



Hazelnut Crunch Cake with Mascarpone and Chocolate

PAIRS WONDERFULLY WITH A BOTTLE OF OUR RUBY PORT



A lot of steps go into putting this cake together but since it starts with a boxed cake mix, none of them is very difficult. All the effort goes into the creamy-crunchy filling, made from hazelnut brittle that is a delicious candy all on its own. It makes for a spectacular birthday cake.

8 SERVINGS

Cake

1 box chocolate cake mix and any additional ingredients needed to make the cake

Crunch

1 cup (about 4½ ounces) hazelnuts, toasted and skinned
2/3 cup granulated sugar

Filling

2 (8-ounce) containers mascarpone cheese, at room temperature
1 cup heavy cream
3/4 cup confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Topping

¼ cup bittersweet chocolate chips
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1 teaspoon grated orange zest

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Butter and flour two 8-inch cake pans. Prepare the cake mix according to package instructions. Divide the batter between the cake pans and bake as directed. Remove from the oven and cool on a wire rack.



To make the crunch, place the toasted nuts close together in a single layer on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Combine the granulated sugar and ½ cup of water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium high heat and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Continue to boil the mixture until the sugar is light brown, about 8 minutes. Remove from the heat and let the bubbles subside, then pour the caramelized sugar over the nuts. Place the baking sheet in the refrigerator and let the nut crunch cool until hard, about 30 minutes. When the nut crunch is hardened and cool, place it on a cutting board and cut into small pieces, saving a few larger ones for decoration. Set aside.

To make the filling, put the mascarpone, cream, confectioners' sugar, and vanilla into a large mixing bowl. Using an electric mixer, whip the cream mixture to soft peaks. Fold the chopped nut crunch into the whipped cream.