

The **ULTIMATE CHOCOLATE** cake from The Free Range Cook Annabel Langbein & enjoyed at our Mid-Winter Christmas lunch on 17/7/2011

Prep time 5 mins

Cook time 1 hour

Serves 12-16

Makes 1 large cake (can be cooked in roasting dish) or 2 smaller cakes

3 cups self-raising flour

2 cups sugar

1½ tsp vanilla extract

¾ cup cocoa powder

2 tsp baking soda, sifted

200g butter, softened

1 cup milk or unsweetened yoghurt

3 large eggs

1 cup boiling hot coffee

Heat oven to 160°C. Grease the sides and line the base of a 30cm round cake tin, roasting dish or 2 x 20cm round cake tins with baking paper.

Place all the above ingredients in a bowl and mix until the ingredients are combined and the butter is fully incorporated. (a food processor can be used)

Pour mixture into prepared tin or tins and smooth top. Bake for 1 hour or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Allow to cool in the tin. If not using at once, the cake will keep for about a week in a sealed container in the fridge. You can also freeze it un-iced.

To ice: Chocolate Ganache

500ml cream

500g best quality dark chocolate, roughly chopped

Pour the cream into a medium pot and heat it until it is almost but not quite boiling. You'll know it's ready when bubbles start to form around the edge of the pot. Remove from the heat and add the chocolate. Stand for 2 minutes, then stir until the chocolate is fully melted into the cream. Whisk until smooth and glossy. When you start to stir it, you think it won't come together, but it will.

When you are ready to ice the cake, slather chilled Chocolate Ganache over the top. Top with fresh raspberries and serve.

If you're not using the ganache straight away, store it in a jar in the fridge for up to two weeks. When you're ready to serve it, gently warm in a pot or microwave to soften.

Makes approx 4 cups