

AMERICAN MASTER THE ART OF CELEBRATION CAKES, BAKES, & SWEETS

CakeDecorating

Time to Celebrate!

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ANNIVERSARY

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Sculpt this
Easter-ready
baby dragon.

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\$6.99US



Classic Vanilla Cake

with Chocolate Buttercream

BY MATTHEW MERRIL



LEVEL: 

Makes one 8-inch two-layer cake

VANILLA CAKE

Cooking spray
 3 cups (375 grams) all-purpose flour, plus more for the pans
 1 tablespoon (14 grams) baking powder
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 ½ cup (114 g; 1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
 ½ cup (120 milliliters) vegetable oil
 1½ cups (300 g) granulated sugar
 1 tablespoon (15 milliliters) vanilla extract
 4 eggs
 1¼ cups (300 milliliters) buttermilk



Reprinted with permission from *Teen Baking Bootcamp: 60 Essential Recipes to Take You From Amateur to Pro* by Matthew Merrill, Page Street Publishing Co., 2022.

Photo credit: Thomas McGovern

Nothing screams “celebration!” quite like vanilla cake paired with chocolate buttercream. I dream about this food combo. The delicious flavor of the cake mixed with the rich cocoa frosting creates a bite that is equally nostalgic and exciting. This recipe is just everything you could possibly want in a cake! You’d better keep this cake recipe in your back pocket because although it is simple to make, it will delight *all* guests!

NEXT-GEN BAKER

CHOCOLATE BUTTERCREAM

1 cup (227 grams; 2 sticks) butter, at room temperature
 2 cups (240 grams) powdered sugar
 ¾ cup (66 grams) cocoa powder
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 2 tablespoons (30 milliliters) evaporated milk
 Fruit and chocolate shavings, for garnish (optional)

- Preheat the oven to 350°F. You will need two 8-inch cake pans. Spray the pans thoroughly with cooking spray or brush with butter. Be sure to coat the edges to prevent sticking. Sprinkle a few tablespoons of flour into each pan, covering the edges with flour by rotating the pans. Discard any flour that does not stick. Preparing your cake pans this way will avoid any kitchen catastrophes!
- Pour the flour, baking powder and salt into a large bowl and stir together.
- Place the butter, vegetable oil and sugar together in a large bowl. Using a stand mixer, hand mixer or a wooden spoon, beat the ingredients together until they turn pale and fluffy, around 3 minutes.
- Pour in the vanilla and stir in the eggs one at a time. Make sure each egg is fully incorporated before adding the next!
- To complete the batter, add the flour mixture and buttermilk in a pattern of dry-wet-dry. In other words, add some of the flour mixture, then some of the buttermilk, and so on until you run out of ingredients to add. I learned when I was an aspiring baker to start by adding the dry ingredients and finish by adding the dry ingredients. This small step will prevent your batter from separating.
- Evenly spread the batter in the cake pans and bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until you can insert a toothpick into the cake and it comes out clean. »

Tip: ANY NEUTRAL-FLAVORED OIL WILL WORK, WHETHER IT BE VEGETABLE, CANOLA, SAFFLOWER, PEANUT AND SO ON.

Tip: IF YOU DON'T HAVE EVAPORATED MILK, YOU CAN USE REGULAR MILK.

7. To make the frosting, add the butter to a large bowl. If using a stand mixer, I recommend using the whisk attachment. Mix the butter on high speed until it turns pale, and then slowly add the powdered sugar. Be sure not to whisk too fast or the powdered sugar will fly everywhere (I learned that lesson the hard way!). Stir in the cocoa powder and salt, then the evaporated milk. Once incorporated, you will have a beautiful, fluffy batch of chocolate frosting.
8. To assemble, first cool the cakes by flipping the pans onto a cooling rack or plate. Allow the cakes to cool for at least 1 hour, until the cake is room temperature. If the cakes are even slightly warm, the frosting will melt all over the cake and you will be left with a mess!
9. Place a generous layer of frosting (one-quarter to one-third of the frosting) on top of one cake, then smooth it out into an even layer. Add the top layer of cake. Place about one-third of the remaining frosting on top of the cake and use a spatula to spread this layer thinly around the entire cake. This layer of frosting is called a "crumb coat" because it locks in all the crumbs from around the cake. Add the rest

of the frosting. My favorite way to decorate is with a rustic, textured look. I achieve this by creating a smooth layer of frosting, then tapping different

areas of the cake to create little peaks.

10. Garnish with fruit and chocolate shavings if you'd like. | [ACD](#)

