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A Taste of Okinawa

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4-page pullout

The fluffiest mochi chiffon cake

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ELEONORA BADELLINO, BYFOOD

The pleasures of food are not always linked to extraordinary flavors, but rather to their texture. In Japan, I learned that food is not just about taste and smell, but also about consistency, and mochi is the perfect example.

This Japanese rice dough, at first bite, will not just drive you crazy for its taste, soft and delicate, but also for the pleasant chewiness, almost a bounce between the lips, unique in its kind.

Its use in Japanese confectionery (like daifuku and dango) is well known. We've previously covered modern mochi desserts like this mochi ice cream recipe and mochi donut recipe, but have you ever tasted it in a cake?



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What is a mochi cake?

If you've ever had mochi, you'll love this Japanese-inspired cake.

The main characteristic of mochi cake is the incredible softness and elasticity given by the use of mochiko which not only gives that marshmallow-like softness, but it also lends a natural sweetness (and it's gluten-free!). Unlike mochi, however, do not expect a sticky consistency but rather a delicate chewiness.

Japanese mochi cake recipe

The cake we are going to make today is inspired by one of the most popular cakes here in Japan: the chiffon cake or shifon keeki (シフォンケーキ), famous for its soft texture, delicate flavor and easy preparation (based on just three ingredients: flour, eggs, and sugar).

To give that mochi-mochi feeling, I used shirata-mako (glutinous rice flour) instead of wheat flour. To make shirata-mako, the glutinous rice flour (mochigome) is first soaked in water, ground into a dough, then dried and lightly ground until it forms small granules.

Shirata-mako is used in the preparation of many wagashi (和菓子 - traditional Japanese sweets) such as daifuku, mochi, and dango... But besides those, it is also suitable for the preparation of western desserts such as cakes, biscuits, and donuts.

To enrich its flavor, I decided to use hojicha powder, Japanese roasted green tea which, once harvested, is toasted in porcelain pots over hot coals, giving it a brownish color and a toasty, nutty flavor. Although it is perhaps one of the lesser-known versions of green tea, it is very popular in Japan and is consumed both hot and cold.

Here is the recipe for hojicha chocolate mochi cake.

How to make mochi cake

1 First, we'll prepare our tea, grinding the little pieces of hojicha to make them into a powder.



2 I used a Japanese tool called suribachi (すり鉢 - mortar), but you can use a blender. Once ready, set aside the powder.

3 Take the eggs and separate the yolks from the whites. Set the whites aside for now.

4 To the yolks, we add oil, milk, and half of the sugar (10 grams), and mix well.

5 Add the shirata-mako a little at a time and energetically stir continuously until it has dissolved (it will take a little time and patience).

6 Once it is ready, sift in the baking powder and mix it all together.



7 As for the egg whites, add the remaining half of the granulated sugar (not all at once, but a little at a time so as not to "disassemble" our meringue) and beat until it forms stiff peaks.

8 Add 1/3 of the meringue to our liquid shirata-mako mixture and mix from the bottom up so that the air is incorporated (this will make our cake soft and fluffy). We will repeat the same process until we have added all of our meringue.



9 Put the mixture in a cake tin (I used the traditional chiffon cake pan that forms a donut with a hole in the middle) and, before putting it in the oven, drop the cake tin on the work surface so as to eliminate air bubbles from the batter.



10 Bake at 170 degrees for 45 minutes.

11 When done, take the cake out of the oven and let it cool upside down.



12 While the cake is cooling, we can prepare the chocolate icing.

13 Break the chocolate into a microwave-safe bowl and heat for 10 seconds. Once the time is up, pull it out and mix your chocolate, which will be starting to melt. Continue the operation, heating in 10-second intervals until it has completely melted.



14 Once the cake has cooled, remove it from the cake tin and cover it with the chocolate.

15 To finish, I garnished the surface by sprinkling on some whole hojicha tea leaves.

Mochi cake ingredients

- 4 eggs
- 80g shirata-mako (2.8oz)
- 50g oil (1.7oz)
- 60g milk (I used soy milk) (2.1oz)
- 20g sugar (0.7oz)
- 2 tbsp hojicha (0.4oz)
- 120g dark chocolate (4.2oz)



Mochi cake variations

While the basic ingredients of this green tea cake remain the same (shirata-mako, eggs, flour, and sugar), you can try playing with different flavors. Instead of hojicha, use green tea powder, matcha, or change the taste completely by going for more citrusy flavors with grated yuzu peel, or more traditional with azuki beans.

Same with the icing. I used dark chocolate, but you can opt for a white or milk chocolate glaze or a simple icing made with icing sugar and milk.

Let your imagination run wild.

How to store mochi cake

The cake can be stored in the fridge in an airtight container for 2 to 3 days.

With its pleasing softness, it's a cake that goes beyond standard cake textures, and in times when travel is complicated, it's a great way to bring the flavors (and textures) of Japan to our tables.



Did you know that...

- The use of glutinous rice flour is not only linked to Japanese culture. In Hawaii, for example, we also find the famous Hawaiian butter mochi, a cake characterized by the use of mochiko and coconut milk.
- One of the most famous versions of this recipe is the matcha mochi cake!



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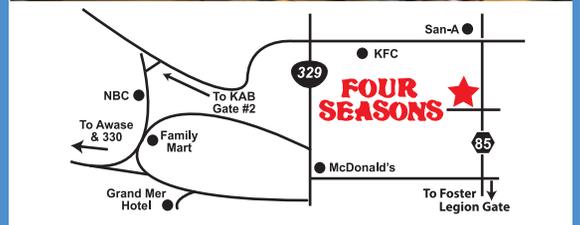
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