

## This coconut-lovers' cake is perfect for the holiday season



**King of Coconut Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting** Photos Susie Iventosch

### By Susie Iventosch

I love coconut! People usually have very strong opinions about coconut ... they either love it or hate it, but rarely do you find a person who is ambivalent about coconut. I can't get enough of it, whether it's in macaroons, a Ritter Sport candy bar, 7-layer bar cookies, or even as a condiment for chicken curry. It's especially good when paired with coconut cream cheese frosting on this layer cake.

This cake is super moist, and I think the reason is because it's made with sweetened cream of coconut, like a Coco Lopez or Real Gourmet Cream of Coconut ... the kind your friendly bartender uses in Pina Coladas. I use it in both

the cake itself and the frosting. And, if I happen to have a little bit of extra on hand, I sometimes spread a thin amount on the middle layers before covering them with frosting.

For this cake, I also added a chocolate element by mixing a portion of the cream cheese frosting with chocolate. This was kind of a fun alternative and you can also add your own little twist by spreading a thin layer of raspberry or your favorite jam between the layers before frosting them. It's delightful with a hint of lime, too, for a summer twist on this cake.

If you branch out to add your own touches, please email me to tell me what you did to make your coconut cake just perfect for you!

### King of Coconut Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting

#### Ingredients

2 3/4 cup all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 cup (2 sticks or 8 oz.) unsalted butter, at room temperature  
1 3/4 cups granulated sugar  
1 cup canned, sweetened cream of coconut, such as Coco Casa Coconut Cream  
4 large eggs, separated  
Pinch of salt  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1 cup buttermilk  
Cream Cheese Frosting (recipe below)  
4 cups sweetened, shredded coconut

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line two 9-inch cake pans with parchment paper. Lightly spray paper with cooking spray. If you use the magic baking strips, dampen them and wrap them around the sides of each of the pans according to the directions. This will really help to bake a nice even cake. (Thanks to Sora O'Doherty for this great tip!)

Separate egg whites and yolks. Put whites in a mixing bowl and yolks in a small bowl.

In a medium bowl, mix flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt to blend. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter together with sugar until light and fluffy. Add coconut cream and continue to beat until well-integrated. Beat in egg yolks and vanilla. On low speed beat in dry ingredients alternately with buttermilk, starting and ending with dries.

Using clean, dry beaters, beat egg whites with a pinch of salt in the separate bowl until stiff, but not too dry. Gently fold beaten egg whites into cake batter.

Divide cake batter evenly between the two prepared pans. Bake cakes until tester inserted into cakes comes out clean. Anywhere from 25-35 minutes, depending on your oven. When done, remove cakes from oven. Cool cakes on rack for about 10 minutes. Then run a sharp knife around the edges to loosen cakes. Remove cakes from pans to racks, and cool completely.

#### To Assemble

With a long bread knife, cut each cake layer in half horizontally. Place first half layer on plate.

Spread chocolate coconut frosting over this layer

and lay other half layer on top. Spread plain

coconut frosting on top of this first whole layer.

Then sprinkle 1/4 cup of shredded coconut over

the plain frosting. Repeat the process with each

half layer, ending with cream cheese frosting on top of cake. Spread remaining frosting all

around sides of cake. Completely cover sides of cake with shredded coconut and pat gently into

frosting with the palm of your hands. If you want to go all out, cover the top of the cake with

shredded coconut too!

### Cream of Coco Cream Cheese Frosting

#### INGREDIENTS

1 8-oz. packages cream cheese, softened to room temperature  
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature  
3-4 cups powdered sugar, sifted  
1/2 cup canned, sweetened cream of coconut  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

For the chocolate frosting for between the layers:

2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder, or 2 oz. bittersweet chocolate, melted and cooled

#### DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, beat cream cheese with butter until fluffy. Add powdered sugar, alternately with cream of coconut and beat until fluffy and well-blended with each addition. Add more or less powdered sugar to arrive at desired spreading consistency. Add vanilla and beat once more.

For the filling, separate out about 1 cup of the frosting and blend in either the cocoa powder or the melted and cooled bittersweet chocolate. This will be the frosting for between the half layers of cake!



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## New rules for pet air travel: What's an Emotional Support Animal?



