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Published March 14th, 2012

Happy Birthday, Lamorinda Weekly!

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Photo Susie Iventosch

Birthdays just seem to bring out the kid in a person, and for me the best part about the celebration is diving into a great big, chocolatey birthday cake. So, I am delighted to celebrate the Lamorinda Weekly's "Fifth Birthday" issue with a cake recipe!

Although I was not involved with the first publication of the Lamorinda Weekly, it was great fun pouring over the March 14, 2007 issue posted in the archives. In particular, I loved Julie Penfold's front-page story entitled "The Little Paper that Could." In it, she described her hometown paper in Virginia and how the entire town eagerly anticipated the publication of the weekly news to read about the latest community events that mattered most to them—sports, entertainment, the Dean's List, new babies, wedding announcements, obituaries ... and the frequently featured jam recipes "that were, and still remain world-class!"

That last line really got my attention, and though we haven't posted any jam recipes yet, we have been able to share so many wonderful dishes from local chefs, readers, community members, mayors, and even food writers! Our readers' contributions to the food column have certainly enhanced my own recipe files and I thank you for the

wonderful opportunity to share cooking ideas with all of you.

And, a great big thank you to the owners and editor of Lamorinda Weekly, Wendy and Andy Scheck and Lee Borrowman, for allowing us this excellent forum. Even though it is the Lamorinda Weekly's birthday, I feel as though I've been given a present every other week, by exchanging delicious recipes with all of you!

Happy Birthday Lamorinda Weekly and best wishes for many more years to come!

Cocoa-Chocolate Chip Birthday Cake

Cake

INGREDIENTS

3 cups unbleached flour
 2 cups granulated sugar
 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder (I love the Trader Joe's and Lake Champlain brands*)
 2 teaspoons baking soda
 1 teaspoon salt
 2 cups cold water
 1 cup Saffola oil
 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
 1 cup semi-sweet or bittersweet chocolate chips (recently I've been using the mini chocolate chips)

DIRECTIONS

Place all dries in a large mixing bowl and blend well with a wire whisk. In a large measuring cup, mix oil, water and vanilla and add to dries, mixing thoroughly with a whisk or wooden spoon. Divide batter into three 8-inch diameter cake pans, lined with waxed paper. Sprinkle chocolate chips evenly over batter in each pan. Bake at 350F for about 20-25 minutes, or until cake tester comes out clean. Cool completely and remove from pan.

Frosting

INGREDIENTS

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter softened to room temperature
 1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
 6-8 cups powdered sugar
 3 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
 1/2 cup+ milk (plus or minus for desired spreading consistency)

DIRECTIONS

In a large mixing bowl, beat butter with an electric mixer until creamy. Sift cocoa powder into butter and cream together. Add powdered sugar and milk a little at a time, beating well after each addition, until you have a

desired consistency. Finally, stir in vanilla.

Frost in between layers, on top and sides of cake.

*Notes on cocoa powders

Cocoa powder can either be natural or Dutch (aka alkalized) process. The Dutch process uses a method that neutralizes the acidity, while the natural offers a more acidic version ... one that works well with just baking soda in recipes. While they say that the Dutch processed cocoa powder does not work well with baking soda, and needs to be used with baking powder or in conjunction with another acidic ingredient such as vinegar, I have never had a problem using just the Dutch processed cocoa powder in this cake recipe. In fact, I used half Dutch and half natural cocoa powder in the same recipe with the same good results. I tend to pick out the cocoa powder I prefer simply by the smell. And, since Lake Champlain and Trader Joe's brands are my favorite-smelling cocoa powders, and one is natural while the other is "alkalized", I am going to say that I have no preference as yet between Dutch process and natural. If you have had problems baking with Dutch processed cocoa powder, or are concerned, then look for a natural cocoa powder for this cake recipe. For those who are curious, here are two links for more information about cocoa powders.

[http://www.cupcakeproject.com/2007/05/dutch-processed-cocoa-powder-](http://www.cupcakeproject.com/2007/05/dutch-processed-cocoa-powder-new-pantry.html)

[new-pantry.html](http://thelunacafe.com/the-wonderful-world-of-unsweetened-cocoa-powder) <http://thelunacafe.com/the-wonderful-world-of-unsweetened-cocoa-powder>

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