covered.
7. Decorate with the remaining whipped cream and top with chocolate covered almonds or coffee beans, or berries.

Photo: Jean Yves' flourless chocolate cake. Credit: David Latt



*Zester Daily contributor David Latt is a television writer/producer with a passion for food. Putting his television experience to good use, he created *Secrets of Restaurant Chefs*, a YouTube Channel, with lively videos by well-known chefs sharing their favorite recipes. In addition to writing about food for Zester Daily and his own sites, *Men Who Like to Cook* and *Men Who Like to Travel*. He has contributed to Mark Bittman's *New York Times* food blog, *Bitten*, *One for the Table* and *Traveling Mom*. His helpful guide to holiday entertaining, "10 Delicious Holiday Recipes," is available on Amazon eCookbooks. He still develops for television but finds time to take his passion for food on the road as a contributor to Peter Greenberg's travel site, *New York Daily News* and *Luxury Travel Magazine*.*