Chocolate & Beetroot Cake

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Chocolate and beetroot is actually a very good combination and even if you say you don't like beetroot, it really does take on a whole new taste sensation this way.

This is a cake of contrasts and contradictions. So dark in colour it should be exceedingly rich, but surprisingly it is quite light. The beetroot lends a little sweetness and also its reddish-purple juice manages to tint even the darkest of chocolate.

Serve with a dollop of cream or creme fraiche.

Ingredients *(serves 6-8)*
• 200g fresh beetroot
• 150g Ecuador Chocolate Powder
• 1 inch piece fresh ginger, peeled
• ½ tsp ground cinnamon
• 125g plain flour
• 1½ tsp baking powder
• pinch salt
• 150g caster sugar
• 200g unsalted butter
• 3 eggs

Method
Boil the beetroot for an hour until tender. Drain and leave to cool. Remove the skin and chop the beetroot into pieces. Using a blender, purée until smooth.

Preheat the oven to 180C / 350F / Gas 4. Grease a deep, 17cm cake tin with butter and lightly coat the inside with flour.

Place the beetroot purée in a saucepan and warm through on a low heat. Remove from the heat and add the chocolate powder and stir gently to melt and mix. Grate in the ginger, add the cinnamon and stir until all mixed together. Set aside to cool.

In a large bowl sift the flour, baking powder and salt together.
Separate the eggs. Put the yolks in a large bowl and the whites in another large bowl.
To the egg yolks add the sugar and butter and beat until pale, creamy and fluffy.
Whisk the egg whites until they are quite stiff and form peaks.

Fold the yolk mixture into the flour until well combined. Then fold in the egg whites, a third at a time until well mixed. Gently stir in the beetroot and chocolate mixture.

Spoon into the cake tin and smooth the mixture evenly over the surface. Place in the centre of the oven and bake for 50 minutes.
Check the cake is done by inserting a skewer into the centre. The skewer should come out clean (no liquid cake mix should show) and the cake should have a fudgey consistency.
Leave the cake to cool in the tin for 10 minutes before removing from the tin and placing on a wire rack to cool.

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