

Golden Buttermilk Cake with Chocolate Buttercream Icing

For the Cake

3 cups sifted flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1½ teaspoons baking soda
¾ teaspoon salt
½ pound unsalted butter
2 cups sugar
4 large eggs
1 cup buttermilk
2 teaspoons vanilla

For the Icing

9 ounces bittersweet chocolate
4 cups confectioner's sugar
½ pound unsalted butter
1 large egg
2 teaspoons vanilla
2 tablespoons heavy cream

For the Cake

Have the butter, the eggs, and the buttermilk at room temperature. Sift the flour into a measuring cup, and sweep off the top with a knife. Whisk together the sifted flour, the baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl. Butter two 9-inch round cake pans, and line the bottoms with buttered waxed paper. Preheat the oven to 350°.

Cream the butter in a mixer, and gradually add the sugar, continuing to beat until the mixture is light and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time, beating after each addition. (I like to crack the eggs into a small dish before adding to the mixture so that I can easily remove any stray pieces of shell.)

Stir in ⅓ of the flour mixture, beating on very low speed until incorporated. Beat in ⅓ of the buttermilk. Continue alternately beating in the remaining flour and buttermilk, ending with the flour. Add the vanilla and continue beating just until the batter is smooth.

Divide the batter between the two prepared pans. Tap each pan on a hard surface to eliminate any air bubbles. Bake in the middle level of the oven for about 35-40 minutes, just until a cake tester comes out clean. I begin checking at about the 30-minute mark because an over-baked cake is a dry cake. Cool the layers in the pans on a rack for about 10 minutes, then invert them onto the rack, and carefully remove the wax paper. Allow the layers to cool thoroughly.

For the Icing

Have the butter at room temperature. Melt the chocolate in a small pan placed over simmering water, stirring until it is smooth. Keep it warm.

Put the confectioner's sugar through a sieve to eliminate any lumps, which actually saves time. Cream the butter in a mixer and gradually add the powdered sugar. Beat in the egg, then the melted chocolate and the vanilla.

Place the bowl over a pot of simmering water and whisk for several minutes until the mixture is hot to the touch. This homogenizes the icing, but more importantly, ensures that the egg is thoroughly cooked to prevent salmonella. Chill the buttercream for 30 minutes to an hour until it reaches spreading consistency. Remove from the refrigerator and beat in the heavy cream.

Place one cake layer bottom-side-up on a plate. Spread icing on top. Then place the second layer bottom-side-up on top of the first layer, and frost the sides and top of the cake.