

Melt his heart

Baking is one of the most romantic of gestures. 'Spice it up' with your partner's favourite ingredients, says **Roz Crowley**

Baking a cake for our partner is one of the most romantic gestures. When the cake includes their favourite flavours and textures, it's even better.

If this is your first time you surprise your loved one, enjoy those additional brownie points.

This Chocolate Mousse Cake has just three ingredients and comes from *The Jocelyn Dimbleby Collection* in 1978. The texture of it is light and fluffy and with no butter or flour, almost guilt-free.

It can be sandwiched with cream and fruit. Poached pears are delicious at this time of year. I used a can of black cherries, which added to the richness, but I have also used great Irish jams and marmalades. Crème fraîche flavoured with lemon juice and rind is a delicious alternative. In summer, I use raspberries.

To top off the night of romance, I had looked for treats to enhance an evening at home and found delicious options.

Chocolate Mousse Cake

Serves 8

I love the simplicity of this cake. Richly chocolate, it's easy, too. I made this one in heart-shaped tins that are widely available. Aldi sell heart-shaped silicone moulds for €3.99.

175g dark chocolate
2 tbsp hot water
5 large eggs, separated
175g caster sugar
Fruit, cream and icing sugar to fill and to decorate
Preheat the oven to 190c/gas 4/350f.

Rub oil on the base of two sandwich tins and cut greaseproof paper to fit. No need to bring oil up the sides.

Whisk the egg yolks until light and creamy.

Meanwhile, melt the chocolate for two minutes on lowest setting of the microwave, or in a bowl over boiling water for a few minutes. Add the two tablespoons of hot water and mix well.

Pour into the egg yolks and whisk until combined.

Whisk the egg whites until stiff. Add a heaped tablespoon to the egg yolk and chocolate mixture to loosen it up, then add the rest in one go, mixing as lightly as possible with a metal spoon so all the egg white melds into the mixture.

Divide into the two sandwich tins, spreading so the mixture is even and reaches the sides.

Bake in the centre of the oven for 15 minutes. If there are light, squeaking sounds when you press them with your finger, return to the oven for another minute or two.



LIKE HOT CAKES: Roz Crowley making her Valentine's Day chocolate mousse cake. Picture: Dan Linehan

Remove, and allow to cool in the tins for at least half an hour, when they will be easier to turn out. (They keep well in the tins overnight.) Peel off the greaseproof paper, setting one on top of the other, filled with your choice of fruit filling and cream.

If using round tins, create the heart shape with cream icing or small chocolates — improvise.

If filling with fruit, place some more on top of the cake, with streaks or blobs of cream as you fancy. There

are tiny chocolate hearts in Eve Chocolates, on College Road, Cork which look cute.

The cake is also good with a simple chocolate icing, which is on my blog, at rozcrowley.com.

Dust with icing sugar shaken through a sieve to finish, or use a potato peeler to make curls of chocolate. Good luck. ■

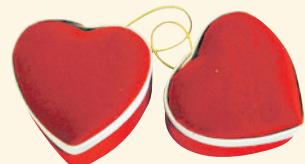
■ Follow our step-by-step video on how to make this Chocolate Mousse Cake at irishexaminer.com.

From the shelf



Green & Black's Organic Milk Collection, 180g, €6.99

This box has six flavours of small chocolate bars — some spiked with raisins and hazelnut, almonds, and butterscotch, some of them plain. They make a great collection for serving after dinner, or as a low-calorie treat, if you can stick to having just one at a time. Individually wrapped; ideal for putting on the pillow.



The Chocolate Shop, English Market, Cork, velvet singe chocolate box with chocolate, €3

It's possible a girl could get the wrong idea when she sees this perfectly formed, red-velvet, heart-shaped box trimmed with oyster-coloured satin. Inside will be a single chocolate, not a diamond, so expectations need to be managed here. A well-priced, beautiful treat.



St Tola Chocolate Cheese, €4.50

Fresh, soft goat's cheese is dipped in Kenmare-based chocolatier Benoit Lorge's fine, dark chocolate for this adventurous product, which crosses the cheese-dessert divide. Philadelphia added chocolate to its cream cheese, to less success, but this contrast of the slightly grainy, salty cream cheese, in a delicate coating of chocolate, achieves a lovely balance. The small crottins will be available in heart shapes, as well as the rounds pictured, by the time you read this. In cheese and speciality food shops countrywide.



Quality Street Matchmakers, €3.49

I thought the name was a good idea for a romantic night, until I found, inside the box, that the 'matchmaking' involved is a small board game.

Still, the thin sticks are delicious after a meal, with their lively, orange flavour and light, dark chocolate.