

Midnight Cake With Salted-Caramel Icing

For the Cake

2 cups flour	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup cocoa, sifted after measuring
2 cups sugar	1 ounce semisweet chocolate
1 teaspoon baking powder	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable oil
2 teaspoons baking soda	1 cup buttermilk
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt	1 cup strong-brewed coffee
2 large eggs	1 teaspoon vanilla

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter and flour a 9 x 13-inch baking pan. Make certain the eggs and buttermilk are at room temperature.

Whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and sifted cocoa. Melt the chocolate and stir into the hot brewed coffee.

In a large mixing bowl, beat the eggs until very frothy. Beat in the sugar a little at a time. Gradually mix in the buttermilk, the chocolate and coffee mixture, the oil, and the vanilla.

On a slow speed, gradually beat in the dried ingredients until thoroughly combined. The mixture tends to be a bit liquid.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Bake in the middle level of the oven for about 25-30 minutes. Start checking the cake right after the 20-minute mark, and remove from the oven as soon as a needle inserted in the center comes out clean.

For the Icing

3 cups brown sugar
1½ cups heavy cream
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
4½ tablespoons unsalted butter
2 teaspoons vanilla

In a large heavy pot, combine the brown sugar, salt, and heavy cream until the sugar is dissolved. Cover the pot and cook 3 minutes over medium heat. Uncover the pot and wash down any crystals that may have formed on the sides of the pot with a wet pastry brush. Cook without stirring until the mixture reaches 238° to 240°.

Remove from the heat, and stir in the butter. Let the icing cool until it reaches 110°. Add the vanilla. Beat with a mixer until it reaches the right spreading consistency, which may take up to 15 minutes. If the icing becomes too thick, you can thin it out with a little cream.

Spread evenly over the cooled cake.