



A Rocky Road to Sweeten the New Year

By Susie Iventosch

We celebrated New Year's Eve with our dear friends by dining at Ristorante Amoroma in Moraga. Both the setting and the food were perfect. The atmosphere was festive, the service was impeccable and the meal was delicious, but still, we chose to satisfy our sweet tooth back at my friend Fran's house with her fabulous chocolate cake. My motto: if it's not chocolate, it's not really dessert!

Her cake initiated the desire to create a decadent new chocolate treat for my family's New Year's Day dinner, the very next day. So, we found a recipe



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for a chocolate marshmallow cake, which, after tasting it, we thought should be called Rocky Road cake. This dessert is like eating cake and candy, all at the same time ... and the colder the cake, the more like rocky road it tastes!

High quality cocoa and chocolate make this cake even better. In purchasing cocoa powder, you may have noticed that cocoa powders can be "Dutched" or "Undutched," -- a fancy way to say alkalized or natural. Apparently it was a Dutch man who invented the alkalizing process.

While the alkalizing process deepens the chocolate color, mellows the flavor, and reduces the bitterness, a natural cocoa has a fruitier flavor. Alkalized cocoa is more soluble in water, which is good for most baking purposes, but

it may be fun for you to experiment with both to see what you prefer.

The French Valrhona Gastronomie cocoa powder is an example of alkalized cocoa powder and Scharffen Berger offers a natural variety. These two are at opposite ends of the spectrum and as such, would make a good test.

Diablo Foods of Lafayette carries a good selection of chocolates and cocoas, including the Chocolate Vitale, Moonstruck, New World, Lindt, NewTree Belgian, Sharffen Berger and Lake Champlain, to name a few.



Rocky Road Cake

Rocky Road Cake

- 1½ sticks unsweetened butter, at room temperature
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 4 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3 eggs
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2¼ teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups pecans, chopped
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 3 cups miniature marshmallows

Frosting

- ½ stick butter
- 3-4 cups powdered sugar
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 ounces, bittersweet chocolate, melted and cooled
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ¼ cup milk

Directions

With an electric mixer, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in cocoa powder. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. Add flour, baking powder and salt and mix well. Stir in nuts and vanilla. Pour into a greased (or sprayed) 9x13x2 inch glass baking dish. Bake at 325 degrees for 35 minutes, or until toothpick comes out clean from center of cake. Remove from oven and immediately distribute marshmallows over entire top of cake. Allow marshmallows to melt slightly and spread frosting over top of marshmallows while cake is still warm. This will be a gooey process, and the marshmallows will mix a little bit with the frosting, but that is perfectly okay! Allow to cool completely before serving.

For frosting:

Using an electric mixer, beat butter and melted chocolate until well mixed. Add cocoa powder and beat until integrated. Add 3 cups of the powdered sugar and beat into chocolate mixture, adding milk as needed for spreadable consistency. Add remaining powdered sugar, as needed, to adjust consistency. Spread over melted marshmallows on still warm cake. Serve cooled to room temperature.