

Dare to be DIFFERENT

Festive fare can be so much more than pud and mince pies. Let your imagination soar with these three beauties

Photographer: MARIELOU AVERY Food writer LINDY WILDSMITH

Mummy's Shimmering Profiterole Mountain

Serves 6-8

Everyone loves profiteroles oozing with cream and chocolate and they are not as difficult to make as you might think. Top the mountain with Swiss white or dark chocolate sprinkled with icing sugar and finish with sparklers for extra effect. You can make the mixture in advance; spoon it into balls on trays and freeze. Once frozen, they can be transferred to freezer bags and cooked when required.

Ingredients

- 60g strong plain or 00 flour
- 1 teaspoon of caster sugar
- 75ml water
- 50g butter
- 2 medium eggs, lightly beaten with a fork

For the filling

- 150ml double cream, whipped with 2 teaspoons of sieved icing sugar

For the topping

- 150g white or dark Swiss chocolate
- Icing sugar
- Silver or gold shimmer powder (optional)

1 Grease a large baking sheet and run it under cold, running water, tap it firmly and stand on one side. Weigh out and sieve the flour and put it on either greaseproof paper or a plate so it is ready for you to shoot into the hot water and butter mixture when it comes to the boil. Add the sugar to the flour.

2 Put the water in a large saucepan, add the butter and put over gentle heat until the butter melts. Have ready an electric whisk or wooden spoon. Bring the water and butter mixture to the boil. Then shoot in the flour and beat until the mixture comes away from the sides of the pan and forms a smooth ball. This will take about a minute. Take off the heat and leave to cool for a few minutes.

3 Beat in the eggs a little at a time, stopping

when glossy – the mixture must not get too runny. It should drop hesitatingly off the spoon.

4 Using 2 teaspoons, make small balls of mixture and drop them on to the prepared baking sheet. Spread the balls out on the tray and cook at 200 °C/Gas Mark 6 for 10 minutes, then increase the heat to 210 °C/Gas Mark 7 and cook for a further 10-15 minutes, depending on the size of the buns. When ready they are crisp on the outside and hollow-sounding when tapped. As they come out of the oven make a small hole in the side of each one with a skewer to release the steam. Put on a rack to cool and then cut in half and fill with the whipped cream and icing sugar mixture.

5 Break the chocolate into squares and put in a heat-proof glass bowl set over a pan of boiling water. Make sure the water does not touch the bowl as this will cause the chocolate to overheat. Switch off the heat and leave until the chocolate melts.

6 Arrange the profiteroles in a mountain and drizzle the chocolate over the top. Dust with icing sugar and gold or silver shimmer powder.
Per portion: Energy (Kcal) 306, Fat (g) 22, of which Saturates (g) 13, Carbohydrate (g) 24, of which sugars (g) 17, Salt (g) 0.2





Christmas Snowflake Tartlets

Makes 24

These chocolate tarts are light and hard to resist, but make sure you roll the pastry as thinly as possible to ensure good results.

Ingredients

For the pastry

- 200g plain flour
- 20g cornflour
- 15g icing sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 120g softened butter
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon of dry vermouth or white wine

For the filling

- 200g good-quality plain chocolate
- 200g caster sugar
- 100g butter
- ½ teaspoon vanilla essence
- 3 eggs, separated
- 24g cornflour

For decoration

- Icing sugar
- Fondant icing (optional)

Equipment

- 2 x 12 bun trays

1 Sieve flour, cornflour and icing sugar.

2 Bring all the ingredients for the pastry together and knead quickly into a neat ball, wrap in cling film and refrigerate for 1 hour. After this resting period, butter the trays. Roll out the pastry on a floured surface to 3mm thick and cut circles measuring 7cm in diameter. Line the bun trays with the pastry and refrigerate until required. **Optional:** cut snowflakes or stars out of the left-over pastry, place on baking parchment and store in fridge along with the tartlets.

