

Irish Coffee

Make the hot whiskey-spiked drink, or try it reimagined as a showstopping cake.

BY JEFFREY MORGENTHALER AND GALE GAND



Back Story

Irish coffee was invented in the early 1940s at Port of Foynes airport, in County Limerick, Ireland. In the 1950s, an American travel writer helped popularize the drink stateside.



How Sweet It Is

Brown sugar is traditional in Irish coffee because it adds depth as well as sweetness. Turning it into a syrup ensures that the brown sugar is dissolved and no crystals are left in the bottom of the glass.



Irish Spirit

Like Scotch, Irish whiskey is made with barley, but it's blended with wheat or rye whiskey. It's triple-distilled for a light color and smooth flavor.



Light as a Cloud

The cream is very lightly whipped so that it floats on top like a cloud and blends with each sip of coffee.



THE CLASSIC

Award-winning mixologist Jeffrey Morgenthaler is the bar manager at Clyde Common in Portland, Oregon, and creator of Repeal Day, a holiday celebrating the end of Prohibition. While he's known for innovations like barrel-aged cocktails, he's also a scholar of the classics. He's perfected the art of blending whiskey, coffee, and brown sugar and then topping it off with a fluffy layer of cream.



Coffee Cake

Layers of soft, fluffy coffee-infused chocolate cake really set this update apart from its inspiration.



Crème de la Crème

Made with Irish whiskey, brown sugar, coffee, and of course, cream, this whipped cream filling captures all of the elements of Irish Coffee.



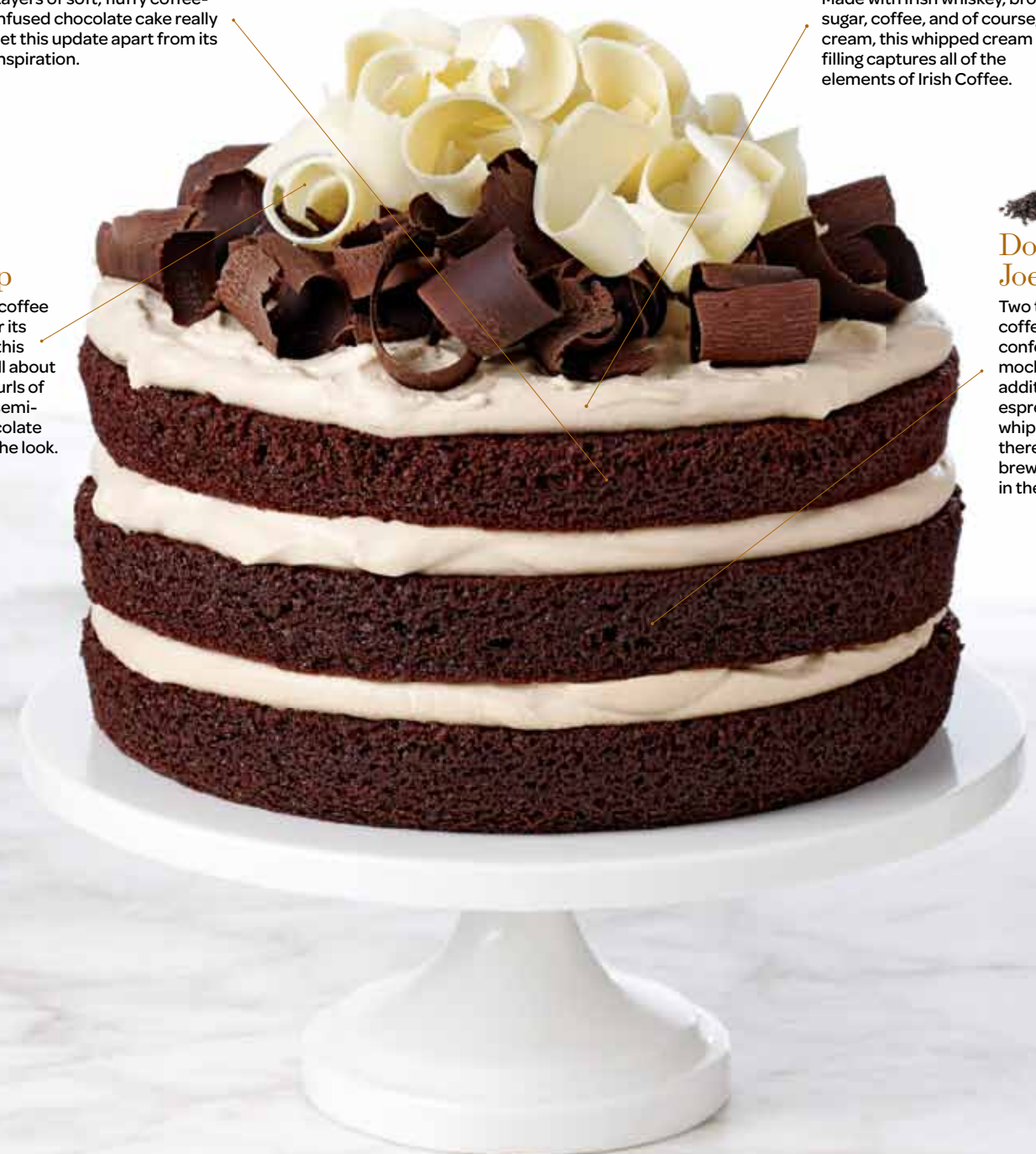
Over the Top

While Irish coffee is prized for its simplicity, this update is all about glamour. Curls of white and semi-sweet chocolate complete the look.



