

Chocolate Cherry Almond Cake

Modified & Translated by Katja Fritzsche

200 g butter, softened (1 cup less 2 Tbsp)

175 g sugar 175 g sugar (1 cup less 1 ½ Tbsp)

1 package vanilla-sugar (substitute 1-2 tsp vanilla or make your own, see below)

½ vial of Dr. Oetker's concentrated rum extract (1 tsp regular rum extract)

Pinch salt

4 eggs

125 g flour (1 ¼ cups)

80 g good quality dark chocolate, melted, cooled to touch (not too hot, not too cold)

80 g good quality dark chocolate chips

100 g ground almonds (1 cup plus 3 Tbsp)

1 tsp baking powder

370 g jar of sour cherries, drained

Icing sugar to dust over top

1. Preheat oven to convection bake at 180°C (350°F).
2. Grease and flour the bottom only of a 10" spring form pan.
3. Cream butter until very soft.
4. Add sugar, vanilla-sugar, rum extract and salt. Cream until light and fluffy.
5. Add eggs one at a time. Beat for 30 seconds after each addition.
6. Mix flour and baking powder together. Add gradually to batter by sifting over top and mixing gently with an electric hand mixer until just blended.
7. Add melted chocolate, chocolate chips, and almonds. Mix gently with electric hand mixer until just blended.
8. Pour into spring form pan. Add individual cherries, poking into batter to distribute well, and leaving some on top.
9. Bake until done, about 35-45 minutes.

Vanilla Sugar:

Vanilla sugar is simply white granulated sugar that has been flavored with a vanilla bean; there really isn't a specific recipe for it. The vanilla bean is good as long as it is fragrant. Vanilla sugar will keep indefinitely in an airtight container at room temperature.

One pouch of vanilla sugar is equivalent to 1-2 tsp of vanilla extract. (Dr. Oetker)

To Make Your Own Vanilla Sugar

Method 1: Place a cleaned vanilla bean on a baking sheet and set aside until dried. Bury 1 dried vanilla bean in a container holding two cups confectioner's sugar, superfine or regular granulated sugar. Cover the container tightly. The sugar will be sufficiently scented with vanilla to be used in a week or so. Add more sugar to the jar when you use some of its contents; the beans will be effective for many months, as long as they remain fragrant.

Method 2: Place any cleaned, used vanilla beans on a baking sheet and set aside until dry. Any amount of granulated sugar will do. With less sugar, the vanilla flavor will be strong. I usually mix one vanilla bean with about 2 cups sugar. When the vanilla beans are dry, place them in a food processor with the sugar and process on high speed until the vanilla and sugar appear to have the same texture, about 1 minute. Pass the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve to remove any large pieces.

Method 3: If you don't have a food processor, you can simply place the dried vanilla beans in some granulate sugar and store in an airtight container. The sugar will take on the flavor of the vanilla. Another way to make vanilla sugar is to use the vanilla seeds. Use a sharp knife to slice the beans in half lengthwise. Separate the seeds from the skin by scraping the blade of the knife along the inside of the bean. Mix the seeds and some granulated sugar together in a bowl. I rub the vanilla seeds and sugar between the fingers to ensure that the seeds are evenly distributed.

Method 4: Use real (not artificial!) vanilla extract and sugar in a ratio of one teaspoon of vanilla extract to every two cups of regular granulated sugar. Then spread the well mixed vanilla sugar on a baking pan lined with wax paper to dry.