

# Pumpkin Sheet cake

WITH CHOCOLATE  
BOURBON BUTTERCREAM

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Thanksgiving is perhaps my most favorite holiday, as I am a fan of any celebration that calls for a large dessert table, showcasing a myriad of treats, all of which guests are nothing short of required to taste. And by taste I don't mean a bite-sized piece of this and a tiny spoonful of that. I mean that, for instance, if there are three different pies on the table, no one evens bats an eye if you slice yourself a generous sliver of each, complete with three dollops of whipped cream or a big scoop of vanilla ice cream (or both). The expectation is that a guest's Thanksgiving dessert plate will be as full as was her dinner plate.

Thanksgiving provides those of us who always put sweet before savory, and large sweets, at that, a judgment-free zone with which to indulge, and for that I am grateful. However, there is always one dessert on the table that I avoid, despite the fact that no one would bat an eye if I squeezed a slice of it onto my already full plate, or grabbed some on my second trip to the table (yes, there are always second trips). The dessert is pumpkin pie.

I know that this dessert is nothing short of "fall" in a pie plate for many, and I have the utmost respect for that position. But for me, a pumpkin cake is really what the Thanksgiving dessert table needs.

First, cake is great, and is sorely underrepresented on thanksgiving.

Second, pumpkin cake gives you all the warm autumnal flavors of its more popular cousin, the pie, but you get to frost cake – and in this instance the frosting includes chocolate – and bourbon.

Third, pumpkin cake can be made ahead and frozen (even frosted!), freeing up much needed cooking space

on the Wednesday before the holiday, when many pies are baked-off, and the day-of, when stuffing and turkey get dibs on the oven.

Fourth, my pumpkin cake is easy-peasy – everything is mixed together by hand – and provides a nice break from all the dough making, rolling, crimping, and par-baking. And, finally, the recipe here produces a wonderfully moist, slightly spicy, deeply flavorful cake with a gorgeous orange hue that marries beautifully with the chocolate bourbon frosting. However, if you'd rather not use the bourbon, you can omit it and substitute additional heavy cream instead; and if you'd rather not combine pumpkin with chocolate, try frosting the cake with a cream cheese icing instead (but, in my humble chocolate-loving opinion, chocolate and pumpkin is basically a match made in fall-holiday heaven).

## Ingredients for the cake:

Yield: serves 16  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 cup cake flour, sifted  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1/4 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon table salt  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
3/4 teaspoon nutmeg  
1/2 teaspoon ginger  
1 cup vegetable oil  
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar  
1 cup light brown sugar  
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract  
2 eggs  
2 egg yolks  
One 15 ounce can pumpkin purée

## For the frosting:

7 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened  
2 cups confectioners' sugar  
1/2 cup Dutch-process cocoa powder  
2 1/2 tablespoons bourbon



2 tablespoons heavy cream  
1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 13-by-9-by-2-inch pan with cooking spray or softened butter. Line the bottom with parchment paper and grease again. Set aside.

Whisk the all-purpose flour, cake flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and spices in a medium-sized bowl, and set aside.

Place the oil, granulated sugar, brown sugar, and vanilla in a large bowl. Whisk to combine. Add the eggs and yolks, and continue whisking until smooth. Add the pumpkin and whisk again. Add the dry ingredients to the wet, and using a rubber spatula, gently fold to combine. Do not over mix. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top with an offset spatula or butter knife.

Bake for 25-30 minutes, rotating at the halfway point, until a cake tester comes out with a moist crumb or two. Let cool until easy to handle before inverting the cake on to a cooling rack and then flipping it right side up to cool to room temperature

## To make the frosting:

Place the room temperature butter in the bowl of a stand mixer, fitted with the paddle attachment. Mix on medium speed until the butter is smooth. Meanwhile, sift the confectioners'

sugar and cocoa powder together in a large bowl. On medium-low speed, add a little of the sugar/cocoa mixture to the butter.

Once incorporated, stop the mixer and scrape the bowl with a rubber spatula, and continue to add and stop and scrape, until all of the dry ingredients are incorporated. Add the bourbon and then slowly add the cream. Stop the mixer and scrape the bowl again. Add the vanilla and then beat the mixture on medium speed until the frosting is light and fluffy, about 3 to 5 minutes. Don't be afraid to beat longer than you might think necessary – this ensures an airy frosting.

Generously spread the cake with the frosting, leaving the sides bare, if you so desire. If you'd like to freeze the cake, do so after frosting it, covering it in plastic wrap only once it is frozen solid. Remove the plastic wrap and let come to room temperature before serving.

The cake will keep wrapped in plastic wrap on the counter for up to three days, and is even more delish on day two. ●

*Jessie is a baker and cookbook author; you can learn more about her through her website [jessiesheehanbakes.com](http://jessiesheehanbakes.com).*