Elkhart County 4-H Fair

News Release

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For Immediate Release

Open Class Home & Family Arts Department

Special Contest – President’s Item Winner: Danae Bell, Goshen

**Winner of President Michael Christofeno’s Baked Item: Chocolate Cake with Chocolate Frosting**

**Dark Chocolate Cake**

***Danae Bell, Goshen***

1-1/2 c. unsweetened Dutch cocoa powder, plus more for pan

3 c. all-purpose flour

3 c. sugar

3 tsp. baking soda

2 tsp. baking powder

2 tsp. salt

4 lg. eggs

1-1/2 c. nondairy or heavy cream

1 T. melted butter

1-1/2 c. warm water

6 T. avocado oil or any neutral oil

1 tsp. espresso powder

2 tsp. vanilla

Chocolate Swiss Buttercream

6 oz. pasteurized egg whites

11 oz. sugar

1 tsp. kosher salt

1/4 tsp. cream of tartar

16 oz. unsalted butter

1 tsp. vanilla extract

16 oz. finely chopped dark chocolate, between 70 and 77% cocoa solids

1 tsp. instant espresso powder, optional, to taste

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter four 8” round cake pans (2” deep); dust pans with cocoa powder. Sift cocoa, flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt into the bowl of a mixer. Beat on low speed until just combined. Raise speed to medium, and add eggs, nondairy or heavy cream, water, oil, vanilla, butter, and espresso powder. Beat until smooth, about 3 minutes.

Divide batter between the four pans. Place two on the middle rack and two on the rack below, switch pans from top to bottom rack and bottom to top rack halfway through baking. Bake until set and a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, about 35 minutes. Let cool for 15 minutes. Turn out from pans. Transfer, top up, to wire racks. Let cool completely. When cakes are cooled, cut to level off each cake. Wrap each layer tightly in plastic wrap and chill until ready to assemble cake.

For buttercream, fill a wide pot with at least 1-1/2 inches water, with a thick ring of crumpled tinfoil placed on the bottom to act as a “booster seat” that will prevent the bowl from touching the bottom of the pan. Place over high heat until steaming-hot, then adjust temperature to maintain a gentle simmer. Combine egg whites, sugar, salt and cream of tartar in the bowl of a stand mixer. Set over steaming water, stirring and scraping constantly with a flexible spatula, until egg whites hold steady at 185°, about 10-12 minutes. Once ready, transfer to a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment and whip at high speed for about 10 minutes, until meringue is glossy, stiff, and cool to the touch, around 90°.

With mixer still running, add butter, 1 or 2 tablespoons at a time. Initially, the volume of the meringue will decrease dramatically; it may even seem soupy along the way, but as the cool butter is added, the mixture will begin to thicken and cool. In the end, the buttercream should be thick, creamy, and soft but not runny, around 72°. Mix in the vanilla extract on low speed until well combined.

Melt chocolate, either in a microwave or over a water bath, until fluid and warm. Scrape all the warm chocolate into stand mixer bowl at once, then immediately begin whipping on medium-high until fully incorporated. Scrape bowl with a flexible spatula to ensure there is no unincorporated chocolate around sides of bowl, then continue mixing until homogeneous. If you like, adjust to taste with additional salt, vanilla, or dissolved espresso powder to add depth of flavor.

Use buttercream right away, or transfer to a large zipper-lock bag, press out air, and seal. Buttercream can be refrigerated for up to 2 weeks and frozen for up to several months. Rewarm to approximately 73° and re-whip before using.

When assembling cake, place ganache in between layers of cake and frosting as you stack.

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