Mom's Diós Torta (Walnut Torte)

Make-ahead · Serves 12–16

Ken's note: TBD

A light walnut sponge, split in two and layered and frosted with a cooked walnut-rum cream, then covered with chopped nuts. The cake is made with separated eggs and very little flour, so beat the whites last and fold them in gently. The original measures in heaping tablespoons; cup amounts here are approximate.

Ingredients

Cake

- 1 cup sugar
- 5 large eggs, separated
- ⅔ cup water (10 Tbsp), ideally filtered
- ¾ cup plus 1 Tbsp all-purpose flour (about 10 heaping Tbsp)
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ¾ cup finely ground walnuts or pecans (about 10 heaping Tbsp)
- Zest of 1–2 lemons

Walnut cream

- 3 Tbsp all-purpose flour
- 2 cups finely to medium chopped walnuts or pecans
- 1 cup sugar
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 1¼ cups milk
- 1½ sticks (12 Tbsp) unsalted butter, softened (not melted)
- 1 Tbsp rum
- Extra finely chopped nuts and nut halves, to finish

Method

1. Heat the oven to 375°F. Grease and flour a 10½×15-inch pan.
2. Whisk the flour and baking powder together very well. Mix the lemon zest into the ground nuts. Beat the sugar and egg yolks until smooth and somewhat lighter in color. Add the water a tablespoon at a time, then half the flour a tablespoon at a time, stirring all the while. Stir in the nuts a little at a time, then the rest of the flour. Only now beat the egg whites until stiff, and gently fold them into the batter.
3. Pour the batter into the pan and bake about 30 minutes, until the cake tests done. Turn it out onto a rack and cool completely.
4. For the cream, whisk together everything except the butter and rum in a saucepan and cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until thick. Remove from the heat and cool to near room temperature. Stir in the softened butter and the rum until smooth. If needed, adjust with a little more sugar, milk, flour, or nuts to sweeten, thin, or thicken.
5. Cut the cooled cake lengthwise into two pieces. Spread a generous amount of cream over one piece, set the other on top, and cover the top and sides with the remaining cream. Coat all over with finely chopped nuts and decorate the top with nut halves. Refrigerate; serve at cool room temperature.