

Dark Chocolate Chunk Pear Loaf Cake



INGREDIENTS

Recipe by Audrey Marcum

For the Poached Pears

- 2 firm Bosc or Anjou pears, stems intact
- 4 cups (960 ml) water
- 1 cup (200 g) granulated sugar
- 1 orange
- 1 vanilla bean, split and scraped (or 1 tbsp vanilla bean paste)

For the Cake

- ½ cup (113 g) salted butter
- ½ cup (120 ml) neutral oil (like grapeseed or canola)
- 2 ½ cups (300 g) all-purpose flour + 1 tbsp for the chocolate
- 1 ½ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground cardamom
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground ginger
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 ¼ cups (250 g) granulated sugar
- ⅔ cup (158 ml) buttermilk, at room temperature
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 bars [Chocolove 70% Strong Dark Chocolate](#) (180 g), chopped
- 1-2 tbsp powdered sugar, for garnish (optional)

Poach the Pears

- Peel the pears, leaving the stems intact. Using a melon baller (or small spoon or knife), carefully core them from the bottom.
- In a medium pot, combine the water, sugar, 4 strips of orange peel, and the juice of 1 orange. Scrape the vanilla bean seeds into the pot and add the pod as well. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar.
- Add the pears, ensuring they are mostly submerged. Poach gently for 10-15 minutes, or until a knife can be easily inserted. Let the pears cool completely in the liquid, then remove onto a plate. This can be done a day in advance.

Prepare the Cake Batter

- Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease and line an 8x4-inch loaf tin with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on the two long sides to create a "sling."
- In a small saucepan, melt the salted butter over medium heat. Continue to cook, swirling occasionally, until the butter turns a rich amber brown and smells nutty. Immediately remove from heat and stir in the ground cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg. The spices will bloom and become very fragrant. Pour the butter into a heatsafe bowl to cool for a few minutes.
- In a medium bowl, whisk together the 2 ½ cups flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.
- In a small bowl, mix the chocolate chunks and remaining 1 tbsp flour. This ensures the chocolate doesn't all sink to the bottom.
- In a large bowl, using a hand mixer or stand mixer, beat the eggs and granulated sugar on high speed until light, pale, and fluffy, about 3-4 minutes.
- On low speed, drizzle in the browned butter-spice mixture and the neutral oil. Mix until just combined.
- Fold the dry ingredients in by hand, until only a few clumps remain. Add in the buttermilk and vanilla extract and stir until incorporated.
- Finally, fold in the dark chocolate chunk and flour mixture until incorporated.

Assemble and Bake

- Pour about one third of the cake batter into the prepared loaf tin. Carefully place the two poached pears side-by-side on top of the batter, with the stems facing upwards. Gently pour the remaining batter over and around the pears, ensuring they are mostly covered but the stems are still visible.
- Bake for 55-65 minutes, or until a wooden skewer inserted into the cake (but not the pear) comes out clean. If the top of the cake begins to brown too quickly, you can loosely tent it with aluminum foil.
- Let the cake cool in the pan for 15 minutes before using the parchment sling to carefully lift it out onto a wire rack to cool completely.
- Once the cake is completely cool, dust it with powdered sugar.