Millionaire’s Layer Cake

2 1/4 cups (285 g) all-purpose flour

2 1/4 cups (450 g) superfine sugar

3/4 cup (90 g) dark Dutch-process cocoa powder (I use Cacao Barry Extra Brute)

2 1/4 teaspoons (10 g) baking soda

2 1/4 teaspoons (10 g) baking powder

1 teaspoon (8 g) salt

1 cup (240 mL) buttermilk

3/4 cup (180 mL) brewed coffee or espresso, hot

1/3 cup (80 ml) vegetable oil

3 eggs, room temperature

1 tablespoons (15 mL) pure vanilla extract

Pinch of salt

2 cups (400 g) sugar

1/2 cup (120 ml) water

1 cup (240 ml) heavy cream (whipping cream)

2 tablespoons (30 g) unsalted butter

2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste

Generous pinch of sea salt

1 cup (125 g) all-purpose flour

1/4 cup (50 g) sugar

1/2 cup (115 g) unsalted butter, softened, cut into cubes

1 pound plus 6 ounces (700 g) best-quality dark chocolate

2 cups (480 ml) heavy cream (whipping cream)

1/3 cup (110 g) corn syrup

1/4 teaspoon sea salt

8 tablespoons (120 g) unsalted butter, cut into cubes

1 tablespoon (15 ml) pure vanilla extract

Sift together flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder and salt.

Combine the buttermilk, coffee, oil, eggs and vanilla.

Add liquid mixture to dry ingredients and mix on medium speed until smooth, about 1 minute.

Divide batter among the 3 cake pans.

Bake about 20-25 minutes.

Let cakes cool in the pans for 10 minutes and then turn onto a wire rack until completely cool.

Add egg whites and sugar, and simmer over a pot of water (not boiling) to a clean mixing bowl, whisking constantly but gently, until temperature reaches 130°F, or if you don't have a candy thermometer, until the sugar has completely dissolved and the egg whites are hot, about 8-10 minutes.

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, stir the sugar and water until combined. Brush down the sides of the saucepan with a wet pastry brush and increase the heat to medium-high.

Stop stirring, and let the mixture bubble until it reaches an amber color (about 350°F).

Promptly remove the saucepan from the heat and whisk in the heavy cream (be careful, as this will bubble and steam aggressively for a moment) until smooth, followed by the butter.

Clip a candy thermometer onto the saucepan and return the mixture to medium-high heat until it reaches 248°F).

Transfer the caramel to the heatproof bowl and stir in the vanilla and sea salt.

As the caramel reaches room temperature it will become thick and spreadable. Store in a sealed jar in refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

Combine the flour and sugar. Cut in the butter using a pastry blender or your fingers (or food processor), until you have distributed the butter and achieved pea-size bits.

Turn the mixture in an even layer onto the prepared baking sheet and bake for 10 minutes.

Remove the tray from the oven and, using a heatproof spatula, gently break up the mixture and return to the oven for 10 more minutes.

Let tray cool completely on a wire rack. Once cool, keep in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

Place chopped chocolate (or callets) in a large heatproof mixing bowl (I find a stainless 5QT mixer bowl works well).

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, combine the cream, corn syrup and salt and bring just to a boil.

Pour hot cream mixture over the chocolate and let sit for about 1 minute.

Using an immersion blender (or whisk, if necessary) combine the chocolate mixture until smooth. Add butter and vanilla and mix again until smooth.

Mixture with thicken to spreadable frosting consistency, and eventually become solid at room temperature. To soften, simply warm and bring to desired consistency.

Prepare your fillings and frosting and ensure they are all at spreadable consistency. For the ganache, this will take about 15-30 minutes after making it, and about 30-60 minutes for the caramel. If you have made ahead, simply warm the ganache and let cool until spreadable, and do the same for the caramel.

Slice all three cake layers in half horizontally, so you have a total of 6 cake layers.

Smear a small dollop of the ganache frosting on a cake plate, pedestal or cake board, and place your first layer cut side up (so bottom of the cake layer is touching plate), and using a small offset palette knife, spread about 1 cup of buttercream on the layer leaving about 1-inch around the edge.

Spread one-third of the caramel and then a generous handful of shortbread crumble.

Place your next cake layer on top, and spread about 1 cup of the ganache frosting all the way to the edge.

Repeat previous step until you get to the final cake layer.

Place last layer face down (cut side down) and frost entire cake with the ganache frosting. Let sit for about 15 minutes.

Use a turntable and palette knife to create texture (as in photo)--use one hand to turn the turntable and hold the palette knife in the other hand. Keep palette knife in place and let the turntable do the moving. Use a small offset palette knife to create texture on the top of the cake and sprinkle on some Fleur de Sel.