

Yule Log

This delightful French bûche de Noël always goes down a treat. As it's so rich you'll find a little goes a long way, so make the slices small. This also happens to be gluten free if you use gluten-free.

SERVES 8–10

butter, for greasing
100g (4oz) plain chocolate (at least 70% cocoa solids), broken into squares
4 large eggs, separated
100g (4oz) caster sugar, plus extra for dusting
For the icing:
225g (8oz) butter, softened
200g (7oz) icing sugar, sifted, plus extra to decorate
2 tbsp good-quality cocoa powder, sifted
1 tbsp vanilla extract



1. Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/gas mark 5). Butter a 33cm x 23cm (13in x 9in) Swiss roll tin, line with non-stick baking paper and butter the paper.
2. Melt the chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water, making sure the water doesn't touch the bottom of the bowl.
3. Whisk the egg yolks with the caster sugar until very thick and pale in colour. Beat in the egg whites until stiff, then fold into the melted chocolate. Transfer into the prepared tin and spread out evenly. Bake in the oven for 20–25 minutes, until risen and firm to the touch.
4. Turn the sponge out onto a sheet of greaseproof paper generously sprinkled with caster sugar. Carefully peel off the lining paper. Cover the roulade with a warm damp tea towel and leave to cool.

5. To make the icing, use an electric hand-held mixer to whisk the butter and icing sugar in a large bowl until light and fluffy. Add the cocoa powder and vanilla and whisk until you have a smooth icing. Spread one-third of the icing over the cold roulade. Using the paper to help, roll up the roulade to enclose the filling.
6. Put the filled roulade on a long plate or board and trim down the edges at an angle, then use these pieces to make a 'branch' coming off to the side. Spread the Yule log with the rest of the icing, covering the whole thing completely so that it looks like a big log with a branch coming off the side. Using a skewer, create a wood-like texture on the icing.
7. To serve, transfer the roulade onto a serving plate and dust generously with icing sugar, then cut into slices.