3 Place the cornflour and the egg yolks in a basin and beat until smooth.

4 Melt the chocolate with the sugar and butter in a basin over a bain-marie. Once the chocolate and butter have melted, add the vanilla essence, stir well and remove the bowl, cool a little then add the beaten egg yolks and cornflour and stir again.

5 Whisk the egg whites until stiff and fold into the chocolate mixture until smooth. Spoon the mixture carefully into the pastry cases and **(optional)** top with the reserved snowflakes or stars from Step 1.

6 Bake at 180 C/Gas Mark 4 for 10-15 minutes or until set (the filling should be soft in the middle). For topping, cut snowflakes or stars from fondant icing or use a stencil and icing sugar to make snowflakes, stars or Christmas trees.

7 Leave to cool. Serve on a large platter dusted with icing sugar.

Per portion (tart) Energy (Kcal) 196, Fat (g) 11, of which Saturates (g) 6.5, Carbohydrate (g) 23, of which Sugars (g) 15, Salt (g) 0.2

Sophie's Chocolate Candy-cane Cake

Serves 6-10

This unusual Christmas candy-cane cake is made using a simple ring-shaped cake tin. On paper it may sound very complex but in fact it is simple to make. Cracks in the cake can be filled with butter icing and any flaw in the fondant icing covered with stripes and flowers. It can easily be adapted to create a pretty birthday or christening cake; simply use pale yellow, pink or blue icing for the stripes and flowers.

Ingredients

- 4 large eggs
- 200g soft margarine
- 200g caster sugar
- 160g self-raising-flour, sieved with
- 1 heaped teaspoon of baking powder and 40g cocoa powder
- 30g chopped plain chocolate
- 30ml warm water

For the butter icing

- 300g icing sugar
- 180g soft margarine
- ½ teaspoon vanilla essence
- 450g white fondant icing
- 250g red fondant icing

To finish

- Large cake board
- 1 m green or red satin ribbon
- Sprig of holly

Equipment

- 1 ring cake tin, 1 litre capacity
- 1 flower cutter (optional)

1 Put all the eggs, soft margarine, sugar, sieved flour, baking powder and cocoa in a large bowl and beat together with an electric whisk. Fold in the chopped chocolate and the warm water. Grease the mould with soft margarine and pour or spoon in the cake mixture. Do not over-fill - it may be necessary to keep a couple of spoonfuls back. (You could always use any left-overs to make a muffin.) Bake at 160 °C/Gas Mark 3 until springy to the touch - 35-40 minutes. Leave to cool for 10 minutes in the tin and then turn out onto a wire rack. You may need a palette knife to lever it out.

2 Sieve the icing sugar into a large bowl and then fold in the soft margarine with the vanilla essence. Beat until pale and fluffy - approximately 10 minutes - and cover until required.

3 When the cake is cold, cut the ring into 3 equal parts. Leave 1 section whole and cut the other two into 5 equal pieces (see diagram) making 10 equal-sized pieces and one larger piece. Each of these small pieces has a long and

a short side plus 2 cut sides.

4 Arrange the large piece of cake at the top of the board to form the crook of the candy stick; spread a little butter icing on the right-hand cut end. Now spread butter icing on both the cut ends of the small pieces of cake. Take 1 of the small pieces and stick it to the right-hand cut end of the crook, short side facing inwards. Do the same with the next 3, to make the rest of the curve.

5 Now attach the 6 remaining small pieces down the side of the crook to form the straight part of the candy stick. This is achieved by facing the small pieces in alternate directions, short side facing in, long side facing out, and vice versa, until you have a more or less straight stick.

6 Now cover the whole candy stick with butter icing: use it like mortar to fill the cracks where necessary.

7 Spread a large piece of cling film on a work surface. Put half the white fondant icing in the middle and cover with another large piece of cling film. Roll a

rectangle 18cm by 31cm. Do the same with the other piece of white icing and roll a 26cm square. (You can use ready-rolled icing but I think it is too thick.)

8 Take the cling film off the rectangle and lay the icing over the straight part of the candy stick. Press it down gently and trim off any over-lap.

