



Gingerbread Cake with White Chocolate Ganache and Cranberry Sauce

YIELD: one layer cake

TIME: 4 hours

INGREDIENTS

Cake:

1 Duncan Hines Perfectly Moist Spice Cake mix

$\frac{3}{4}$ c (166 g or 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ sticks) salted butter, melted

4 eggs

$\frac{2}{3}$ c (166 g) whole milk

$\frac{1}{3}$ c (106 g) molasses

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp (28 g) ground ginger

$\frac{1}{2}$ c (150 g) finely chopped candied ginger

Ganache:

12 oz (340 g) white baking chocolate, chopped

$\frac{2}{3}$ c (6 oz or 165 g) heavy cream

Cranberry Sauce:

12 oz (340 g) fresh cranberries (one normal-sized bag)

zest and juice of 1 navel orange

$\frac{3}{4}$ c (160 g) sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

Cake:

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F. Prep two 9-inch round cake pans by greasing the sides with butter and lining the bottoms with parchment paper. Use a little butter to stick the parchment to the bottom of the cake pan.
2. Place all the ingredients in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Beat on low speed until well combined. Stop and scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl.
3. Beat on medium speed for 2 minutes, stopping once or twice to scrape down the bottom and sides of the bowl. The cake will lighten a few shades in color and become very airy in texture.
4. Pour the batter into the cake pans and bake them on the center rack of the oven for 20–25 minutes. They are done when a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out with some moist but cooked crumbs clinging to it.
5. Leave the cakes to cool in their pans for 10 minutes, then run a knife along the edges of the pans and turn them out onto cooling racks lined with parchment paper.

Ganache:

1. While the cakes are baking, place the chopped baking chocolate in a medium-sized bowl. The pieces should be about the size of chocolate chips, but smaller is fine.
2. Place the heavy cream in a small pot and warm it on low just until it begins to simmer. Pour the cream over the chocolate and gently push down any pieces that are not fully submerged.
3. Wait 1 minute, then using a whisk, slowly and gently stir the mixture until all of the chocolate is melted, the heavy cream is fully incorporated, and the ganache is smooth. If not all of the chocolate melts, pour the ganache back into the saucepan and heat on very low, just until the chocolate is melted, stirring constantly. Place the ganache in the fridge to cool.

Cranberry Sauce:

1. Also while the cakes are baking, wash the cranberries. Pick out any bruised or soft ones, and if you like, reserve a large handful for decorating the cake at the end.
2. Add all the ingredients to a medium saucepot and heat over medium heat, stirring constantly. Cook the sauce until the cranberries burst, the sauce turns bright red, and it has boiled and thickened significantly. It doesn't have to be as thick as the final product will be, because it will thicken in the fridge as it cools.
3. Squish any unpoped cranberries on the sides of the pot if you'd like, or leave them whole for a chunkier texture.
4. Transfer the sauce to a bowl and place it in the fridge to chill.

Assembly:

1. When the ganache has cooled enough so that it's no longer warm to the touch and it seems thick and almost frosting-like in consistency, it's time to whip it. Place it in the bowl of your stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment and whip on medium-high to high speed for a few minutes until the ganache is light and fluffy and feels like a frosting consistency.
2. If you want to decorate the top of your cake, reserve about ½ cup of ganache and transfer it to a frosting bag fitted with a large star tip. (I used Wilton tip #1M.)
3. Take the cranberry sauce from the fridge and give it a good stir to break it up and make it spreadable again if it's turned into one big blob of jelly. (Which is a good thing!)
4. Place one cake layer on a plate or cake stand and top it with half of the ganache, then half of the cranberry sauce. Spread the ganache to the edges of the cake and the cranberry sauce almost to the edge.
5. Place the second layer of cake on top of the cranberry sauce and top it with the remaining ganache. Pipe a border of stars around the top edge of the cake with the reserved ganache. Fill the middle with cranberry sauce and put the reserved whole cranberries on top of every other star in your border.
6. Store the cake in the fridge, but let slices come to room temperature before enjoying for the best texture and flavor. (I cut them cold and then let them warm on plates for about 15 minutes before serving them.)

NOTES AND TIPS

Chopping the ginger pieces finely keeps them from sinking to the bottom of your cakes when you bake them.

I used Ghirardelli white baking chocolate and recommend using a nice brand for ganache. Don't use white chocolate chips. They don't melt well and when I used them my ganache was runny.

If you hate oranges, up the sugar to 1 cup and substitute $\frac{1}{3}$ c water for the orange juice and zest in the cranberry sauce.

Cranberries can pop quite forcefully, so be careful while you're stirring so you don't get burned by the hot syrup.

Cranberry sauce seems to thicken by magic, since there's no egg yolk or cornstarch or gelatin in it, but the magic has a name: pectin, a gel-like substance that certain fruits produce. Cranberries are full of it, so they make a wonderful sauce that just gets thicker as it sits in the fridge.

If whipping the ganache is one step too many for you, skip it! It will have a fudgier but equally delicious texture. Just make sure to frost your cake while it's at the firm but spreadable consistency. If you miss the window and your ganache gets too cold, warm it in your microwave in short 5–10 second bursts, stirring in between each one, until it's spreadable.

This is a naked cake! That's for two reasons: one is to let the beauty of the cranberry and white chocolate layers shine, and the other is so that your cake doesn't get overwhelmed by the sweetness of the white chocolate. An added bonus is that assembly takes a lot less effort than usual.