

Germany Bite by Bite: Black Forest Gateau

Germany's most famous cake comes from Baden-Württemberg. Its cherry decorations are reminiscent of traditional Bollen hats, which are a characteristic headwear in the Black Forest. To successfully make the cake you'll need to plan in 2 days — and no, that's not a joke. On the first day you make the sponge cake and prepare the cherries. And the following day you get to finish it. Here's the recipe:

Ingredients for the sponge cake:

6 eggs (room temperature)

1 pinch of salt

180 g sugar

100 g flour

50 g cornstarch

50 g cocoa (baking strength)

For filling and decoration:

12 Amarena or candied cherries

A jar of sour cherries (drained weight 350 g) Morello cherries

100 g sugar

1 packet vanilla sugar

1 tablespoon cornstarch

800 g whipping cream ice cold (cream stiffener)

6 tablespoons Kirsch cherry liqueur

30 g dark chocolate

The chocolate sponge cake — this is how it's made:

Preheat the oven to 180°C (356°F) top/bottom heat at 165°C (329°F) for fan-assisted ovens. Line a round 26 cm/10-inch baking tin with grease-proof paper.

Thoroughly sieve flour, baking powder, cornstarch & cocoa powder & set aside.

Separate the eggs and whip the egg whites with a pinch of salt, and after about two minutes, slowly add 3/4 of the sugar. Keep beating the egg white until it forms stiff peaks. If you can turn the bowl upside over your head and not be covered in egg, then you've done it right.

Now whisk the egg yolks with the remaining sugar for a few minutes until the mixture is nice and creamy and the color is noticeably lighter.

Now fold the beaten egg white into the egg yolk mix, then very gently fold in the dry ingredients.

Pour the batter into the tin and bake in the oven for about 25 - 30 minutes, or until a skewer comes out clean. Then turn the sponge cake out onto a rack and let it cool down. Ideally overnight. This is important, in order to be able to decorate it properly.

Filling

Drain the cherries using a sieve and save the juice. There should be 350 ml of cherry liquid, and if not, simply top up with water. Mix 3 tablespoons of the juice with the cornstarch. If you have a sweet tooth, add sugar to taste — we didn't use any;-) Heat the juice, add the cornstarch slurry and bring to the boil while stirring. When the mixture turns creamy, let it simmer for another minute. Finally add the cherries and bring everything to the boil again. Important: The compote must now cool down completely. It is best to put it in the fridge overnight. Cherries and cream should later be the same temperature.

Whip the cream with the vanilla sugar and cream stiffener until very stiff and put it in the fridge overnight.

Assemble the gâteau

The classic Black Forest gâteau consists of three cake layers. Cut the cooled sponge cake twice, starting from the top. A long knife with a serrated blade works best. First, carefully mark thirds around the edge of the cake with the knife, then cut through towards the middle, turning the sponge cake in one direction. Once you have cut the first layer, carefully lift it up, using the knife to support it and place it on a plate. Repeat for the next layer.

When you've done that, you can start stacking. Drizzle the cake base with 3 tablespoons of Kirsch cherry liqueur. Place a ladle-full of cherry compote in the middle and gently spread it but making sure to leave a 3 cm (1 inch) space to the edge of the cake. Using a piping bag, pipe cold whipped cream around the edge of the compote in a single layer, maintaining the space to the edge of the cake, so it won't later spill out. Do the same with the second layer of cake. Once you have placed the third layer of sponge, ice the entire cake with whipped cream. Finally using the piping bag decorate it with 12 cream rosettes along the outer edge, and place the strained Amarena cherries on top, sprinkle the whole cake with chocolate shavings and put the finished cake in the fridge again. It's best to leave it for a few hours to make it nice and stable.

Enjoy!