

Tasty cake evokes all the lovely freshness of spring



Pistachio Cake

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

I was looking for a fun Easter dessert, when I scrolled across

a lovely green cake on Pinterest! I know we just passed St. Patty's Day and we've done our fair share of green lately, but this is a lovely pastel spring green, which comes from the pistachio pudding used in the frosting and no additional food coloring. The cake in the picture turned out to be a vanilla cake with pistachio buttercream frosting. I really wanted more pistachio flavor in the cake, and I found an amazing cake on Sally's Baking Addiction. I made a minor change by replacing the sour cream with plain nonfat yogurt, which is something I usually do whenever a recipe calls for sour cream. Even though we are talking about dessert, it's nice to skip a calorie here and there, whenever possible.

One thing I would suggest, if you decide to make this cake, is to sift out and discard as many of the tiny nut fragments as possible from the pistachio pudding mix when making the frosting. I encountered some blockages in my cake decorating tips due to the tiny bits of nuts. I spent a good deal of time and watched several videos on how to make frosting roses, and even though I totally understand it, it turns out I am just not very good at it. So, in the end, I took my No. 822 open star frosting tip and made giant swirly looking flowers. This is good enough for me, but if you are good at making roses, I do think they'd be beautiful on this cake for springtime!

Also, on a great tip from Sora O'Doherty, I've been using



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.

the Wilton's cake strips to make the cake layers nice and flat. By wrapping the layer pans with a dampened cake strip, the cake will come out nice and flat on top. Before using these, my cake layers were always a little bit like a Mt.

Vesuvius, with a great big hill in the center, or sometimes a crater. Now I can always count on them being perfectly level. This helps a great deal when it comes to putting the layers together and frosting the cake. Thanks, Sora!

Wilton's Bake Even strips:
<https://www.wilton.com/bakeeven-strips/415-0796.html>

Pistachio Buttercream Frosting

(Makes enough to frost a 3-layer cake and the decorative flowers on top.)

INGREDIENTS

- 4 sticks unsalted butter (1 pound)
- 1 (4.3 oz.) package pistachio pudding mix (sift out the little nut pieces)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 8 cups sifted powdered sugar
- 1/4 cup milk

DIRECTIONS

In a large mixing bowl, beat butter until creamy and fluffy. Add pistachio pudding mix and blend well. Mix in vanilla and almond extracts. Now, add powdered sugar, 1 cup at a time, beating well after each addition and scraping down sides of bowl. Continue to add powdered sugar until you reach desired spreading consistency.

Pistachio Cake

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter (3/4 cup), at room temperature
- 1 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 5 large egg whites
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1/2 cup milk (2% or whole milk)
- 1/2 cup nonfat plain yogurt (I used Greek yogurt)
- 2 1/3 cups cake flour (sifted with other dries)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups, very finely chopped unsalted, roasted (shelled) pistachios (1 1/2 cups for cake and 1/2 cup for garnishes on top of cake)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F. Prepare three 9-inch layer pans by greasing and flouring the entire inside surface and fastening the damp "Bake-even" strips around the outside edges of the pans. (If you don't have these, you can still bake this cake, but trust me, they are well worth the investment.)

In a medium mixing bowl, combine flour, 1 1/2 cups pistachios, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, cream together butter and sugar until fluffy and smooth. Stir in vanilla and almond extracts. Beat in egg whites, until well integrated, scraping sides of bowl as you go. Beat in yogurt. Now, add dries alternately with milk, beating with each addition until well incorporated and scraping down sides of bowl as you go. Begin and end with dries.

Distribute batter evenly into the three prepared cake pans and bake for about 22-25 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

To assemble cake set aside about 1/3 of the frosting for decorations on top. Then, place first cake layer on your cake plate. Spread about 1/2 -3/4 cup of the frosting over the first layer. Repeat with remaining two layers. Then frost the sides. Place reserved frosting in a pastry bag that has been fitted with the coupler and decorating tip. I used the No. 822 tip, which worked well for my purposes, but you can use whatever decorating tip you like best. Make your decorations for the top of your cake. Sprinkle reserved chopped pistachios over the top of the cake, in and around the flowers.

Happy Easter!

