

Note: The recipes are presented in the order in which I make them. In theory, the baking time of the first item allows for the preparation of the second item, and so on. (Theories, are, of course, all well and good in theory.)

Use baking paper for all the recipes.

French Chocolate Cake

A rich, tender cake that keeps fresh for days, and needs no icing. The use of potato flour makes it especially soft and the large amount of chocolate gives it a rich dark colour and pronounced chocolate flavour

6 oz (150g) plain dessert (semi-sweet) chocolate

4 oz (100g) butter (unsalted if possible)

2 oz (50g) potato flour

4 oz (100g) caster (superfine) sugar

1 level teasp baking powder

4 eggs, separated

1 teasp vanilla essence (extract)

Use an 8 in (20 cm) moule à manqué (shallow tin with sloping sides). Otherwise use an 8 in (20 cm) loose-bottomed tin. Melt the butter in the top of a double boiler or mixing bowl standing in a pan of very hot water (or in a microwave), then add the broken chocolate and stir again until the chocolate too has melted.

Take from the heat and stir in the sugar then the yolks, vanilla, baking powder and sifted potato flour.

Finally, fold in the egg whites, beaten with a pinch of salt until they form stiff but still glossy peaks.

Pour the mixture into the tin and bake at Gas No. 4, 350°F, 180°C, for 45 minutes until well risen and firm to a very gentle touch. Leave on a cooling tray for 5 minutes, then turn out and leave until cold.

Notes:

Don't overbake. Underbaked, it can be just a little gooey inside and an excellent 'chocolate volcano-ish' dessert. A little firmer, it is a light, spongy cake.

Coconut Pyramids

4 egg yolks; or 2 whole eggs

½ lb (200g) desiccated (dried and shredded) coconut

4 oz (100g) caster sugar

Juice and rind of a 1 lemon

Beat the yolks and sugar until creamy, then stir in the lemon rind, half of the lemon juice and the coconut.

Form into pyramids, using a moist egg cup. (You don't need to space them out – they don't spread.)

Bake at 355°F, 180°C, 18-20 minutes until golden brown.

When you put them on a rack to cool, spoon a couple of drops of lemon juice onto each one (using half of the lemon juice you have left). When you pack them away, spoon the rest of the lemon juice over them.

Makes about 18.

Florentines

200 gm chopped almonds

½ pkt chocolate chips

100 gm chopped apricots or cranberries or a mixture

100 gm caster sugar

2 egg whites

Mix all ingredients in a bowl.

Spoon onto a baking tray. (Leave space – they spread.)

Bake at 355°F, 180°C, for 10 minutes, until almonds are tanning.

Almond Macaroons

5 oz (175g) ground blanched almonds (hazelnuts can also be used)

7.5 oz (100g) caster sugar

2 large egg whites

18 split almonds

4 drops vanilla essence (extract)

Put the unbeaten egg whites into a bowl; add the mixed almonds and sugar, a tablespoon at a time, beating well after each addition.

Beat in the essence.

With moistened hands, shape balls of the mixture and place on the trays (spaced – they may spread).

Press a half split almond onto the top, flattening the macaroon slightly.

Bake in a moderate oven (330–340°F, 165–170°C) for 25 minutes or until golden brown.

Store in an airtight tin. Makes 18.

Cinnamon Balls

2 egg whites

2 oz (50g) caster sugar

25 (250g) ground almonds (*If you want the inside to be dark brown, do not blanch the almonds before grinding them – leave the skins on.*)

1½ level tbsp cinnamon

Beat the whites till they form stiff peaks.

Fold in all the remaining ingredients.

Form into balls with wetted hands. (You don't need to space them out – they don't spread.)

Bake at 310–320°F, 155–160°C for minutes, or until just firm to the touch.

Roll in icing sugar whilst warm, and then when cold. (*I tip them gently in a zip bag of icing sugar.*)

Makes about 24.