9 Take the cling film off the square piece of icing and cut a semi-circle of icing (see diagram below). Lay this semi-circle of icing over the crook. Trim the icing from the centre of the crook and around the edges and trim and make good the ends.

10 Roll the red icing, using cling film as before, into a large rectangle. Cut strips 1.5-2cm wide and 20cm long and lay them over the cake to form the stripes. Cut flowers, if using, and attach these to the cake. Dust with icing sugar and trim with a ribbon and holly.

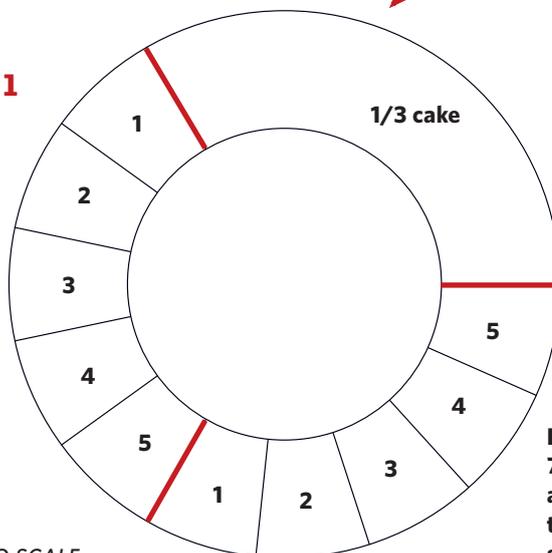
Per portion (slice): Energy (Kcal) 698, Fat (g) 30, of which Saturates (g) 7, Carbohydrate (g) 109, of which Sugars (g) 97 Salt (g) 1

CANDY-CANE CAKE DIAGRAM

FIG 1: Cut the circular cake into 3 sections. Keep one section whole and divide the other two into five pieces each (total 11 pieces of cake).

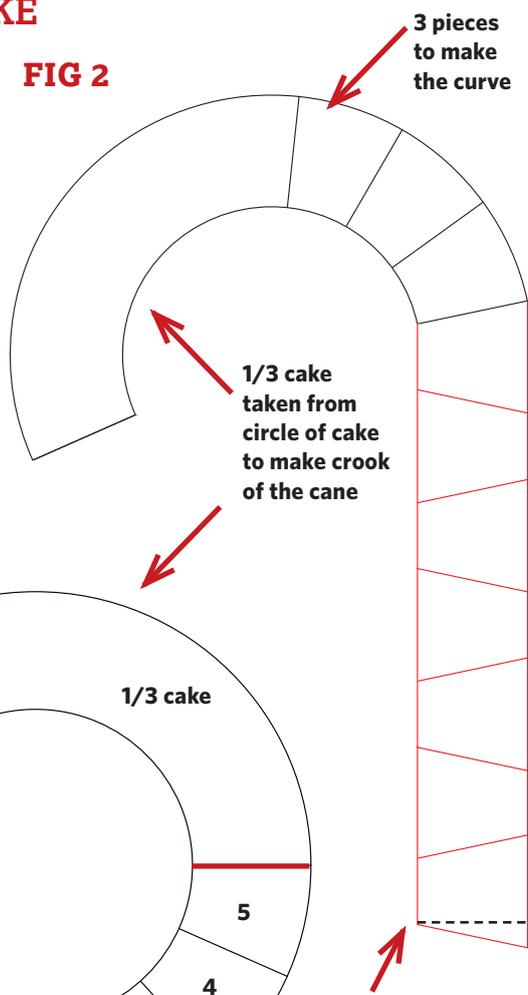
FIG 2: Arrange the large section of cake at the top of the board to form the crook of the candy stick; arrange the rest to create a straight stick (by facing the small pieces in alternate directions), using buttercream to stick each piece to the next.

FIG 1



NOT TO SCALE

FIG 2



Place the next 7 pieces of cake alternately to form the stick. Then straighten the bottom

