

Great British Bake Off Episode 1 – Tips from the Scottish Women’s Institutes (SWI) On The Cakes Featured in First Episode

As this year’s hopefuls on the Great British Bake Off get ready for the airing of the first episode this week, the Scottish Women’s Institutes (SWI) have advice for would-be bakers. The first episode will feature Madeira cake, frosted walnut cake and Black Forest gateau and the SWI’s Mary Young, Stirling Clackmannan and West Perth (SCWP) vice chairman, has some useful tips for those wishing to emulate the three initial bakes.

Mary says of Madeira cake – the first challenge, “For any cake like this you should take the butter out of the fridge a few hours before you start to bake, as the butter and sugar are always best at room temperature. This is make it easier to cream the butter and sugar together until they are light and fluffy. You really need to see a much lighter coloured mixture at the end of creaming these ingredients together than you had at the start of the mixing process. When you add the beaten to egg to the mixture it is best to add some beaten egg followed by some of the sieved flour alternatively as this helps to prevent the mixture from curdling.

“We don’t know what recipe they will be using for the frosted walnut cake but I find that the flavour of the walnuts is greatly improved if you roast them lightly before using them.

“In a Black Forest Gateau, the contestants may be using a whisked mixture and, if so, you have to whisk the mixture until a trail remains on top of the mixture for three seconds when the whisk is lifted. Only then is it whisked enough for a great result. They will probably be whisking egg whites and in order for this to be successful you need to make sure use a thoroughly clean and dry bowl and whisk with a clean, dry whisk. Assembling a Black Forest gateau can be tricky but I advise when the cake is cold, trim the top to make a level surface and then turn this over so that the top becomes a level base. Then use a long, serrated knife to cut the cake horizontally into three equal slices.

““For all the cakes in episode 1, preparing the tin properly is really important. You have to line the sides and base with baking parchment and I find that mini baking parchment rolls and parchment circles make this easy.”

The SWI has recently undergone a rebranding exercise to attract and engage new generations of Scottish Women to learn and share skills in an atmosphere of fun and friendship. Flexible meetings at different times of the day and in different venues are helping the SWI become more accessible and relevant to women who work, have family and busy lifestyles.

New Institutes are encouraged to take up themes and activities that reflect their own interests, lifestyles and communities, alongside existing SWI groups where education and training in home skills, family welfare, citizenship and friendship remain the key aims. Baking and crafts remain among the most popular activities but they now exist alongside activities such as fascinators making, cocktail classes and musical tribute nights.

With less formal minute taking new institutes are using social media to communicate with members. These pilot meetings complement the existing network of traditional meetings that have been held all over Scotland since the organisation's foundations in 1917.

Earlier this year, the SWI dropped 'Rural' from its name, unveiled a new logo and motto, 'Women Together' and launched a new website.

For more details of how to find your nearest institute, or advice on how to set up a new one, visit www.theswi.org.uk or go to its Facebook pages at <https://www.facebook.com/ScottishWomensInstitutes>.

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