

White Russian Birch de Noël

Chocolate Sponge:

(adapted from Bon Appetit recipe)

- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder, plus more for dusting
- Powdered sugar (for dusting)
- Espresso powder (for dusting)
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 4 oz bittersweet chocolate chips
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 6 large eggs, separated
- ½ tsp kosher salt
- ⅔ cup plus 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar

Kahlua Filling:

- 150 ml Kahlua
- ½ cup mascarpone
- 1 cup whipping cream
- 6 teaspoons powdered sugar
- ½ teaspoon espresso powder

Vanilla- Coffee frosting:

- 2 large egg white
- ¾ cup white sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 16 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon espresso powder

White Chocolate bark:

- 2/3 cup white chocolate chips
- ~ ½ teaspoon vegetable oil
- Cinnamon to taste

Merengue Mushrooms:

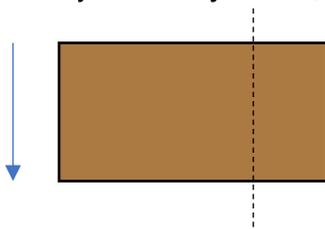
- 1 large egg white
- less than 1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar
- Pinch salt
- 2 Tablespoons white sugar
- Cocoa powder for dusting
- 4+ strawberries (dependent on number of mushrooms desired)

Hard Candy Grass:

1 cup white sugar
1/3 cup water
1 tablespoon corn syrup
Green food coloring

For the Sponge-

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Cover a 18x13 rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Lightly coat parchment by running it with stick of butter. Place a large kitchen towel (it should be larger than baking sheet) on a flat surface. Whisk equal parts cocoa, espresso powder, and powdered sugar in a small bowl and dust towel with a fine-mesh sieve.
2. Sift flour and ¼ cup cocoa powder into a small bowl. Heat chocolate, oil, and vanilla in a medium microwave-safe bowl in 15-second intervals, stirring occasionally, until melted. Let cool slightly.
3. Using an electric mixer on medium-high speed, beat egg whites and salt in a large bowl until foamy. With motor running, gradually add ⅓ cup granulated sugar and beat until stiff, glossy peaks form.
4. Using clean beaters, beat egg yolks and ⅓ cup granulated sugar in another large bowl until pale and thick, about 4 minutes. Beat in chocolate mixture until no streaks remain, then use a large spatula to fold in meringue, leaving some streaks. Fold in dry ingredients just to combine—be careful not to overmix.
5. Scrape batter into prepared baking sheet; smooth top (you want to have an even layer). Bake until top of cake is dry and springs back when gently pressed and edges are starting to pull away from sides of baking sheet, 10–12 minutes; let cool slightly.
6. Invert cake onto prepared towel. Peel away parchment. Cut cake, with smaller piece 2.5 inches wide (see image). Carefully roll both cake pieces into a log inside towel (direction of arrow). Transfer, seam side down, to a wire rack and let sit until just barely warm, about 20 minutes.



For the Filling-

1. Whip mascarpone for 30 seconds.
2. Add whipping cream and 4 teaspoons sugar, whip until soft peaks form.
3. Add in Kahlua in increments, beating as you go. Add espresso powder.
4. Once incorporated and medium peaks form, add remaining sugar to taste, as well as additional espresso powder.
5. Beat until medium-stiff peaks form.

Filling Cake-

If the cake has been sitting for about 30 minutes, it should be cool enough to fill. Slowly unroll cake, spread filling inside to cover entire exposed area (both pieces). Carefully re-roll, place seam side down and refrigerate.

For the Frosting-

1. Mix egg whites until foamy with a mixer.
2. Add 2.5 tablespoons of sugar a mix on high speed until soft peaks form.
3. Simultaneously, add remaining sugar and 2.5 tablespoons of water to small saucepan. Using a candy thermometer, bring the mixture to 240° F without stirring (soft-ball stage).
**Try to have steps 2 and 3 finish simultaneously, feel free to stop mixing at any point to allow melting sugar to catch up.
4. Continuing to mix the egg whites, slowly combine sugar syrup. Try and aim the syrup to hit the side of the bowl and not the whites directly while incorporating. Whip 10+ minutes, until bowl is no longer hot. The mixture will be thick with glossy, firm peaks. Beat in salt.
5. While beating, add in butter a tablespoon at a time. Mixture may thin but continue beating until firm peaks return.
6. Add vanilla and coffee.
7. Use immediately to frost cake or refrigerate, though if refrigerating you may need to beat again slightly. ** Before frosting, arrange smaller roll next to larger roll to mimic a tree branch. Place on final serving tray, sticking pieces of parchment paper under the edges of the log to catch stray frosting.

For the Bark-

1. Melt the chocolate chips and oil in a microwave safe bowl at half power in 30 second increments until melted, stirring each 30 seconds. (This can alternatively be done in a double boiler on the stove).
2. Mix in cinnamon to taste.
3. Cut a piece of parchment paper to fit a baking sheet. Using the back of a spoon, spread the mixture in streaks (approx. 1 in wide, 4-6 in long)
4. Leave on counter or refrigerate until hardened.
5. Once hardened, carefully peel off and decorate cake to imitate birch bark.

For the Mushrooms-

1. Preheat oven to 200° F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Beat egg white until foamy.
3. Add salt, cream of tartar, and sugar (slowly), beating on high until glossy stiff peaks form.
4. Add to bag, pipe onto parchment paper forming mushroom stems and a few caps. Leave a small amount of merengue in bag to be used later as glue for building the mushrooms.
5. Bake for 1.5 hours, then turn off oven and allow to cool for another hour without opening oven.

6. Wash and core small strawberries.
7. Using left over merengue, attach mushroom caps to stems, and stems to mushroom caps. Arrange around birch log, using merengue to hold mushrooms up or stick to baking sheet.

For the Grass-

1. Mix sugar, water, corn syrup, and food coloring in small saucepan.
2. On medium heat mix until crystals dissolve.
3. On medium-high heat using candy thermometer, bring mixture to 293° F.
4. Pour mixture on parchment lined baking sheet.
5. Allow to harden, break into desired shapes and decorate.

Finish cake by sprinkling powdered sugar with fine sieve across constructed log to mimic a light snowfall.