***Gingerbread Speculoos and Dark Chocolate Cake***

makes 1- 8×8-inch cake

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon ground ginger

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

1/8 teaspoon ground cloves

1/8 teaspoon ground cardamom

1 1/2 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted and cooled

3/4 cup granulated sugar

2 large eggs

3/4 cup unsulfured molasses

3/4 cup hot water

2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

1 cup Speculoos spread

3 ounces dark chocolate, melted (I used Godiva 72% dark chocolate)

Place a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat oven to 350 degrees F.  Grease an 8×8-inch square baking pan.  Line with parchment paper and grease the parchment paper as well. Set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together flour, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, cardamom, baking powder, and salt.  In a medium bowl, whisk together melted butter, sugar, eggs, and molasses.  Whisk until smooth and well combined.  Add the hot water and vanilla and carefully stir to incorporate.

Add the wet ingredients all at once to the dry ingredients.  Stir with a spatula or wooden spoon to combine.  When no pockets of flour remain, and the batter is entirely smooth and silky, pour into the prepared pan.  Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until a skewer inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean.  Allow to cool in the pan for 2o minutes before removing to a wire rack to prepare to frost.

When cake has cooled, but is still just warm to the touch, gently spread with Speculoos (or Cookie Butter from Trader Joes).  Be gentle, as to not tear the cake.  The Speculoos will begin to melt against the warm cake as it is spread.  Great!  When entire cake is covered and Speculoos is dripping down the sides of the cake, drizzle generously with the melted dark chocolate.  I placed my melted chocolate in a small ziplock bag and cut a tiny piece of the tip off, creating a makesift pastry bag.

Place cake in the fridge to set the Speculoos and dark chocolate for 30 minutes before serving.