

black forest cake

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Black Forest Cake

Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte: chocolate genoise, sour cherries, whipped cream and a great deal of kirsch. German law is unusually specific about it — under the *Leitsätze für Feine Backwaren*, a cake sold under this name must contain kirschwasser, and in a detectable quantity. The cherry brandy is the definition, not the cherries.

What makes it work

- **Kirsch in three places:** in the soaking syrup, in the cherry compote, and a spoonful in the cream. It is the flavour that ties the assembly together.
- **A chocolate [genoise](#), soaked hard.** The sponge is deliberately dry so it can absorb; brush every cut face until it stops taking syrup.
- **Sour cherries, not sweet.** Morello or Amarena. Sweet cherries have neither the acid nor the colour and the cake goes flat. See [Cherry](#).
- **Stabilise the cream if the cake must stand.** A teaspoon of gelatine bloomed and melted into a little of the cream, or 30 g of mascarpone per 300 ml, keeps it from weeping. See [Gelatin](#).
- **Chill the assembled cake for four hours** before cutting. It slices cleanly and the flavours marry.

Ingredients

One 23 cm cake, three layers. Serves 14.

Chocolate genoise:

- 6 [eggs](#)
- 180 g caster sugar
- 130 g cake flour
- 50 g cocoa powder — see [Cocoa and cocoa mixes](#)
- 60 g unsalted butter, melted
- 3 g fine salt

Cherries and syrup:

- 700 g jarred sour cherries, drained, juice reserved
- 100 g granulated sugar
- 20 g [cornstarch](#)
- 80 ml kirsch

Cream:

- 750 ml double cream, very cold
- 60 g powdered sugar
- 1 tbsp kirsch
- 200 g dark chocolate, shaved — see [Chocolates](#)

Method

Make the genoise by the method on [genoise](#), sifting the cocoa with the flour. Bake at 180 °C for 28–32 minutes in a 23 cm tin. Cool completely and split into three layers.

Simmer 250 ml of the reserved cherry juice with the sugar; slake the cornstarch in a little cold juice, whisk it in, and cook one minute until glossy. Off the heat add the cherries and half the kirsch. Cool.

Mix the remaining kirsch with 100 ml of the cherry juice for the soak.

Whip the cream with the powdered sugar and kirsch to firm peaks.

Assemble: bottom layer, soaked; a ring of cream piped round the edge; half the cherry compote inside it; cream over. Second layer, the same. Top layer, soaked, then cream over the whole cake. Press shaved

chocolate onto the sides, pipe twelve rosettes, and set a whole cherry on each.

Chill four hours.

Notes

- **Non-alcoholic version:** replace the kirsch with cherry juice reduced by half and a teaspoon of [almond extract](#) — the almond note is what kirsch supplies, since it comes from the stones.
- **Assemble in a cake ring** if you have one; the layers slip otherwise.
- **Keeps two days refrigerated.** It is a fresh-cream cake and does not travel.

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