

LOVE AND A LICKED SPOON

TUESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2010

Chocolate and the essential art of sloth



I love working from home. I take phone calls with the *Gilmore Girls* temporarily on mute, check emails while singing along enthusiastically if tunelessly to *42nd Street* and type with a dog to warm my feet and a pair of kittens snoozing in my in tray. My one shiver of envy for office workers comes when we have so much snow, trains don't run, offices close and they get the day off. Frustratingly - as my office is a gentle 60 second stroll from my bed - it would take quite the snow storm to make it impossible for me to clock in.

I'd been sent a bag of Trish Deseine's new milk chocolate buttons to try. I needed to cook them - what they're intended for - before I ate the whole bag. I flipped through the pages of Trish's *Best of Chocolat* (in French, just so you know) which I bought when we were in *Agde* in the summer and decided the milk chocolate, date and almond cake was a suitable fate for my precious and rapidly diminishing bounty.

DEBORA ROBERTSON



LICKEDSPOON
LONDON, UNITED
KINGDOM

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BEHIND THE SPOON

Love and a Licked Spoon is written by Debora Robertson, food writer, editor, passionate home cook and chaotic gardener. She lives in north London with her husband Séan, Barney the dog and a mountain of cookbooks.

She began this blog in March 2009 as a way of recording the hundreds of recipes she's collected from

places as far apart as Moscow and Houston, villages in the Durham Dales and sleepy towns in the South West of France. Some recipes come from closer to home - Burmese recipes from a London neighbour and Turkish ones from the local cafés she retreats to when she really should be writing.



I love Trish Deseine's food. It's cosy, sexy, sophisticated and her books are shot through with her natural warmth and humour. She is from Northern Ireland and has lived in France for the past twenty years or so, where she has enjoyed *un succès fou* showing the French how to create simple and delicious meals which require neither a sous chef nor a trust fund. Luckily for us, she has published several [books](#) in English. Try them. You will like.

Chocolate by Trish

Trish's chocolate is available from Selfridges or by mail order in the UK from Chocolatebytrish.com

Rich chocolate cake with dates and almonds

This flourless chocolate cake has an intense, almost wine-y depth of flavour. It's grown up, rich, fudgy and, yes, intensely chocolate-y. It keeps very well for a few days too, if you're the sort of person who can sleep while there's chocolate cake in a tin on your kitchen shelf.



Really, how could it not be good?

Serves 8 to 10 people

250g milk chocolate, Trish's magic buttons are 38%
3 egg yolks
3 eggs
125g light muscovado sugar
175g ground almonds
100g whole almonds, toasted* and finely chopped
175g unsalted butter, plus a little more for greasing
150g Medjool dates, stoned and chopped, if you can't get hold of
Medjool dates, poach ordinary dates for three minutes in a little
water and sugar

Lightly grease a 25cm loose-bottomed cake tin, line it with a circle of baking parchment and butter the parchment. Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3.

Put the chocolate and butter in a heatproof bowl and melt in a microwave or over a bowl of barely-simmering water (the bottom of the bowl shouldn't touch the water). Cool slightly.



Pretty.

In a large bowl, beat together the eggs, egg yolks and sugar until light and creamy – the beaters should leave a ribbon trail across the surface when you lift them out of the batter. Add the ground and chopped almonds and the dates and stir until well combined. Lightly but thoroughly fold in the melted chocolate and butter with a spatula. Pour into the cake tin and bake for about 50 minutes – the centre should still wobble a bit as it will firm up as it cools. Let it cool in the tin before turning it out.

* Place them in an even layer on a baking sheet and bake them at 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4 for about 6 minutes. Cook them for a minute or two longer if they still look a bit pale but keep checking them as they can burn very easily.



I took some of the cake to the park the next day – I'm kind like that. This picture was taken by Stephen Morallee.
