

Trees factor largely into Hope Jahren's story in "Lab Girl." So a twist on the classic Christmas log cake, *bûche de Noël*, seemed in order.

You can go as crazy as you like with the decorations or keep it simple. For cake base and filling, you'll find many variations online. Any jellyroll cake with a filling can be used. We thought mocha was appropriate given the crazy long hours Hope and Bill kept at the lab.

This recipe is adapted from *bettycrocker.com*.

Log of Life

Makes 10 servings

Cake:

3 eggs
1 cup granulated sugar
1/3 cup water
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3/4 cup flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt

Filling:

1 cup whipping cream
2 tablespoons
granulated sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons instant
coffee granules

Chocolate buttercream frosting:

1/3 cup unsweetened baking cocoa
1/3 cup (2/3 stick) butter or
margarine, room temperature
2 cups powdered sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 to 2 tablespoons hot water

Garnish: Crushed green pistachio nuts and fresh mint sprig

Make cake: Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line a 15-by-10-inch sheet pan with foil or wax paper; grease generously. In a mixer bowl, beat eggs with electric mixer on high speed about 5 minutes or until thick and lemon-colored. Gradually beat in sugar. Beat in water and vanilla on low speed. Gradually add flour, baking powder and salt, beating until batter is smooth. Pour into pan, spreading to corners.

Bake in preheated oven 12 to 15 minutes or until toothpick inserted into center comes out clean. Immediately loosen cake from edges of pan; invert onto towel very generously sprinkled with powdered sugar. Carefully remove foil. Trim off stiff edges of cake if necessary. While hot, carefully roll cake and towel from narrow end. Cool on rack at least 30 minutes.

Make filling: In a chilled medium bowl, beat all filling ingredients on high speed until stiff. Unroll cake; remove towel. Spread filling over cake. Roll up cake.

Make frosting: In a medium bowl, beat cocoa and butter on low speed until thoroughly mixed. Beat in powdered sugar and vanilla until mixed. Beat in enough of the hot water until frosting is smooth and spreadable.

Frost entire cake. With tines of fork, make strokes in frosting to look like tree bark.

Garnish with crushed nuts to give your cake "log" the appearance of a covering of moss. Add a mint sprig for leaves.



Note: Other edible natural-looking adornments include chocolate leaves, meringue mushrooms, mint gumdrop leaves and red cinnamon candies.