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## This chocolate cake is our favorite for birthdays

By Susie Iventosch



Chocolate cake Photos Susie Iventosch

This decadent cake has become my "go-to" chocolate cake for almost any occasion! It is super moist, easy to make, calls for no eggs, and can be dressed up or down. Sometimes we add peanut butter chips and Reese's to the batter, and peanut butter to the frosting for our favorite peanut butter and chocolate lovers. Other times we add mint chocolate or raspberries, and often we leave it simply and divinely chocolate with either chocolate or vanilla buttercream. You can make it in 8 or 9-inch cake pans, but it also makes a great batch of two dozen cupcakes. You have so many options with this basic cake recipe.

The reason we love this chocolate and vanilla version is because one of our very favorite cakes comes from Amy's Bread, a fabulous bakery in New York City. For our daughter's 30th birthday party several years ago, we ordered four cakes from Amy's Breads, and while all were fantastic, their Black and White was our

absolute favorite. It was a dark chocolate cake with white vanilla buttercream. Sooooo good! Ever since that time, whenever I visited Courtney while she was living in New York, we made it a point to pick up a couple of slices of this luscious cake. She no longer lives there, but we still needed our regular fix of this amazing cake, so we started making our own.

To make all the fun swirls of frosting on top of the cake, remove about 1 cup of the vanilla buttercream frosting and add 2-3 tablespoons of cocoa powder to it. Blend well, and add just a dash of milk, if the frosting is too thick. Then, using a pastry bag and a number 824 open star tip with the matching coupler, make the swirls on top of the cake and along the bottom edge. It looks so fancy this way! But, if you are more inclined, you can also just frost the top of the cake and in between the layers, to expose the cake layers. This is easy and makes a beautiful naked style cake.

Thanks to Sora O'Dougherty, I now use even bake cake strips for placing around the outside edge of the pan to allow the cakes to bake more evenly. If you don't have these, don't worry, you can always slice off the rounded part on the top of each layer to make a flatter surface. Also, I have found over the years, that is it so much easier to get the cake layers out of the pans by using parchment paper rounds that fit into the bottom of the pan. They come pre-cut, with tabs which really makes it easy to get the cake out!

Cooking Tools

1 large pastry bag

1 #824 open star cake decorating tips with matching coupler

1 offset spatula

2 eight or nine-inch cake pans

Parchment paper cake rounds with pre-cut pull tabs (you can buy them or make your own)

2 even bake cake strips (helps the layers to bake evenly)

INGREDIENTS

Cake

3 cups all-purpose flour

2 cups granulated sugar

1/2 cup unsweetened Dutch-processed cocoa powder (the better quality, the better the flavor)

2 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. salt

2 cups cold water (can use 1/4 cup strong coffee and 1 3/4 cup water to boost the chocolate flavor)

1 cup canola oil

2 tsp. vanilla extract

1/2 tsp. cider vinegar

1 cup bittersweet chocolate chips

Frosting

2 cubes butter, softened to room temp

6-7 cups confectioners (powdered) sugar

1 tsp. vanilla powder (or vanilla extract)

1/4 - 1/3 cup milk or cream

2 tbsp. cocoa powder (for the chocolate frosting designs)

DIRECTIONS

Spray the bottom and sides of two cake pans and place parchment paper rounds on top of spray. You can make the parchment rounds by tracing the bottom of the pan and leaving two-inch tabs or you can buy them pre-cut. (See image) Soak the cake strips in water and secure them around the edges of each of the cake pans.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Place all dries for cake 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 evenly among the two cake pans. Sprinkle chocolate chips evenly over the batter in each pan.

Bake for about 30-35 minutes, or until the cake tester comes out clean. Cool completely and remove from the pan. Place one layer on your cake plate and spread vanilla frosting over the top and sides of that layer. Place the second layer on top of the first, and frost top and sides of that layer, smoothing out the frosting on top and around the sides of the cake with an off-set spatula. Using the chocolate part of the frosting, make your decorative swirls on top of the cake and smaller stars all along the bottom edge, using the same tip.

Frosting

Place softened butter in the bowl of your standing mixer. Using the paddle attachment, beat until creamy and very white with an electric beater. Beat in vanilla powder or extract.

Add powdered sugar alternately with milk, beating well after each addition, until you reach the desired spreading consistency. Reserve 1/4 cup powdered sugar for the last addition, in case you've added too much milk. Remove about 1 cup of the vanilla frosting and set aside in a separate bowl. Stir cocoa powder into this frosting for the chocolate decorations on the cake.

Cake Strips: Wilton and King Arthur Baking Co., among others, make these and you can buy them online or at stores like Michaels or Williams Sonoma.

Parchment rounds: The Smart Baker makes these. <https://thesmartbaker.com/>





A cake spinner like this one is not absolutely necessary, but it sure makes cake decorating easier!



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