

PEAR, BRANDY AND CHOCOLATE TORTE

- 250g fresh pears (use tinned if fresh are not available)
- 4 tbsp brandy
- 25g cocoa powder (I used Dutched)
- 100g dark chocolate, preferably 70% cocoa, in pieces
- 50g unsalted butter
- 175g caster sugar
- 100ml hot water
- 4 large (59g) egg whites
- 85g plain flour
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon (optional)



1. Peel and core the pears, cutting each pear in half. Place the pears and brandy in a small bowl and allow to steep for about 30 minutes until most of the brandy has been absorbed.

2. Preheat the oven to 190C/170C with fan. Grease a 23cm/9in loose-bottomed cake tin or springform tin. Put the cocoa, chocolate, butter, hot water and 140g of the sugar in a small saucepan. Whisk gently over a low heat until the mixture is smooth. Leave to cool slightly.

3. Whisk the egg whites to soft peaks, then gradually whisk in the remaining 35g sugar. In a separate bowl, sift the flour and cinnamon together. Sprinkling in a little at a time, gently fold the flour into the egg whites with a metal spoon, until almost combined. Add the chocolate and fold in until evenly combined, being careful not to overwork the mix.

4. Pour the batter into the prepared tin and arrange the pears over the top (they will sink into the torte during baking). Sprinkle over any remaining brandy and bake for about 40 minutes until just firm. Serve warm with a generous dollop of homemade vanilla icecream or, in our case, softly whipped vanilla cream (made by whipping a little vanilla syrup into heavy cream).

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Fig Jam and Lime Cordial

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