

Chocolate

SHEET CAKE WITH COCONUT FROSTING

By Jessie Sheehan
info@mainstreetmag.com

As anyone who knows me well will tell you, when it comes to cake, I am all about Duncan Hines and Betty Crocker. But not in the way you think: I don't actually buy a boxed mix when making a cake – although I'd be thrilled to come over and have a slice, if you've baked one and want to share – but I do try to replicate the flavor and texture of one when preparing one from scratch. Moreover, if I am out and about and eating cake, I always hope the person who has baked it has done the same.

Thus, it should come as no surprise that this recipe for chocolate sheet cake, thickly frosted with billowy, marshmallow-like coconut frosting, is not for the faint of heart (a.k.a. those that prefer their cake made with an alternative flour, in small, delicate unfrosted slices, with a berry or two on the side). This cake has a deep chocolate flavor (and color), is very moist, and has a soft, pillow-y crumb. The frosting is very sweet, somewhat sticky, and the combination of the two reminds me of a Hostess Suzy Q (a coveted after-school treat from my childhood that I haven't had in a million years).

Like, how about now?

I love the combination of coconut and chocolate, but if you do not, substitute vanilla extract for the coconut extract in the cake and in the frosting do the same. Truthfully, though, the coconut flavor is subtle, so if you're on the fence, give it a try. I'd love to tell you to make this cake for your Easter Brunch, but alas, Easter came early this year. But I will tell you this: the cake comes together quickly, in one bowl, and the frosting is a seven-minute frosting – meaning, quite literally, that it'll be done in seven minutes.

That's a long-winded way of saying, make it whenever the feeling for an old-school, over the top, slice of cake hits – like how about now?

For the cake:

2 cups cake flour, sifted
3/4 cup Dutch-process cocoa powder, sifted if lumpy
3/4 cup light brown sugar
1 1/4 cups granulated sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 3/4 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon table salt
1 egg
1 egg yolk
1 tablespoon pure coconut extract, or vanilla extract
3/4 cup vegetable oil
1 1/4 cups buttermilk
3/4 cup boiling water
1 tablespoon espresso powder

For the coconut frosting:

3 egg whites
1 1/3 cups granulated sugar
2 teaspoons light corn syrup
1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
1/4 teaspoon table salt
1/3 cup water
2 teaspoons coconut extract, or vanilla, or more to taste
1 cup sweetened shredded coconut, toasted, for decorating

For the cake

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and grease a 13x9x2-inch pan with cooking spray or softened butter. Line the pan with parchment paper and grease again.

Add the flour, cocoa powder, brown sugar, granulated sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle



attachment and mix on low speed until combined.

In a small bowl, add the egg and yolk, coconut extract, oil, and buttermilk and whisk until combined. With the mixer on medium-low speed, slowly pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Beat until incorporated, scraping down the bowl with a rubber spatula as needed.

Combine the boiling water and espresso powder in the same small bowl, no need to clean it, and add to the batter in the mixer bowl. Mix again on medium speed for 30 seconds, until smooth. The batter will be quite thin.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake on the middle rack of the oven for 30 to 35 minutes, rotating at the halfway point. The cake is ready when a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Let cool completely in the pan.

For the frosting

Place a large heatproof bowl over a saucepan of simmering water over medium-high heat. Do not allow the bottom of the pan to touch the water. Add the egg whites, sugar, corn syrup,

cream of tartar, salt, and coconut water. Using an electric hand mixer, beat the egg white mixture on high speed until stiff and glossy, about seven minutes. Remove the bowl from the saucepan of hot water, add the coconut extract, and continue beating for another two minutes. Use immediately, spreading thickly and decoratively on your cooled chocolate cake. Slice the cake using a sharp knife dipped in hot water for the cleanest slices, wiping the knife clean and re-dipping it each time you make a cut. This cake is best eaten the day it is made. •

Jessie is a baker and cookbook author; you can learn more about her through her website jessiesheebanbakes.com.