

The Chocolate Trio Cake Story

My family is a food family. Our best times have always been at the dinner table. We can also be intimidating: both of my parents are medieval English professors, and dinner conversations tend to meander to some pretty strange topics. When I'm dating someone, I put off introducing them to my parents from worry that the combination of kindness and knowledge, but high expectations might scare them off. So it might have gone badly when my brother introduced the family to his girlfriend Shannon. She walked a complex life path and had to defer her own college education to support her family. But anything she might be missing for that was drowned out in her intelligence, self-acquired knowledge, kindness, and joyful spirit.



Photo provided by Austin Brown: Austin Brown left, Shannon 2nd from left, Austin's brother and parents

One of my happiest days was when they were married and I gained Shannon as a sister. Shannon also found the secret to immediate acceptance into our family: share great food with us. . Of the many meals she has made with us, this cake may be my favorite dish and is now a go-to if I need to impress. Just like Shannon as the newest member of our family, the differences in this cake complement each other. Austin Brown

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Three Layers of Chocolate Bliss!...Gluten Free

Chocolate Trio Cake



Chocolate Trio Cake available at **Eatonville Restaurant**

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Photo: Chocolate Trio Cake Eatonville Restaurant

Chocolate Trio Cake

The final cake consists of three dramatically different layers: dark chocolate flourless cake makes a base that would be almost too decadent on its own. The center is a rich, creamy chocolate mousse with deep flavor. On top is a cloud of light-as-air white chocolate, which cut the richness just enough for a perfectly balanced slice, top to bottom. This cake is very rich and yields 12 generous portions or up to 24 small slices.

For equipment, you'll need a 9 inch round springform pan, a good stand mixer and a large metal bowl set over a saucepan big enough to support it. You could use a standard double boiler but will have to transfer the melted chocolate to fit the beaten eggs or whipped cream each time, which can overcool the chocolate. Each layer must be made in sequential order. Total prep time is about 4 hours, but most of this is waiting for the layers to cool or set. Wash out the bowl of the mixer between layers.

Bottom Layer

- **6 Tbsp** unsalted butter, cut into 1 Tbsp pieces and extra for greasing pan
- **8 oz** bittersweet chocolate (60-70%), roughly chopped or in discs / chips
- **1 1/2 tsp** instant espresso powder (optional but recommended)
- **1 1/2 tsp** vanilla extract
- **4** large eggs, separated
- pinch salt
- **1/2 tsp** cream of tartar (to stabilize the egg whites)
- **1/4 cup** light brown sugar (if using 70% chocolate, use **1/3 cup**)

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Using butter, grease the bottom and sides of the springform pan.
2. Combine 6T butter, chocolate, vanilla, and espresso powder (if using) in large metal bowl over boiling water on medium-high heat, stirring occasionally until fully smooth. Cool slightly (~10 minutes) while doing the next step
3. In stand mixer with whisk attachment, beat egg whites and salt 30 seconds at medium speed. Add cream of tartar, then brown sugar a quarter at a time until combined. Increase speed to high until soft peaks form (1-2 minutes), scraping down sides halfway through.
4. Add egg yolks to cooled chocolate mixture and whisk until combined. The chocolate must be cool enough so it doesn't cook the eggs but warm enough to stay fluid. Using rubber spatula, gently fold in egg whites until no white streaks or unmixed chocolate (get all the way to the bottom of the bowl) remain. Do not beat or overmix, as this will prevent the cake from rising properly and affect the final texture. Pour into greased pan in the center, avoiding getting any on the sides. Gently smooth the top or shake gently so the batter is even.
5. Bake 13 to 16 minutes, until cake is firm around edges, and center has just set but is still soft. Cool completely at room temperature, about 1 hour. After 45 minutes, begin the middle layer.

Middle Layer

- **8 oz** bittersweet chocolate (60-70%), roughly chopped or chips
- **2 Tbsp** dutch-processed cocoa powder
- **2 Tbsp** hot water
- **1 1/2 cup** heavy cream
- **1/8 tsp** salt
- **1 Tbsp** granulated sugar

1. Melt chocolate in large metal bowl over boiling water on medium-high heat, stirring occasionally until fully smooth. Cool slightly (~5 minutes) while doing the next step.
2. In stand mixer with whisk attachment, whip cream, salt, and granulated sugar at medium speed for 30 seconds. Increase speed to high until soft peaks form, about 1 minute. Do not overbeat or you'll have butter.
3. Stir cocoa powder into hot water in small bowl and whisk the mixture into melted chocolate. Using rubber spatula, fold in whipped cream until no white streaks remain. It's important to fold very gently or the final texture will not be light enough.
4. Spoon into the middle of the pan over cooled bottom layer. The bottom layer will have contracted as it cooled, so fill the space around it with the mousse. Smooth top and wipe around the inside of the pan to avoid drips that would affect the appearance of the final cake. Refrigerate while making the top layer, at least 15 minutes.

Top Layer

- **3/4 tsp** powdered gelatin
- **2 Tbsp** water, room temperature
- **6 oz** white chocolate, chopped rough or chips
- **1 1/2 cup** heavy cream
- Cocoa powder for dusting on top, or chocolate shavings

1. Sprinkle gelatin over water in a small bowl; let stand while moving to next step (at least 5 minutes).
2. Place white chocolate in medium bowl. Heat 1/2 cup of the cream to a simmer in a small saucepan, stirring to prevent scalding. Remove from heat, add gelatin mixture and stir until dissolved. Pour the hot cream mixture over white chocolate and whisk until mixture is smooth. Let cool to room temperature, stirring occasionally.
3. In stand mixer with whisk attachment, whip remaining 1 cup cream at medium for 30 seconds. Increase speed to high and whip until soft peaks form when whisk is lifted, 30 - 60 seconds. Using rubber spatula, gently fold whipped cream into white chocolate mixture until fully combined. It's important to fold very gently or the final texture will not be light enough. Spoon mixture over middle layer and smooth top. Return cake to refrigerator and chill until set, at least 2 1/2 hours.
4. Sprinkle the top of cake with cocoa powder (through a sifter to avoid clumps) or decorate as desired. Run a thin knife around the edge of cake and remove springform ring. Smooth sides gently with an angled spatula if blemishes exist. Very carefully cut into slices and serve, using a thin knife run under hot water. Wipe the knife between cuts to avoid getting dark chocolate on the white chocolate layer.