Chocolate ripple fridge cake

3 tbsp milk (or 105ml if not using the Grand Marnier)
60ml Grand Marnier (if using)
1 espresso shot, regular or decaf (30ml)
650ml double cream
325g crème fraîche
50g icing sugar
1½ tsp vanilla extract
1½ tsp ground cinnamon

Biscuits
225g plain flour
50g cocoa powder
¾ tsp baking powder
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
¼ tsp salt
100g unsalted butter, at room temperature
200g caster sugar
50ml vegetable oil
50g golden syrup
1 egg

Macerated strawberries
600g strawberries, hulled and quartered
1½ tbsp caster sugar
1 tsp finely shaved orange zest
2 tbsp Grand Marnier (or orange juice)
2 strips of orange zest, julienned

As anyone who's ever been to an Australian barbecue will know, chocolate ripple cake is a ubiquitous, no-bake dessert. In Australia, it's made with shop-bought chocolate biscuits which are then sandwiched together with cream. The recipe is so simple that it's printed on the back of the biscuit packet! On a recent family trip back to Melbourne, Helen's kids were so taken by the cake that they begged her to make it back in London. Not being able to get hold of the right biscuits – Arnott's Choc Ripple (though they are now available online) – Helen made them from scratch. They're so quick and simple to bake that Helen now not only bakes them to make the cake but, also, makes extra biscuits to have around. No birthday party (or barbecue!) is complete without them. ***Pictured overleaf.***

Getting ahead: **The biscuits can be made and baked up to 7 days in advance, kept in an airtight container. The cake needs to be made up to 6 hours before serving, to allow it to soften and meld together, but can be made up to 2 days in advance, left to sit and wait in the fridge.**

Playing around: **The strawberries work really well here but, as an alternative, just crumble over another cookie or a chocolate flake.**

Serves 8–10

First make the biscuits. Sift the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda and salt into a medium bowl.

Place the butter, sugar, oil and golden syrup in the bowl of a stand mixer with the paddle attachment in place. Beat on a medium speed for 2 minutes, until light and creamy. Scrape the sides of the bowl, then add the egg and beat again until combined. Reduce the speed to low, add the dry ingredients and mix until the dough comes together. Wrap and chill in the fridge for at least 2 hours.

When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 170°C fan.

Pinch off 30g pieces of dough and roll them into balls, then place them, spaced about 5cm apart, on two large parchment-lined baking trays. You should make about 23 balls. Flatten them with your hand – they should be about 5cm wide – then bake for 15 minutes, until firm and the tops are cracked or 'rippled'. Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

When ready to assemble the cake, combine the milk, Grand Marnier (if using) and espresso and set aside.

Place the cream, crème fraîche, icing sugar, vanilla extract and cinnamon in the bowl of the stand mixer with the whisk attachment in place. Whisk on a medium-high speed until soft peaks form: be careful not to over-whip, as the cream will thicken as you spread it. Transfer 200g of the mixture to a small bowl and refrigerate: this will be used to finish the cake. Pipe or dollop a roughly 30cm-long line (about 2cm wide) of the remaining cream mixture down the centre of a long cake plate or board: this is to help position the biscuits for assembly.

Take 20 of the biscuits and, working with one biscuit at a time, lightly brush both sides with the milk mixture: you want to just moisten the entire biscuit without drenching it. Then, using a small spatula or knife, spread 2 tablespoons of the cream on one side of the biscuit. Standing the biscuit upright, press it down on to one end of the strip of cream. Repeat with another biscuit, then place alongside the first biscuit, pressing to sandwich them together. Continue with the remaining biscuits to form a long log cake. Spread the remaining cream mixture over the top and sides of the log: don't worry if it only barely covers the cake, as it will be topped up with the reserved cream the following day. Cover loosely and refrigerate for at least 6 hours or overnight.

About 15 minutes before you're ready to serve, combine the strawberries in a bowl with the sugar, finely shaved orange zest and Grand Marnier. Leave to macerate for 10–15 minutes.

Meanwhile, spread the reserved cream over the top and sides of the log.

When ready to serve, tumble about half the strawberries along the top of the cake, pressing them on slightly to help them stick. Drizzle any syrup over and around the plate. Finish with the orange zest strips on top. When serving, slice on the diagonal – warming the blade of the knife in a jug of hot water helps with the 'cleanness' of the slice – to reveal the stripes.