

Christmas Yule Log: Bûche de Noël Recipe

This is one of our [Only Provence](#) family favorite recipes at Christmas time. The original Yule Log tradition was that the “Lord of the Manor”, or whomever could afford it and had the space, cut a huge log of wood, put it into the fire place and burned it from Christmas until the twelfth day after Christmas. It must have been a HUGE log!

The first Christmas yule log, or Bûche de Noël, recipe was apparently created in the late 1800s by a French pastry chef looking to replace and pay culinary homage to the original yule log tradition. This new, gastronomic tradition caught on in spectacular fashion, and the Christmas dessert is now celebrated worldwide. This chocolate Bûche de Noël recipe showcases a light-as-air, vanilla Genoise rolled into a cylinder with the richest, homemade chocolate butter cream frosting. Genoise is a light, airy cake that’s leavened by the air whipped into the eggs, rather than with baking powder or baking soda. That means you really need to whip the eggs for a long time – like 10 to 15 minutes. And to get good volume from the egg foam, it helps to warm the eggs and sugar first.

Make sure the mixing bowl you use is very clean and dry. A tiny bit of oil in the bowl can interfere with the foaming process.

Sponge cake (Genoise):

150 grams cake flour (about 1½ cups) (You can use All Purpose Flour, but the Genoise will not be as light.)

150 grams sugar (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)

5 eggs at room temperature

50 grams butter (about $\frac{1}{2}$ stick), melted

1 tsp vanilla extract

1 large pinch of salt

Preparation:

Preheat your oven to 350EF.

Butter a 10-inch by 15-inch baking pan with a 1-inch lip (jelly-roll pan) and line it with parchment paper.

Butter the parchment or spray it with cooking spray. Set the pan aside.

Bring a saucepan of water to a boil on the stove top, then lower it to a simmer.

In the a mixing bowl, beat the eggs and stir in the sugar until blended.

Now set the bowl over the saucepan to form a double-boiler so that the bottom of the bowl is inside the pan but not touching the water. Stir the egg-sugar mixture over the pot until the mixture is warm, which should take 3 to 4 minutes.

Now remove the bowl from the heating arrangement and beat with a whip for 10 to 15 minutes or until the mixture is thick and light.

A hand- or stand mixer are perfectly acceptable, no need to emulate the techniques of 100 years ago.

Fold in the flour, then fold in the melted butter. But be

gentle, and don't overmix or deflate the foam. Immediately pour the batter into your prepared pan and transfer it to the oven.

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, or with a crumb or two attached. You can start testing after 20 minutes, because it's better to check too soon than to overbake.

Cool the cake for 10 minutes in the pan on a wire rack, then loosen the edges by running a knife along the sides.

Invert the baked cake onto a clean, dry kitchen towel and peel off the parchment paper.

Wait 3 minutes and then gently roll the cake, still in the towel, starting at the 10-inch end.

Allow it to cool completely.

Chocolate butter cream:

There are butter creams and then there is the traditional butter cream icing. We suggest that for this particular yule log you do not use butter cream icing, but a real butter cream. There are several varieties, such as French-, Italian-, Swiss-, or German butter creams. The first three use a hot sugar syrup of a very high temperature and can cause bad burns to the unwary, to top this off, many published recipes warn of potential salmonella poisoning if the sugar is not quite hot enough. To tell the truth, French, Italian and Swiss cemeteries are NOT FULL of yule log eaters which have succumbed to a case of yule-log-not-quite-hot-enough-sugar-caused-salmonella poisoning. We suggest you use the German variety, it is easy to make and there are no food poisoning warnings to be found in any of them.

This is how you do it:

Make two cups of firm chocolate custard, either using the classic egg and milk recipe or a powdered custard mix. The second bit sounds like cheating, but hey, you have not got all the time in the world.

Make sure the custard is completely cooled before proceeding.

Put the custard into a mixing bowl and whip it until it is quite creamy.

Then add, spoon by spoon, 16 ounces of unsalted butter, which is at room temperature.

Add a pinch of salt if you think it will add to the flavour and keep whipping until the mixture is smooth and homogenous.

This will make roughly five cups of butter cream.

To assemble the chocolate Bûche de Noël:

Unroll the cake and set aside the towel. Evenly spread 2 cups (or desired amount) of the chocolate butter cream on the inside of the cake and following its natural curve, gently form it into a cake roll. Cut off the ends of the cake roll on the diagonal and reattach them in the center of the cake with a bit of butter cream to fashion a “branch” coming off the main Yule log.

Spread the exterior of the Bûche de Noël with enough chocolate butter cream to cover it and gently pull a butter knife or small, offset spatula through the frosting to give the appearance of rough tree bark. A fork can also be used to create the same effect.

Cover the ends of the log as well as the ends of the “branches” with butter cream and using a small piping bag

tube, decorate the ends with concentric rings of molten chocolate to simulate the “year rings’ of a cut piece of wood.

Meringue mushrooms and even a miniature “Père Noël” could add to the festive look.

Chill the Bûche de Noël before serving it, and refrigerate any leftovers.

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