

THINK OUTSIDE THE GLASS

Beer jazzes up any recipe BY KENDALL FIELDS

Beer — it's bubbly, it's refreshing, it's hoppy. And if you ditch the glass, beer becomes much more than a beverage. You can have your beer and *eat* it, too.

Beer has been used in cooking for as long as wine. In fact, ancient Egyptian physicians encouraged cooking with beer for increased health. Beer jazzes up any recipe, creating complex flavors. Hops' bitterness is a great complement to sweeter vegetables or desserts. Darker beers offer a roasted flavor that's delicious in chocolaty dishes. And beer's effervescence makes it the perfect addition to batters.

There are hundreds of ways to use beer where a glass isn't necessary — unless, of course, you want to drink some on the side. There's beer-battered fish, beer-cheese soup, beer barbecue and beer bread. Beer can even be used in desserts.

Brewmaster Matt Van Wyk at Oakshire Brewery urges beginning beer chefs to “experiment by adding small amounts of beer in places where liquid was used. Then, think about ‘flavor hooks,’” Van Wyk says. “A lighter beer with citrus notes goes in a sauce for fish. Use a roasty, malty ale in a barbecue sauce. Use a Belgian cherry ale reduction on roasted pork or a rich imperial stout in a chocolate sauce for bread pudding.”

Oakshire's Espresso Stout could work perfectly in the following recipe:



CHOCOLATE STOUT CAKE

Cake

- 2 cups stout of your choosing (a chocolate stout, like Rogue's works well)
- 2 cups (4 sticks) unsalted butter
- 1 1/2 cups unsweetened cocoa powder (Dutch-process is best)
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 4 cups sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking soda
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 4 large eggs
- 1-1/3 cups sour cream

Preheat oven to 350° F. Butter three 8-inch round cake pans with 2-inch-high sides. Line with parchment paper; butter paper. Bring stout and butter to simmer over medium heat in large saucepan. Add cocoa powder and whisk until mixture is smooth. Cool slightly.

Whisk flour, sugar, baking soda and salt in large bowl until blended. Using electric mixer, beat eggs and sour cream in another large bowl until blended. Add stout-chocolate mixture to egg mixture and beat just until combined. Add flour mixture and beat briefly on slow speed. With a spatula, fold batter until completely combined.

Divide batter equally among pans. Bake cakes until tester inserted into center of cakes comes out clean, about 35 minutes. Transfer cakes to rack; cool 10 minutes. Turn cakes out onto rack and cool completely.

Icing

- 2 cups whipping cream
- 1 pound semisweet chocolate, chopped

Bring cream to simmer in medium saucepan. Remove from heat. Add chopped chocolate and whisk until melted and smooth. Refrigerate until icing is spreadable, stirring frequently (about two hours).

Place one cake layer on plate. Spread 2/3 cup icing over. Top with second cake layer. Spread 2/3 cup icing over. Top with third cake layer. Spread remaining icing over top and sides of cake.

Slice and enjoy with a glass of red wine or even some leftover stout. ■

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