'Corpus Christi' challenges our perceptions of good and evil



By Sophie Braccini

Image provided

A strangely beautiful, though sometimes violent film from Poland is coming to Orinda March 27 as part of the International Film Showcase. For Christians, spiritual people and non-believers alike, the film asks questions about redemption, faith, truth and social order. The movie, which is both very simple and complex, will undoubtedly touch movie goers.

In a small town in today's Poland, a sick priest is replaced at a moment's notice by Daniel, a 20-year-old imposter, who steps into the role almost despite himself. The community, which was recently traumatized by a tragic event, welcomes the novelty offered to it. Is the young ex-juvenile convict a manipulator, is he enlightened by his faith, or does he simply want to be somebody for once in his life? Whatever the reason, the deeply wounded community finds help through him and begins to heal.

Daniel (Bartocz Bielenic) is not a evil imposter, he is not seeking money or revenge. He is sincere. He wanted to become a priest,

but his criminal past barred him from ever being able to enter a seminary. He is portrayed as young, sometimes filled with the light of pure faith. He is like an angel at a crossroads – one side probable damnation; the other, possible redemption. The scenario was based on a true story and evolves like a spiritual quest. Daniel has what he wanted, his wish has come true, but he must now face the consequences. As he gets more and more involved with his parishioners, he goes further along the road of deceiving.

Jan Komasa's film is set in a small town where an immemorial order still seems to prevail. Money, church and social order have always advanced hand-in-hand. The story challenges the model, suggesting that truth might be on the side of the young imposter. He is sincere and seems to get his words from Christ himself. We have known for some time that nowadays clothes do make the man, but should faith be stronger than law? Maybe Komasa also wants to tell us to beware of the passionate leader who can manipulate crowds for better or for worse.

The choice of Bielenic to interpret Daniel was key to the effectiveness of the film. In an interview during the Mostre a Venezia, the director said that role required someone different in a charismatic way. Bielenic is a experimental theater actor, someone Komasa calls a real artist with angel eyes. He is also quite versatile, giving realism to this very complex character, constantly oscillating between guilt and faith.

The film set in the little Polish town speaks also to us about ourselves, how we are quick to judge, ostracize, categorize between good and bad without nuance. It talks about our shared humanity and desire to heal.

"Corpus Christi" was nominated to the 92nd Academy Awards in the Best International Feature Film category. Bielenic won the award for Best Actor at the Chicago International Film Festival and Stockholm International Film Festival; he also won the Shooting Stars Award for the most promising up-and-coming European actor. The movie will play for one week at the Orinda Theatre starting on March 27. More information at www.orindamovies.com



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Service Clubs Announcements

Lafayette Rotary Club

Step in on a Thursday and join us for our lunch meeting.
Thursday at noon Oakwood Athletic Club, 4000 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette.

Thank you to all Gala participants and organizers!

No meetings in March

www.rotarylafayette.org
www.facebook.com/Rotary-Club-of-Lafayette-CA

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Contact us:

Letters to the editor (max 350 words): letters@lamorindaweekly.com
Delivery issues: homedelivery@lamorindaweekly.com
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Publishers/Owners: Andy and Wendy Scheck; andy@lamorindaweekly.com, wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
Editor: Jennifer Wake; jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com
Senior Staff Writer: Nick Marnell; nick@lamorindaweekly.com
Sports Editor: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Advertising: 925-377-0977, Wendy Scheck; wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
Staff Writers:
Vera Kochan; vera@lamorindaweekly.com,
Pippa Fisher; pippa@lamorindaweekly.com,
Nick Marnell; nick@lamorindaweekly.com
Sora O'Doherty; Sora@lamorindaweekly.com
Jon Kingdon; sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Digging Deep: Cynthia Brian; cynthia@lamorindaweekly.com
Food: Susie Iventosch; suziventosch@gmail.com
Contributing Writers:
Conrad Bassett, Sophie Braccini, Diane Claytor, Michele Duffy, Amanda Eck, Fran Miller, Jenn Freedman, Mona Miller, Kara Navolio, Moya Stone, Margie Ryerson, Linda Fodrini-Johnson, Victor Ryerson
Calendar Editor: jaya@lamorindaweekly.com
Photos: Tod Fierner, Gint Federas
Layout/Graphics: Andy Scheck. Printed in CA.
Mailing address: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O. Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570-6133 Phone: 925-377-0977; Fax: 925-263-9223; email: info@lamorindaweekly.com
website: www.lamorindaweekly.com