

Walnut Cake

By Jules, Boston Mamas Guest Contributor



I created this walnut cake when I was trying to come up with reduced fat recipes for a local chef. The only fat in the cake is the walnuts, and, from a nutritional perspective, the healthy fats from the walnuts and the protein from the egg whites should encourage you to have another slice! Ironically (but not surprisingly), this cake tastes best drizzled with gooey dark chocolate ganache and sprinkled with sweetened, buttered walnuts. If you must, omit the chocolate and eat the light and airy cake on it's own with tea or coffee.

Sweetened Walnuts:

- 1 cup walnuts
- 4 tbsp butter, melted
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- Black pepper, to taste (optional)

Walnut cake:

- 2 cups chopped walnuts, toasted lightly
- 1 3/4 cups confectioners' sugar
- ¾ whole wheat flour
- ½ cup all purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 9 egg whites
- 1 ½ tsp pure vanilla extract
- ¾ cup dark brown sugar, packed tightly

Ganache:

- 8 oz, chopped chocolate, at least 60%
- ¼- ½ cup heavy cream

Prepare walnuts for topping:

Preheat oven to 250°F. In large bowl, mix walnuts with butter, salt and sugar. Toss well. Taste for seasoning - you may prefer more sugar or more salt. A few grinds of black pepper add for a nice dynamic, though optional. Toast walnuts for about 45 minutes, tossing every 15 minutes to ensure even toasting and coloring. Set aside to cool.

Make walnut cake:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter and flour 9" cake pan. In food processor, combine walnuts and confectioners' sugar. Process until walnuts are finely ground. Add flours and salt and pulse processor just a few times, to ensure that the mixture is well combined. Set aside.

Meanwhile, in electric mixer with whisk attachment, whip egg whites and vanilla until frothy. Once frothy, with mixer on high speed, slowly add brown sugar, about a tablespoon at a time. Whip until glossy and stiff peaks form. Remove mixing bowl from stand and with a large spatula, gently fold in flour mixture, about ½ cup at a time, being sure to fully incorporate but not over mix. Bake for about 25 minutes, or until cake tester inserted into cake comes out clean. Cool completely on rack.

Make ganache:

Chop chocolate into uniform pieces and place in medium sized bowl. In small saucepan over medium heat, heat cream until scalded, but not boiling. As soon as small bubbles begin to form around edges of saucepan, remove and pour over chocolate chunks. Allow to sit for one minute. This is the trick to any smooth and glossy ganache. With small whisk, stir chocolate and cream together until smooth.

Assemble cake:

Remove cake from pan and place on rack with parchment paper under the rack. Pour warm ganache over top of cake. Chop sweetened walnuts into very small pieces and sprinkle over ganache. Allow to set for one hour in a cool place before serving.