Desserts / Mexico

Tres Leches Cake

A cloud-light genoise sponge soaked until it can hold no more liquid, drowning in a trio of sweetened condensed milk, evaporated milk, and heavy cream — served cold under a billowing canopy of lightly sweetened whipped cream.

Time 240 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 3 parts All-purpose flour
- ☐ 3 parts Granulated white sugar
- ☐ 5 parts Sweetened condensed milk
- ☐ 3 parts Heavy cream
- ☐ 0.5 parts Powdered sugar (for whipped cream)
- ☐ 5 parts Eggs, separated, room temperature
- ☐ 0.2 parts Baking powder
- ☐ 4 parts Evaporated milk
- ☐ 0.3 parts Pure vanilla extract
- ☐ 0.1 parts Ground cinnamon, for dusting

Let's make it.

01 Separate the eggs carefully — no trace of yolk in the whites. Beat the yolks with 2 parts of the sugar using an electric mixer on high speed for 4–5 minutes until the mixture is pale yellow, thick, and falls from the beaters in a wide, slow ribbon. In a separate clean bowl, beat the egg whites to soft peaks, then gradually add the remaining sugar and beat to stiff, glossy peaks. The whites must be beaten in a completely grease-free bowl — any fat will prevent them from reaching full volume.

02 Sift the flour and baking powder directly over the egg foam. Using a large rubber spatula, fold in three additions: cut down the center, sweep along the bottom, and roll the batter up and over the top. Rotate the bowl a quarter turn with each stroke. Work quickly but gently — you are trying to keep every air bubble you spent 5 minutes creating. Thirty strokes maximum. Some unmixed streaks are acceptable; overmixing is not.

03 Pour the batter into a greased and floured 9x13-inch baking pan. Smooth the top gently. Bake at 175 C (350 F) for 22–28 minutes until the top is golden and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Do not open the oven in the first 20 minutes — the foam structure is fragile until set. Allow to cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then use a wooden skewer or fork to poke holes across the entire surface — rows spaced 2 cm apart, going all the way to the pan bottom. The holes are the highway for the milk soak.

04 Whisk together the sweetened condensed milk, evaporated milk, 1 part of the heavy cream, and vanilla extract into the three-milk mixture. While the cake is still warm in the pan, slowly pour the entire mixture over the surface in a steady, even stream. Start at the edges and work toward the center. The cake will appear saturated — keep pouring. Some will pool at the sides; use a spoon to redistribute. Refrigerate for a minimum of 2 hours, or overnight. The cold temperature allows the proteins in the milk to set and the sponge to become uniformly saturated rather than soggy.

05 In a cold bowl (chill it in the freezer for 10 minutes), beat the remaining heavy cream and powdered sugar with an electric mixer on medium-high speed. Start on medium to build structure, increase to high once the cream begins to thicken. Beat to medium-firm peaks — the cream should hold its shape when the beaters are lifted but still be smooth and spreadable, not grainy. Spread evenly over the chilled, soaked cake in a generous layer.

06 Dust the whipped cream surface evenly with ground cinnamon using a fine-mesh sieve for an even layer. Slice with a clean knife wiped between each cut. Serve cold — this cake is best between 4 C and 8 C (39–46 F). Each slice should be placed on a plate with its full column of soaked cake visible from the side, showing the distinct layers of cake and cream.

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