VISTORTA TORTA DI CIOCCOLATO

(Flourless Chocolate Cake)

SERVES 6–8

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THIS DENSE confection—named for the Brandolini family's wine estate in Friuli, where this cake is often served—is not classically Italian but is based on an old family recipe.

13 tbsp. butter, softened
3 tbsp. flour
6 oz. semisweet chocolate
¾ cup sugar
6 eggs, separated
1¼ cups finely ground almonds
1 tbsp. brandy
2 pinches salt
Confectioners' sugar

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Using about 1 tbsp. of the butter, grease an 11" springform pan, line bottom with parchment paper, grease paper, then dust paper and sides of pan with flour. Melt chocolate in top of double boiler set above simmering water over medium heat. Set aside to let cool.

2. Put remaining butter into a large bowl and beat with an electric mixer until fluffy. Gradually add sugar, beating for 2–3 minutes. Add egg yolks one at a time, beating well between each addition, then add chocolate, beating just enough to blend it in. Stir in almonds and brandy; set aside.

3. Put egg whites and salt into a large, clean bowl and beat with an electric mixer until they form medium-stiff peaks. Add one-third of the whites to the chocolate mixture and fold in with a rubber spatula, then carefully fold in remaining whites in 2 batches, taking care not to deflate the batter. Pour into prepared pan.

4. Put pan into oven and bake for 15 minutes, reduce heat to 350°, and continue baking until a skewer stuck into center of cake comes out clean, 30–40 minutes. Remove cake from oven and set aside to let cool. Unmold, peel off parchment paper, and place on a cake plate. Dust liberally with confectioners' sugar just before serving.