



# Chocolate forest cake

by Frances Quinn

*Great British Bake Off* winner

## Equipment

15cm round, deep, loose-bottomed tin (pork-pie size), greased and fully lined

Forget the Black Forest – rich, chocolatey-brown is where it's at, and there's not a cherry in sight here. With its abundant, woodland-themed decorations, this bake has a wonderfully organic and generous feel. You could go further and create a whole thicket of forest cakes in different sizes, including some mini-muffin-sized ones, and cover them in drifts of sweet pine cones, leaves, acorns and twigs. I can't think of anything better for someone who loves the wild woods...

Preheat the oven to 170°C/150°C fan/gas 3.

Put the butter, sugar and golden syrup into a saucepan. Set over a medium heat and warm, stirring occasionally, until the butter has melted and the sugar has dissolved. Remove the pan from the heat, add the chopped chocolate and stir until melted and smooth. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl and leave to cool for about 5 minutes.

Measure the milk in a jug, add the eggs and vanilla extract, and beat in with a fork. Pour the milk and egg mixture into the warm syrup mixture and beat to combine – ideally with a hand-held electric whisk. Finally, sift the cocoa powder and flour into the mixture, beating until everything is well combined and no flour is visible in the very wet, smooth batter.

Set your lined tin on a baking tray, then carefully pour the mixture into the tin. Bake for about 50 minutes or until a skewer pushed into the centre of the cake comes out fairly clean. Leave to cool in the tin for 15 minutes before removing the cake and transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

While the cake is baking and cooling, make the ganache. Put the chocolate into a medium-sized heatproof bowl with the golden syrup and vanilla extract. Gently heat the cream in a small saucepan over a medium heat. When it's just coming to the boil, pour it over the chocolate and stir gently until smooth and shiny. Leave to cool, then put the ganache in the fridge to firm up slightly.

## For the cake

- 100g butter, roughly chopped
- 100g light muscovado sugar
- 100g golden syrup
- 100g dark chocolate, chopped into small pieces
- 100ml whole milk
- 2 eggs (at room temperature)
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 100g self-raising flour

## For the ganache

- 100g dark chocolate, chopped into small pieces
- 1 tbsp golden syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 150ml double cream

## For the filling

- 150ml double cream

## For the pine cone

- cocoa powder, to dust your hands, optional
- 1 chocolate-covered biscuit stick, such as a Mikado
- 25g toasted flaked almonds

Ingredients continued  
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## Ingredients continued

### To decorate

- some or all of the following:
  - Biscuit leaves
- 1 Marzipan tealight
- Gingerbread acorns
- 1 pretzel stick
- 1 chocolate-covered biscuit stick, such as a Mikado
- 1 chocolate stick, such as a Matchmaker
- an assortment of nuts, such as hazelnuts, walnuts and
- pecans, whole and chopped 1 tbsp edible confetti.

## Chocolate forest cake continued

When the ganache has reached a soft spreading consistency, transfer 25g of it (1–2 tablespoons) to a small bowl; you will use this to create your chocolate pine cone. Return this small portion to the fridge to firm up further.

Using a long, serrated knife, such as a bread knife, carefully cut the cake horizontally into two equal layers. Set the base layer on a plate, cake board or stand (I like to use a tree-trunk cake stand).

Whip the cream to fill the cake until medium peaks form. Use a small palette knife to spread the whipped cream over the surface of the bottom cake layer, then place the second layer on top. If necessary, chill the cake to help firm up the cream filling – this will make it easier to cover the cake with ganache.

With a palette knife, spread the ganache all over the side and top of the cake.

To create your pine cone, take the small portion of chilled ganache and mould it with your hands (dusted with cocoa powder, if necessary) into a rough cone shape, about 5cm long and 2cm in diameter at the widest end. Break off about a third of the chocolate-covered biscuit stick and reserve for decorating the cake (as a twig). Carefully push the other longer piece of the stick, broken end down, into the centre top of the chocolate cone. The broken end of the stick will protrude out of the base of the cone. Insert this end into the ganache-covered cake at about 11 o'clock, a few centimetres in from the edge. Beginning at the base of the cone, stick in flaked almonds (using only those that are unbroken) to look like the scales of a pine cone. You can use the remaining almond pieces in the edible foliage.

Surround the pine cone with the rest of your chosen decorations. It looks best if you cover only about half of the cake surface, just scattering some edible confetti over the remainder.

**“Gathering friends and family for a picnic is a great way to celebrate everything summer has to offer. After finding the perfect spot, surprise everyone by revealing this showstopper forest-themed cake. It’s perfect for those with a sweet tooth, and will fuel everyone up for woodland adventures.**

**“Don’t forget to get little ones involved, too – they can help with nature-inspired decorations.”**

Extract taken from *Quintessential Baking* by Frances Quinn (Bloomsbury, £25)  
Photography © Georgia Glynn-Smith



# Super shortbread leaves

**Fundraising tip**  
Have a bake sale to raise money to help us plant trees!



## Ingredients

125g butter  
55g caster sugar  
180g plain flour  
Green food colouring (optional)

**Tip:** Get creative with your shortbread leaves – decorate them with icing sugar and sprinkles.

## How to make

1. Preheat the oven to 190°C/fan 170°C. Grease a baking tray.
2. Cream the butter and sugar together in a large bowl.
3. Sieve in the flour. If using food colouring, add a couple of drops and stir until it's all combined.
4. Tip out onto a floured surface and knead to make a dough. Now roll it out until it's 1cm thick.
5. Use your cookie cutter to cut out shapes and place on the baking tray. Make sure to chill in the fridge for 30 minutes.
6. Bake the shortbread for 15-20 minutes. Turn out onto a wire rack, sprinkle some caster sugar on top and leave to cool.

# Raspberry lollies

Prep: 20 mins | Makes 6 lollies

## What you need

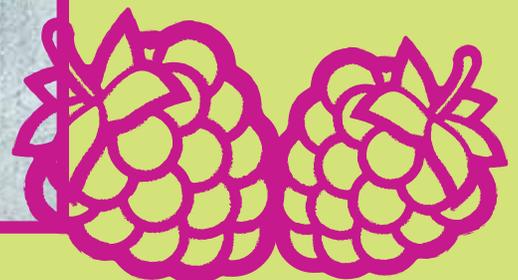
Two handfuls of raspberries

1 cup of apple juice

1 teaspoon of honey

Ice lolly moulds (or empty yoghurt pots and lolly sticks)

1. Wash the berries then mash them up in a bowl (or blitz them in a blender if you've got one).
2. Add the apple juice and honey to your raspberry mash and stir well.
3. Pour the mixture through a sieve to get rid of any nasty pips.
4. Stir it again, then pour it into the lolly moulds (or yoghurt pots – remember to add lolly sticks!)
5. Put them in the freezer and eat them in the sunshine – yum!



# Peanut butter dog biscuits



## Ingredients

125g wholemeal flour  
125g peanut butter  
75g mashed banana  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
60ml skimmed milk

## How to make

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/fan 160°C. Grease a baking tray.
2. Mix the peanut butter, banana and milk in a large bowl until smooth.
3. Sieve the flour and baking powder into the bowl. Stir everything together to make a dough.
4. Sprinkle some flour onto a clean surface and knead the dough lightly, then roll it until it's 1cm thick
5. Use a cookie cutter to cut out shapes and place on the baking tray.
6. Bake for 20 minutes until golden, then transfer to a wire rack to cool. They'll keep for up to a week in an airtight container.

