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Tasty cake evokes all the lovely freshness of spring

By Susie Inventosch



Pistachio Cake Photo Susie Inventosch

I was looking for a fun Easter dessert, when I scrolled across a lovely green cake on Pinterest! I know we just passed St. Patty's Day and we've done our fair share of green lately, but this is a lovely pastel spring green, which comes from the pistachio pudding used in the frosting and no additional food coloring. The cake in the picture turned out to be a vanilla cake with pistachio buttercream frosting. I really wanted more pistachio flavor in the cake, and I found an amazing cake on Sally's Baking Addiction. I made a minor change by replacing the sour cream with plain nonfat yogurt, which is something I usually do whenever a recipe calls for sour cream. Even though we are talking about dessert, it's nice to skip a calorie here and there, whenever possible.

One thing I would suggest, if you decide to make this cake, is to sift out and discard as many of the tiny nut blockages in my cake decorating tips due to the tiny bits of nuts. I spent a good deal of time and watched several videos on how to make frosting roses, and even though I totally understand it, it turns out I am just not very good at it. So, in the end, I took my No. 822 open star frosting tip and made giant swirly looking flowers. This is good enough for me, but if you are good at making roses, I do think they'd be beautiful on this cake for springtime!

Also, on a great tip from Sora O'Doherty, I've been using the Wilton's cake strips to make the cake layers nice and flat. By wrapping the layer pans with a dampened cake strip, the cake will come out nice and flat on top. Before using these, my cake layers were always a little bit like a Mt. Vesuvius, with a great big hill in the center, or sometimes a crater. Now I can always count on them being perfectly level. This helps a great deal when it comes to putting the layers together and frosting the cake. Thanks, Sora!

Pistachio Cake

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter (3/4 cup), at room temperature
- 1 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 5 large egg whites
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1/2 cup milk (2% or whole milk)
- 1/2 cup nonfat plain yogurt (I used Greek yogurt)
- 2 1/3 cups cake flour (sifted with other dries)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups, very finely chopped unsalted, roasted (shelled) pistachios (1 1/2 cups for cake and 1/2 cup for garnishes on top of cake)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F. Prepare three 9-inch layer pans by greasing and flouring the entire inside surface and fastening the damp "Bake-even" strips around the outside edges of the pans. (If you don't have these, you can still bake this cake, but trust me, they are well worth the investment.)

In a medium mixing bowl, combine flour, 1 1/2 cups pistachios, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, cream together butter and sugar until fluffy and smooth. Stir in vanilla and almond extracts. Beat in egg whites, until well integrated, scraping sides of bowl as you go. Beat in yogurt. Now, add dries alternately with milk, beating with each addition until well incorporated and scraping down sides of bowl as you go. Begin and end with dries.

Distribute batter evenly into the three prepared cake pans and bake for about 22-25 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

To assemble cake set aside about 1/3 of the frosting for decorations on top. Then, place first cake layer on your cake plate. Spread about 1/2 -3/4 cup of the frosting over the first layer. Repeat with remaining two layers. Then frost the sides. Place reserved frosting in a pastry bag that has been fitted with the coupler and decorating tip. I used the No. 822 tip, which worked well for my purposes, but you can use whatever decorating tip you like best. Make your decorations for the top of your cake. Sprinkle reserved chopped pistachios over the top of the cake, in and around the flowers.

Happy Easter!

Pistachio Buttercream Frosting

(Makes enough to frost a 3-layer cake and the decorative flowers on top.)

INGREDIENTS

4 sticks unsalted butter (1 pound)

1 (4.3 oz.) package pistachio pudding mix (sift out the little nut pieces)

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 teaspoon almond extract

8 cups sifted powdered sugar

1/4 cup milk

DIRECTIONS

In a large mixing bowl, beat butter until creamy and fluffy. Add pistachio pudding mix and blend well. Mix in vanilla and almond extracts. Now, add powdered sugar, 1 cup at a time, beating well after each addition and scraping down sides of bowl. Continue to add powdered sugar until you reach desired spreading consistency.



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