



Triple Chocolate Bûche de Noël

The Bûche de Noël (that's yule log to you and me) is a classic holiday rolled cake that is decorated to look like a log or branch. This cake is far simpler than the traditional French génoise-and-ganache Bûche de Noël. It features a moist, airy chocolate cake with a light chocolate cream cheese filling inside and a darker chocolate cream cheese icing outside. Perfect even for a novice baker, this cake looks *very* impressive, but it's actually easier than making a plain old layer cake! Our step-by-step instructions and [photos](#) make this cake a breeze!

The real fun is in the decorating. I skipped the traditional (read: fussy) meringue mushrooms and made up some fun chocolate "bark" and lemon leaf and sour candy "holly." It looks terrific and it's a snap (try it on any chocolate cake!). Use my suggestions, or come up with your own fun ideas.

cake:

2/3 cup **flour**
1/2 tsp. **baking powder**
1/2 tsp. **salt**
5 **eggs**
3/4 cup **sugar**
2 (1 ounce) squares **unsweetened baking chocolate**
2 tbsp. brewed **coffee**
2 tbsp. **Kahlua**
2 tbsp. **sugar**
1/4 tsp. **baking soda**

filling:

1/2 of an 8-oz. block of **cream cheese**, softened
2 cup **powdered sugar**
2 tbsp. **butter**
1/2 teaspoon **vanilla extract**
1 1-oz square **baking chocolate**

optional: 1/2 - 1 cup chopped **pecans**

frosting:

1 cup **powdered sugar**
1/2 of an 8-oz. block of **cream cheese**, softened
2/3 cup **chocolate chips**
1 tbsp. **Kahlua**

bark and holly:

1 large (3 - 3.5 oz) **chocolate bar**, milk, semisweet, or dark, plain or with nuts or flavoring (I used dark chocolate)
1 tsp. **butter**
sugar, chopped nuts, or **sliced almonds**, for texture (optional)
3 fresh lemon, lime or other leathery edible **leaves** III
3 small **red candies** (red hots, sour cherry, gumdrop, etc.)

1 Preheat the oven to 350°. Lightly spray a 10x15 inch jelly roll pan. Line with parchment paper. Sift flour with baking powder and salt and set aside.

2 In a large mixing bowl, beat the eggs on high for 5 minutes. They'll be very pale and foamy. Gradually add in the sugar and beat another 2 minutes. Gently but thoroughly fold in the flour mixture.

3 Melt the chocolate in a double boiler or in the microwave (see sidebar). In a small bowl, combine the coffee, the Kahlua, the 2 tablespoons of sugar and the baking soda. Gradually stir into the melted chocolate, blending until smooth. Quickly but completely fold chocolate mixture into batter.

4 Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake a for 18 to 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the cake comes out clean.

5 While the cake is baking, lightly sift an even layer of confectioners sugar over a clean, flat-weave dish towel (not terry cloth). Flip the cake out of its pan onto the prepared cloth as soon as it comes from the oven. Carefully peel away parchment paper. Dust top of cake with confectioners sugar, then trim away crisp edges with a sharp knife. Gobble them up now or save for decorations.

6 Starting with one of the short sides of the cake, immediately roll the cake up in the cloth, jellyroll style, and cool thoroughly on a rack.

7 **Make the filling:** Melt the chocolate in a double boiler or the microwave. Set aside. In a medium bowl, combine cream cheese, powdered sugar, butter, and vanilla. Beat until fluffy. Reserve 1/4 cup of the icing for the "cut" parts of the log

Beat in the melted chocolate.

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Unroll the cake and spread the filling evenly over the surface. If you're using pecans, sprinkle them evenly over the filling. Roll the cake back up and cool for an hour or so.

Decorating the cake:

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Make the frosting: Melt the chocolate chips in a double boiler or the microwave. Set aside. Beat cream cheese with powdered sugar until smooth, then blend in the Kahlua and the melted chocolate.

10

Make the bark: Cover a cookie sheet with plastic wrap. Break up and melt candy bar, mix in 1 tsp. of butter and powdered sugar if you wish, then spread on plastic wrap and freeze while cake is cooling.

11

Frost the log: Cut a diagonal chunk off of one end of the cake to make into a branch (see photo below) and set aside. Frost log, leaving ends unfrosted. Stick the cut side of the chunk of cake onto the frosted log to form a cut "branch." It can go anywhere you want it to. Frost the sides of the branch, leaving the flat end unfrosted for now. Save a spoonful or two for "rings" of cut end.

If you like, you can cut a chunk off either end and make two "branches."

Use the reserved filling, as-is, or with a spoonful of dark frosting added for color, to frost the three ends of the cake. If you'd like, make "rings" on the cut ends to mimic the look of a real log. I wanted to avoid any specialty tools, so I simply used a chopstick. You could use the tip of a knife, or a fork drawn around in concentric circles, whatever you like. If you have cake-decorating supplies, pipe in the circles for a more polished look.

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The finishing touches: Take the chocolate sheet out of the freezer and peel off the plastic wrap, breaking off irregular pieces of "bark" and layering them casually around the sides of the log. You'll need to work quickly to keep the chocolate from melting in your hands, but that's actually good, because you don't want it to look too tidy.

To make the holly, snip semicircles out of the sides of the lemon leaves to make them look like holly leaves. Stick them into the cake, and place 3 sour cherry candies in the center of the cluster for holly berries.

If you like, sift powdered sugar around the plate or the log itself for a snowy look.

step 5



Invert cake onto a clean kitchen towel covered with powdered sugar.

step 6



After removing the parchment paper, dust the cake with powdered sugar and roll it up, towel and all.

step 6



Side view of cake rolled in towel. Let it cool on a rack while you clean up a bit and make the filling.

step 8



Spread on the filling (and sprinkle with chopped pecans, if desired), then re-roll the cake. Notice how the cake stuck a bit to the towel (under my thumb). If that happens, it's not a problem, but prevent it by using more powdered sugar on the towel before inverting the cake.

step 11



Using a sharp knife, diagonally slice a chunk off one or both ends and set aside. This chunk will form a branch stump off the main log.

step 11



Stick the cut end of the stumpy piece (the larger flat surface) to the frosted side of your log. Then frost its sides.

step 11



Frost the 3 flat "cut" sides of the log with the reserved (pre-chocolate) filling. Use it plain (light cream-colored) for more contrast, or mix with a bit of the icing for a caramel color like this.

step 11



Make the stump's rings with the darker icing (as shown), or simply drag the tines of a fork in concentric circles.

step 12



Peel back the plastic wrap, breaking off chunks of "bark" and overlapping them irregularly over the outside surface of the log. Work quickly or the chocolate will melt and be a mess.