Double Joe

Two types of coffee give this confection its mocha flavor. In addition to the espresso in the whipped cream, there's regular brewed coffee in the cake.



THE UPDATE

Gale Gand is a James Beard Award-winning pastry chef and founding partner of the Chicago restaurant Tru. She is co-author of seven cookbooks, including *Gale Gand's Brunch!* Here she reimagines Irish coffee as a decadent mocha layer cake filled with coffee-whiskey whipped cream and topped with white and dark chocolate shavings.



1 Whisk the cream only until it begins to thicken. It won't hold a peak but should be light, with just enough air to make it float on top of the coffee.

2 Use a large spoon to gently place two or three spoonfuls of cream on top of the coffee. Hold the spoon just above the surface so the cream slides rather than splashes onto the coffee.

irish coffee

This cocktail is always served in an Irish coffee cup, which is clear to show off the light cream against the dark coffee and has a handle to prevent burns from a hot glass. Warm the glasses by filling them with hot water and letting them sit for a few minutes before pouring out the water. **Serves 4**

- ¼ cup packed dark brown sugar
- 2 cups strong hot coffee
- ¾ cup Irish whiskey, such as Jameson
- ¾ cup heavy cream

Combine the brown sugar and 2 Tbs. water in a 1-quart saucepan and stir over low heat until the sugar is just dissolved. You'll have ¼ cup of syrup; depending on how sweet you like your Irish coffee, you may not need it all.

Pour ½ cup of the coffee, 3 Tbs. of the whiskey, and 2 to 3 tsp. of the brown sugar syrup into each of 4 warmed 6-oz. glass Irish coffee mugs.

In a medium bowl, beat the cream with a whisk just until it's frothy and slightly thickened but does not yet hold a peak **1**, about 1 minute. With a soup spoon, float about ¾ inch of the lightly whipped cream on top of each coffee **2** and serve immediately.

chocolate irish whiskey cake

This impressive cake can be made ahead. Wrap the layers in plastic and keep them at room temperature for 1 day. The assembled cake will hold for 2 hours in the refrigerator.

Serves 10 to 12

FOR THE CAKE LAYERS

Unsalted butter for the pans

- 10 ½ oz. (2¼ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 ½ oz. (¾ cup) unsweetened natural cocoa powder
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- 1½ tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. table salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup whole milk
- ½ cup canola oil
- 1½ tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup hot coffee



1 The most accurate way to distribute the batter among the three pans is by weight. A full batch of batter weighs about 3 lb. 3 oz., so each pan should get about 1 lb. 1 oz.

FOR THE COFFEE-WHISKEY WHIPPED CREAM

- 1 Tbs. instant espresso granules
- ¼ cup Irish whiskey, such as Jameson
- 3 cups heavy cream
- 3 Tbs. packed dark brown sugar

TO FINISH THE CAKE

- 1 4-oz. block semisweet chocolate (about 1 inch thick), at room temperature
- 1 4-oz. block white chocolate (about 1 inch thick), at room temperature

MAKE THE CAKE

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Butter three 9x2-inch round cake pans and line the bottoms with parchment. Butter the parchment.

In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment (or in a large bowl, using an electric hand-held mixer), briefly blend the flour, sugar, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed. Add the eggs, milk, oil, and vanilla and mix at low speed, scraping the bowl as necessary, until the mixture is thick

Food styling by Ronne Day



2 For the bottom two layers, spread the whipped cream with an offset spatula to within ½ inch of the edge. The extra space will keep it from spilling over when the cake is assembled.



3 Apply a little pressure when you place a layer on top of the whipped cream to help the cream spread just to the edge.



4 Warming the chocolate slightly in a microwave makes it easier to shave. If you don't have a microwave, rub the edge of the chocolate with the heel of your hand to soften it.

and creamy, like chocolate frosting, about 5 minutes. With the mixer running, gradually add the hot coffee, mixing at low speed just until combined. The batter will be quite thin. Divide the batter equally among the pans **1**. Bake, switching positions and rotating the pans halfway through, until a tester inserted in the center of the cake comes out with only a few crumbs clinging to it and the center feels firm to the touch, 20 to 25 minutes. Let the cakes cool completely in the pans on racks.

MAKE THE COFFEE-WHISKEY WHIPPED CREAM

Clean and chill the mixing bowl and whisk attachment. In a measuring cup, stir the instant espresso into the whiskey until completely dissolved. In the chilled bowl, whip the cream, brown sugar, and whiskey mixture on medium-high speed until medium peaks form, 2 to 3 minutes.

FINISH THE CAKE

Run a thin knife around the inside edge of the cake pans and turn the cakes out onto a large cutting board; peel off the parchment.

Transfer one layer to a cake plate and spread a third of the whipped cream on top, leaving a ½-inch border **2**; repeat with the second layer **3**. Put the top layer in place and spread the remaining whipped cream out to the edge.

To make the chocolate shavings, put a piece of waxed paper or foil on a baking sheet. Microwave each block of chocolate on medium power for 20 to 30 seconds to soften slightly, then draw a vegetable peeler along the chocolate bar's edge, letting the curls fall onto the waxed paper **4**. Make enough curls of both colors to top the cake generously, 1½ to 2½ oz. each. Refrigerate the shavings to make them easier to handle.

Arrange the shavings on top of the cake and serve.



See the story behind this recipe's evolution in the FC test kitchen at FineCooking.com/extras.