Desserts / France

Chocolate Lava Cake

A paradox in a ramekin — a cake with a fully set chocolate shell that conceals a dark, flowing center of pure molten ganache, the interior flowing out in a slow, warm river when the spoon breaks through the thin crust.

Time 45 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 60 parts Unsalted butter, plus extra for ramekins
- ☐ 60 parts Dark chocolate (70% cacao), roughly chopped
- ☐ 40 parts Large eggs (whole)
- ☐ 20 parts Egg yolks
- ☐ 30 parts Powdered (icing) sugar
- ☐ 12 parts All-purpose flour
- ☐ 1 parts Fine sea salt
- ☐ 2 parts Pure vanilla extract

Let's make it.

01 Butter four 180ml (6oz) ramekins generously and dust with cocoa powder or flour, tapping out the excess. The butter-cocoa coating must be thorough and even — any bare spot and the cake will stick, ruining the unmolding. Refrigerate the prepared ramekins while you make the batter. Cold ramekins help the outer shell set quickly in the oven, creating the temperature differential that keeps the center liquid.

02 Combine the butter and chopped chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a pot of barely simmering water (bain-marie). The water should not touch the bottom of the bowl. Stir gently and frequently until the mixture is completely melted and smooth — remove from heat the moment the last solid piece has melted, as continuing to heat will make the chocolate grainy. The finished mixture should be glossy, fluid, and smell deeply of dark chocolate.

03 In a large bowl, whisk the whole eggs, yolks, powdered sugar, salt, and vanilla vigorously by hand for 2 full minutes until the mixture is pale, thick, and ribbon-like. This step aerates the batter and gives the outer shell its slightly cakey structure — without this whipping, the cake will be more like set ganache throughout rather than having a defined shell. The mixture should lighten in color noticeably.

04 Pour the cooled chocolate mixture into the egg mixture and fold gently with a spatula until just combined. Sift the flour over the top and fold again with minimal strokes — 8–10 folds maximum. Overmixing develops gluten and toughens the exterior shell. The batter should be smooth, dark, and just barely homogenous — stop the moment no flour streaks remain.

05 Fill each prepared ramekin three-quarters full. Bake at 220°C (425°F) for exactly 10–12 minutes — the timing is everything. The edges should be set and pulling away from the ramekin walls, but the center should visibly jiggle when the pan is shaken. Run a thin knife around the edge of each cake, place a warm plate on top, and invert in one decisive movement. Wait 10 seconds, then lift the ramekin. Serve immediately — the center will continue to set within 2 minutes.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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