

All-Purpose Chocolate Sheet Cake

Makes one 13 × 18-inch sheet cake or three 9-inch cake layers

There are lots of great things about this chocolate sheet cake, not least of all, we are talking about a whole sheet of CAKE, hello! But the two most important things are that (1) It doesn't require a mixer of any sort, which is great because who has the time, and (2) It's got a real, honest-to-god chocolate flavor without the inclusion of any solid chocolate (which in my opinion, can make for a dry cake). It's a truly and genuinely easy cake that doesn't sacrifice any sort of structural integrity, baking up tall and proud, fluffy and tender in all the right places, not unlike a boxed mix.

While this cake can be treated and dressed with a number of accouterments, it's tough to beat the two premier examples given in this book. When paired with Salty Vanilla Frosting, it evokes "Ding-Dong," the Hostess cake I still fantasize about on a regular basis. When used as the base for ice cream cake, specifically with mint and chip ice cream (see Mint and Chip Ice Cream Cake), it's transformed into what is arguably the best dessert on the planet (sure, I've said this before—I'll say it again!).

Ingredients

Cooking spray, for the pan
2½ cups/360g all-purpose flour
1 cup/115g unsweetened cocoa powder*
2 teaspoons/8g baking powder
1 teaspoon/6g baking soda
2 teaspoons/8g kosher salt
1¼ cups/275g granulated sugar
1 cup/200g light brown sugar
1½ teaspoons/7g vanilla extract
3 large eggs
1½ cups/330g buttermilk
¾ cup/155g vegetable oil
1 cup/220g sour cream

* Cocoa powder absorbs liquid differently than plain flour, so there's an above-average amount of liquid and fat in this recipe to compensate for the amount needed to give you that promised chocolaty flavor. You may think the batter looks a bit loose when it goes into the oven, but trust, it's going to turn out great.

Instructions

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray a standard half-sheet pan (13 × 18 inches) with cooking spray and line with parchment paper. (Alternatively, spray three 9-inch cake pans with cooking spray and line with rounds of parchment paper.)
- 2 In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.
- 3 In a large bowl, whisk the granulated sugar, brown sugar, vanilla, eggs, buttermilk, vegetable oil, and sour cream until combined. Slowly whisk in the flour mixture.
- 4 Pour the batter into the prepared sheet pan (or cake pans) and bake until the cake is puffed, springing back and pulling away from the sides of the pan, 30–35 minutes (closer to 20–25 minutes for the individual cakes).
- 5 Let cool completely before frosting or using to make an ice cream cake.

DO AHEAD: Wrapped tightly in plastic wrap, the cake can last 3 days stored at room temperature, 5 days in the fridge, or up to 1 month in the freezer (I'd wrap it once more in aluminum foil if freezing).