

CHOCOLATE RASPBERRY CELEBRATION PETIT FOURS

Makes one 13 x 9 Pan, yielding various numbers of petit fours depending on your cutter size

This elegant dessert is the perfect way to honor someone you love, whether for Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, a birthday, or any special occasion in between. It was the hit of our pastry tables for the catering. At Manna we often made large heart shapes, and for Easter we fashioned Ukrainian Easter eggs.



The cutouts can be themed to any occasion, but here is what I love the most. After cutting out shapes with a cutter there will be lots of bits and pieces remaining which cannot be reused. At The Collins House, I would pile these haphazardly on a plate to form a pyramid of scraps. Then I would swish leftover glaze all over the pile as if making a Jackson Pollock cake painting. Once the glaze set up, I would present the messy pile to our guests, and they disappeared instantly. In this way nothing goes to waste.

The cake itself is soft and moist. The glaze is soft as well, and on a warm day will get melty at room temperature. You may prefer to eat it with a fork, but it *is* finger-licking good.

Cake

7 oz. frozen raspberries, thawed to room temperature
1/2 cup sugar
1 Tbsp. orange liqueur

15 Tbsp. (2 sticks minus 1 Tbsp.) butter
6 oz. high quality semisweet chocolate
1 1/2 oz. high quality unsweetened chocolate

5 eggs, separated (make sure the white has NO yolk in it)
1 cup sugar, divided in half
1/2 cup cake flour

Chocolate Glaze

12 oz. semisweet chocolate (the best quality you can find)
6 oz. (1 1/2 sticks) butter

Optional garnishes: strawberry halves, whole fresh raspberries, colored icings

1. Make a raspberry puree: In a food processor or blender, puree the raspberries, sugar and orange liqueur together to well blended. Strain out the seeds, pressing down on the solids. Set aside.
2. Preheat the oven to 350. Lightly coat a 13 x 9-inch cake pan with pan spray or butter, line the bottom with parchment paper, and set aside.
3. For the cake: Melt the butter and chocolate (either in a microwave on medium power, in 1-minute intervals, or in a double boiler). Stir well to combine and set aside to cool.
4. In the bowl of an electric mixer with a paddle attachment, beat the egg yolks and 1/2 cup of the sugar on high speed until very thick and light-colored, about 3-5 minutes. Reduce speed to low and

gently mix in cooled chocolate/butter mix, and the reserved raspberry puree. Use a rubber spatula to scrape down the side of the bowl, and hand mix the batter til homogeneous.

5. In a clean bowl, beat the egg whites on a high speed until frothy and beginning to take on some fluffy volume. Add the remaining 1/2 cup of sugar and beat until soft peaks form (peaks should just hold their shape, but not be stiff and dry).
6. Sift cake flour over the batter and fold in. Then fold in the whites gently, so as not to disrupt their fabric. Spread the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top well with an offset spatula. Bake for about 25 minutes, or until a tester comes out clean. Cool, then chill well, in the refrigerator until ready to cut and glaze. The cake should be cold and firm. If you partially freeze it, it will make the cutting even easier.
7. For the glaze: Melt the chocolate (either in a microwave on medium power, in 1-minute intervals, or in a double boiler). Stir in the butter 1 Tbsp. at a time. You are aiming for a glaze that is just a tad warm, and flows when you pour it over the cutout pieces of cake, but that will set up quickly as you spread it over the tops and sides.
8. Remove the cake from the fridge. Invert the pan onto a cutting board that will fit it, and remove the parchment paper from underneath. Cut into heart shapes with a cookie cutter that is no smaller than about 2 inches wide (too small and they are hard to handle). If the cutouts seem too fragile to push out of the cutter, set the bars in the freezer for 30 minutes to firm them up. *Make sure there are no errant crumbs on the cake's top, so the glaze will be perfectly smooth.*
9. One at a time, pour some glaze over the top of each piece. Working quickly with a small metal spatula, spread the glaze over the top. You can either let it drip naturally down the sides, or, if you want a more elegant look, spread the glaze around the sides with your spatula. The glaze should set up with a glossy look, but if you touch it with a spatula after it has set, it will lose some of that gloss. In glazing this petit four, less is more.
10. You can add a strawberry half or raspberry to the top if you like (before the glaze sets), or let the glaze set and then decorate the tops with a colored icing.

Note: You can cut diamond shapes for more generic celebrations. Using a sharp knife, cut rows lengthwise, about 1 1/2 inches apart (clean off after each cut). Then cut each row diagonally to form diamond shapes.)