Cocoa-Nut Layer Cake

Cake Layers

4 oz. or ½ cup unsweetened cocoa

½ cup boiling water

1 ¾ cups unsifted all-purpose flour

1 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. baking soda

1/8 tsp. salt

½ cup butter, softened

2 cups granulated sugar

2 eggs

1 tsp. vanilla extract

1 1/3 cups buttermilk\*

½ cup finely chopped pistachio nuts or walnuts

1 cup heavy cream

Chocolate Frosting

1/3 cup light cream

1/3 cup butter

6 oz. or ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa

2 2/3 cup sifted confectioners’ sugar

1 tsp. light corn syrup

1 tsp. vanilla extract

¼ cup coarsely chopped pistachio nuts or walnuts

\*Buttermilk

Stir together 18 Tbsp. (1cup plus 2 Tbsp.) half & half and 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice in a bowl. Let stand 10 minutes before using.

Cake layers: In a small bowl, mix cocoa with boiling water. Cool completely. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease and flour three 8 x 1 ½ inch layer-cake pans. Sift flour, baking powder, soda and salt. In large bowl of electric mixer, combine the butter, sugar, eggs and vanilla. Beat at high speed until fluffy, about 5 minutes, occasionally scraping side of bowl and guiding mixture into beaters with rubber scraper. At low speed, blend in flour mixture (in fourths), alternately with buttermilk. Begin and end with the flour mixture. Beat just until smooth. Measure 1 2/3 cups batter into a small bowl. Stir in ½ cup chopped nuts and pour into a prepared pan. Add cocoa mixture to remaining batter. Mix until smooth and divide evenly between other pans. Bake 30 to 35 minutes, until cake tester or toothpick inserted in center of cake comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes on rack. Remove from pans and cool completely. Whip heavy cream until stiff and refrigerate.

Frosting: In saucepan, heat light cream until bubbles form and then remove from heat. Add butter, cocoa, 1 ½ cups confectioners’ sugar, corn syrup and vanilla to saucepan to melt. With portable mixer or wooden spoon, beat frosting until smooth. Add remaining confectioners’ sugar, beating until smooth and thick enough to spread.

To assemble cake: Place one chocolate layer on cake plate, right side down and spread with half of the whipped cream. Place the nut cake layer on next and spread with the remaining whipped cream. Top with the other chocolate cake layer with right side up. With spatula, spread frosting on the side and top. Garnish top edge of cake with the coarsely chopped nuts. Refrigerate. Makes 12 servings.