Illustration Jaya Griggs

### By Mona Miller, DVM

It has become common to travel on airplanes with animals under the classification of "Emotional Support Animal," which has allowed travel in the cabin with minimal restraint. This policy has produced conflicts, challenges and controversy. How does an animal travel safely, with guarantees of no aggression or anxiety produced by the often distressing nature of navigating airports, planes, loud noises, unfamiliar scents and generally scary conditions? This classification has received criticism for pet owners who abuse the privilege, as evidenced by pet owners asking for sedatives or anti-anxiety medications for these same pets that are supposed to provide comfort to their anxious owners. Perhaps this has been a way for pet owners to bypass more regulated restraint during travel, such as confinement to appropriate-sized carriers, and to avoid placing pets into baggage compartments.

The height of the controversy, in my opinion, reached an interesting peak in 2018 when United Airlines denied recognizing Dexter the peacock as an Emotional Support Animal, and refused to allow

him to fly from Newark to Los Angeles. While this provided some humor, it highlights the probable over-reach of some pet owners in their attempts to transport animals. At the time, Delta Airlines released a statement that "customers have attempted to fly with comfort turkeys ..., snakes, spiders and more. Ignoring the true intent of existing rules governing the transport of service and support animals can be a disservice to customers who have real and documented needs." In my opinion, Delta's statement says it all.

From the veterinary standpoint, there are two major issues with ESA classification. The first starts with the documentation required. Several years ago, the original forms that airlines required had a section for veterinarians to sign, stating they could guarantee that this pet was well-behaved and would show no signs of aggression during air travel. Very quickly, airlines had to change this statement when veterinary organizations (such as the American Veterinary Medical Association) protested. It is impossible to make that guarantee and it makes the signee veterinarian liable for bite incidents - because any individ-

ual (human or animal) might very well lash out under stressful circumstances. A prominent Veterinary Behaviorist Specialist likes to say, "The question is not whether this dog will bite, it's under what circumstances." Very rarely, dogs will just curl up quietly in the corner when they are feeling cornered, anxious, fearful, stressed - at some point, it is reasonable to assume that they will, in fact, seek a way out - and in doing so, exhibit aggression behavior that is actually quite reasonable given the circumstances.

Thus, airlines changed the form to require a veterinary statement that "the pet owner has indicated to me this pet has not shown signs of aggression and has never bit anyone." This statement provoked less controversy in the veterinary community, but I know many vets who still refuse to sign this, because it has an implication that potentially induces liability to the signee (the veterinarian).

The second issue with ESA classification occurs when the pet owner asks the veterinarian for "something to calm the pet down" during travel, because he (the pet) is so anxious. There's an inherent contradiction in this: How can the ESA pet actually do the job for which he is classified (i.e., provide emotional support to a human) when he himself is under a mind-altering medication that quite often produces sedation? That's akin to drug warnings that state: "Don't operate heavy machinery when taking this medication." You can't do your job when you are mentally or physically unable to do your job. A properly-trained service animal knows how to provide their service under stressful, loud and confusing situations, remaining calm and focused in their duties.

In any event, this decision-making process for pet owners and veterinarians has just been clarified by the Department of Transportation in its recent ruling that emo-

tional support animals are recognized as pets, not service animals. The goal of this statement is to "ensure that ... air transportation system is safe for the traveling public and accessible to individuals with disabilities."

The new statement provides a clear definition of a service animal as "a dog that has been trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability." It also provides some specific key points in allowing airline carriers to require a harness/leash system, as well as the requirement for a DOT-generated form to attest to the animal's training, good behavior and health (including current Rabies vaccination). This form puts the responsibility of this statement on the owner, rather than the veterinarian. This ruling will take effect most likely in January 2021.

You can read the specifics of the DOT Ruling at this link: [www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2020-12/Service%20Animal%20Final%20Rule.pdf](http://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2020-12/Service%20Animal%20Final%20Rule.pdf)

## Local residents flock to outdoor locales during lockdown



Photo Jennifer Wake

While the Bay Area Region is now under stricter stay-at-

home orders due to an upsurge in coronavirus infec-

tions, outdoor parks and recreation areas in Lamorinda are seeing a steady stream of visitors enjoying the mild winter weather. The parking lots at Lafayette Reservoir and Commons Park in Moraga are regularly filled on weekends, even with masking restrictions that apply for park visitors. One 82-year-old Lafayette resident, who spends most days alone in her apartment, says heading to the Reservoir parking lot to watch the sun sparkle on the water while she eats her lunch in her car is one of her many joys during this difficult time. - J. Wake