



SIREN

Bitter chocolate. Sour cherries. Sea salt.



A cake baked by the gods of the sea in celebration of an immortal Siren’s odyssey.
Of bewitching songs to tempt a king’s heart that are still being sung.
Feathered and finned all gather in a festival of flowers and fruit to set her free.
A wreath of cherries floating on twilight waters met on the horizon
by a sky of Napoli stars.

- 1 Preheat the oven to 140°C. Line a 20 cm | 25 cm round cake tin with baking paper using the following instruction. This cake will be baked in a water bath, so you need to use a conventional tin, not a springform tin, to ensure it doesn’t leak. On this occasion, you won’t be tipping the cake upside down to get it out, instead, you will be levering it out with the aid of two paper strips lining the base of the tin. So before you line the tin, lay a couple of long baking paper strips approximately 5 cm-wide and 40 cm-long crossing over one another so they meet in the centre of the tin, then run the strips up the sides and let them fall over the rim. Now line the tin as you usually do and set it aside.
- 2 Half-fill a deep tray large enough to fit your cake tin with water and place it in the preheating oven.
- 3 Combine the 180 g | 220 g Manjari chocolate, all the Jivara chocolate, and the butter in a large (sounds excessive but bear with me) heatproof bowl and place over a saucepan of barely simmering water, making sure the bowl isn’t touching the water, to half-melt. Once half-melted, turn the heat off and leave the bowl on top of the saucepan.
- 4 Meanwhile, place the extra 80 g | 100 g Manjari chocolate in a food processor and blitz to a fine crumb using the pulse function or pausing intermittently between 4 second spurts. This method allows the chocolate to fall from the sides of the processor back into the bowl and will ultimately form a fine, even crumb without the chocolate overheating or melting. Decant the chocolate into a bowl, then add the toasted almonds to the food processor and blitz using the same method until they are just roughly chopped. Remove 50 g of the coarsest almonds to use for the top of the cake and continue to blitz the remaining almonds until they form fine crumbs, then add these to the bowl with the Manjari crumb.
- 5 Place the egg yolks in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment and whisk on medium speed, then add half the caster sugar, increase the speed to high and beat until very pale and tripled in volume. Remove the bowl of chocolate from the saucepan and stir it to thoroughly combine the chocolate and butter, then, half at a time, gently fold through the whipped yolks using a spatula. Sift the cocoa directly over the chocolate mixture and fold it through until well combined. Add the ground almonds and chocolate crumbs and fold to combine. You’ll find that large bowl coming into play now. (*cont.*)

SIZE	20cm	25cm
SERVES	10-12	12-15
CHOCOLATE MOUSSE CAKE		
Valrhona Manjari chocolate (minimum 64% cocoa solids), plus extra 80g / 100g	180g	220g
Valrhona Jivara chocolate (minimum 40% cocoa solids)	65g	80g
unsalted butter	80g	100g
whole almonds, skin on and toasted	120g	150g
eggs, separated	6	7
caster sugar	130g	160g
good-quality cocoa powder	40g	40g
salt	pinch	pinch
sea salt flakes, plus extra to serve	½ tsp	¾ tsp
frozen sour cherries	200g	250g
clotted or thick cream, to serve (optional)		

- 6 Whip the egg whites with a pinch of salt in a clean and dry electric mixer bowl fitted with the whisk attachment on high speed. When soft ribbons start to form, reduce the speed to medium and gradually add the remaining caster sugar, then beat until glossy and firm peaks form. Be careful not to overwhip.
- 7 Gently fold half the whipped meringue into the chocolate, pressing out any lumps of meringue that may have formed. Fold in remaining meringue, then pour the cake batter into the prepared tin and smooth the top with an offset palette knife. Scatter the coarsely chopped almonds evenly over the top of the cake and sprinkle with sea salt.
- 8 Place the cake tin into the water bath in the oven, ensuring the water comes halfway up the sides of the tin. If the tin starts to float, remove some of the water until it makes contact with the base of the tray again. Bake the cake for 25 minutes, then open the oven door and scatter the sour cherries over the top of the cake like a wreath. Reduce the oven temperature to 130°C and bake the cake for a further 50 minutes.
- 9 Once this time is up, the cake will spring back when pressed in the middle, although, it will still seem a little wobbly. Turn the oven off, leaving the cake in the oven with the oven door slightly ajar to cool for 1 hour. If your oven door doesn't stay ajar by itself, use a wooden spoon wedged into the door to allow the heat to escape. Cooling the cake this way will help it to set and reduces the dramatic sinking that flourless chocolate cakes usually encounter.
- 10 After 1 hour the cake can be removed from the oven and from the water bath to cool completely in the tin. Ideally, this cake should be set overnight or 'express set' in the fridge for 4 hours because it is very mousse-y and this will make it easier to remove from the tin. To unmould the cake, gently tug at the four strips of baking paper hanging over the rim to release the cake from the base. Then pull upwards, angling the cake at 45 degrees to slide it out onto a serving platter. Even better if you have a friend who can pull up on two of the strips as you pull up on the other two. I recommend using a hot knife to cut this cake. Sprinkle with extra sea salt to serve. I like to serve it with clotted or thick cream.
- 11 There is no need to refrigerate this cake after it has been removed from the tin. If you have leftovers, just leave it out at room temperature. (*end.*)

