



PASTEL IMPOSIBLE

SERVES 6

The “impossible cake” is a dessert that I became obsessed with when I first opened my restaurant. Mexican newsstands have dozens of cooking magazines, almost more like pamphlets, devoted to certain categories of dishes, and I bought every one that mentioned this dessert, in all its forms. Also known as *chocoflan*, this is cake and flan in one. It’s “impossible” because when you put it in the oven, the cake batter is on the bottom, with the flan on top, but as it cooks, they switch positions, since the risen cake is lighter than the flan. When you flip it, the flan is again on top, covered with the caramel sauce.

Pastel imposible is often more impressive than it is delicious, so I was happy to stumble across a modest little restaurant/bakeshop called **Pastelería y Lonchería Mi Raiz** one day. They have exceptional desserts (a rarity in casual Mexican restaurants), especially their pastel imposible, and a good lasagna to boot.

CHOCOLATE CAKE

1 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter,
at room temperature

½ cup sugar

1 egg

1 cup flour

½ teaspoon baking powder

¾ cup raw almonds, ground in a
food processor to powder

3 tablespoons cocoa powder

¾ cup buttermilk

1 shot (¼ cup) espresso

FLAN

¾ cup sugar

4 large eggs

1 large egg yolk

½ vanilla bean

1 (14-ounce) can evaporated milk

1 (14-ounce) can sweetened
condensed milk

¾ cup milk

1 cup sugar, for the caramel

To make the chocolate cake, in a large bowl, mix the butter and sugar with a wooden spoon until well combined, then add the egg. In another bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, almond powder, and cocoa. Add to butter mixture a little at a time, mixing well after each addition. Add the buttermilk and espresso and mix until just incorporated, then refrigerate the batter.

To make the flan, put the sugar, eggs, and egg yolk in a large bowl. Slit the vanilla bean lengthwise and scrape the seeds into the bowl with the tip of a knife. Whisk until the egg mixture is frothy and pale, about 1 minute. Whisk in the evaporated milk, condensed milk, and regular milk.

Preheat the oven to 300°F. Make the caramel by heating 1 cup of sugar with ¼ cup of water. Bring to a boil over medium heat and when it just starts to darken, reduce the heat to low and cook until golden brown. Pour the caramel into an 8-inch round cake pan. Pour the chocolate cake batter over the caramel, then cover with the flan mixture.

Place the cake pan in a water bath and cover the entire thing with aluminum foil. Bake for 45 minutes, or until the center of the cake is set. Remove pan from water bath and let cool to room temperature, then refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to 12 hours.

To serve, loosen the cake from the sides of the pan with a knife, cover with a large plate, then flip the cake onto the plate. Let the caramel drain for about a minute before removing the pan.