**Crunchy Milk Chocolate-Peanut Butter Layer Cake**

Serves 12, *Food and Wine Magazine,* adapted

**Cake:**

1 cups plus 1 tablespoons sugar

3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder

3/4 teaspoon baking powder

3/4 teaspoon baking soda

3/4 teaspoon salt

1 large eggs

1/2 cup milk

1/4 cup vegetable oil

1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons boiling water

**Filling:**

1/3 cup sliced almonds

1/2 cup confectioners’ sugar

2 large egg whites

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

1/2 cup salted roasted Spanish peanuts, coarsely chopped

1 cup fresh peanut butter

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

3 ounces milk chocolate, chopped

1 cup Rice Krispies

**Frosting:**

10 ounces milk chocolate bits

1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons hot water

1/2 pound unsalted butter cut into ½-inch pieces, thoroughly chilled

1. **Cake:**  Preheat the oven to 350°. Butter an 8-inch cake pan. Cut out a circle of parchment and place it on the bottom of the pan; butter and flour the pan and set it aside. In a large bowl, whisk the sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, milk, oil and vanilla. Whisk the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Whisk in the boiling water. Pour the batter (it will be thin) into the prepared pan and bake for about 30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool.
2. **Meringue Filling:** Reduce the oven temperature to 325. Trace two 8-inch circles onto parchment paper and lay them on two baking sheets. In a food processor, pulse the almonds with the confectioners' sugar until they're finely ground. In a bowl, using an electric mixer, beat the egg whites at medium speed until soft peaks form. Add the granulated sugar and beat until the whites are stiff and glossy, about 2 minutes. Using a rubber spatula, fold in the almond mixture. Spread the meringue on the parchments to fill the circles. Sprinkle the chopped peanuts on top. Bake for about 20 minutes, until lightly browned and firm. Turn off oven and leave meringues in overnight. In a medium bowl set in a saucepan of simmering water, heat the peanut butter with the butter and milk chocolate, stirring constantly, until smooth and melted. Remove from the heat and fold in the Rice Krispies. Spread the mixture all over the meringue rectangle. Transfer to the freezer and let cool completely.
3. **Frosting:** Melt chocolate with hot water in small saucepan over medium heat, stirring until bits dissolve. Pour into bowl of food processor. Beat in butter, 2 tablespoons at a time, until smooth. Refrigerate to thicken to spreading consistency. (This may take several hours; it's best to do it the day before assembly.)
4. **Assembly:** Remove the parchment from the cake and cut it horizontally into two equal slices. Place one layer of meringue on a serving platter. Spread 1/4 of the frosting over the top. Add one cake layer and frost it with 1/4 of the frosting. Add the second layer of meringue and spread it with frosting. Add the second layer of cake and spread the top with the remaining frosting. Refrigerate until firm, at least 1 hour. Using a serrated knife, trim the edges if necessary. Cut slices with a serrated knife and serve.