

FEBRUARY

Chocolate Cream Cheese Pound Cake

Our February lesson of the Better Baking Academy with Bob's Red Mill tackles a humble hero of the baker's repertoire: the pound cake. Named for its simple original recipe formula of 1 pound each of eggs, sugar, butter, and flour, the pound cake has had a number of delicious updates over the years, with bakers introducing tender cream cheese into the batter and incorporating rich flavors like coconut and bourbon. Our Chocolate Cream Cheese Pound Cake is a perfect blend of classic excellence and sweet modern improvement. From its crispy, sugared exterior to its soft and tender interior, this cake's ideal texture comes from Bob's Red Mill Organic All-Purpose Flour matched with the velvety benefits of cream cheese. We take you through every step of this cocoa decadence, from creaming the butter and sugar to making the silky ganache finish. Prepare yourself for the ultimate chocolate experience.



INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

Great recipes require great ingredients. Here's how each ingredient creates the ultimate chocolate pound cake.

BOB'S RED MILL ORGANIC ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR: For the fine crumb of this pound cake, a special flour that toes the line between soft and hard is needed. This versatile all-purpose wheat flour has a protein content of 10% to 12%, so our cake is tender but has enough gluten structure to form a fudgy crumb that borders on decadently dense.

CREAM CHEESE: Dairy is always an essential ingredient to improve flavor and texture in a pound cake, but cream cheese imparts that special boost of rich milk fat. Cream cheese has a high milk fat content of at least 33%, a richness that makes all it touches creamier and more tender. Mixing a block of cream cheese into your pound cake batter will create the moist, velvety crumb of Southern pound cake lore.

DARK CHOCOLATE: For the most precise baking, we use the cacao percentage of the chocolate to act as our guide on what to buy and use. The cacao percentage shows how much cocoa is present in the bar, with higher percentages usually meaning darker, more intense chocolate with a very high cocoa butter content. For our recipe, we use a 60% cacao chocolate, but anything within the 60% to 70% cacao range will work.

DUTCH PROCESS COCOA POWDER: Dutch process cocoa powder is treated with an alkaline solution of potassium carbonate to make it milder and less acidic in flavor and darker in color. We opt for Dutch process cocoa because it is slightly less astringent in flavor than natural cocoa powder, so it makes an intense but not bitter-tasting chocolate cake.

BOILING WATER: We use boiling water to “bloom,” or hydrate, our Dutch process cocoa powder. Why? As the cocoa comes in contact with the hot water, larger clumps dissolve, making a smooth paste that is easier to mix into the batter. Blooming cocoa powder also helps release flavor particles, making for a richer, more intense flavor.

VANILLA EXTRACT: Vanilla complements and enhances the chocolate and cocoa notes in our recipe.



INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

UNSALTED BUTTER: Butter brings tender, rich milk fat to baked goods, but it has another purpose in this cake. For our recipe, we creamed softened butter and sugar together, a classic technique that whips air pockets into the dough. Cakes that use the creaming method will be fluffy and lofty while simultaneously ensuring a melt-in-the-mouth interior.

GRANULATED SUGAR: Partnered with the butter, sugar brings more than sweetness to this chocolate cake. During the creaming method, the sharp sugar crystals that make up granulated sugar break into the dense fat of the butter, creating little pockets. The sugar is also the key to the pound cake's crunchy crust, as the high heat in the oven helps dissolve and caramelize the sugar touching the pan's surface.

EGGS: As opposed to other cake recipes, pound cake often calls for a high number of eggs. We use a whopping six eggs in our cake batter for a particular reason: leavening. Eggs bring richness through their yolks and moisture through their whites, but they also help leaven baked goods. Eggs act as a giant emulsifier in pound cakes, trapping and protecting the air bubbles created during the butter and sugar creaming process. During baking, the egg emulsion keeps these air bubbles from collapsing, helping the batter bake into a lofty and beautiful cake.

KOSHER SALT: We bake with kosher salt because, unlike most commercial salt, it doesn't contain iodine, making it taste purer and more palatable. Also, the salt crystals are larger. Table salt is much finer, so you would use half of what a recipe with kosher salt calls for.

INSTANT ESPRESSO POWDER: In small amounts, espresso powder, like most other coffee products, enhances the flavor of chocolate.

BAKING POWDER: Most pound cakes don't need a chemical leavening agent, as much of their height is achieved through creamed butter and sugar and the many eggs. However, the heavy, silky chocolate and cream cheese mixture in this recipe can weigh down the batter. A little bit of a baking powder helps alleviate that issue.

CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR: A light sifting of confectioners' sugar helps bring snowy elegance to the exterior of our cake.



CHOCOLATE CREAM CHEESE POUND CAKE



CHOCOLATE CREAM CHEESE POUND CAKE

Makes 1 (15-cup) tube cake

Our revolutionary pound cake harnesses the power of melted chocolate and cream cheese to create the perfect chocolate experience. Made expertly tender with Bob's Red Mill Organic All-Purpose Flour, this cake is exactly what chocolate and pound cake lovers are craving.

- 1 (8-ounce) package (226 grams) cream cheese, cubed and softened
- 4 ounces (113 grams) 60% cacao dark chocolate, finely chopped
- 1¼ cups (106 grams) plus 2 teaspoons (4 grams) sifted Dutch process cocoa powder, divided
- ½ cup (120 grams) boiling water
- 1 tablespoon (13 grams) vanilla extract
- 1½ cups (340 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 3 cups (600 grams) granulated sugar

- 6 large eggs (300 grams), room temperature
- 3 cups (375 grams) Bob's Red Mill Organic All-Purpose Flour
- 2 teaspoons (6 grams) kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons (3 grams) instant espresso powder
- ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking powder
- 2 tablespoons (16 grams) confectioners' sugar
- Ganache (recipe follows)
- Cocoa Whipped Cream (recipe follows)

Garnish: grated dark chocolate

1. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C).
2. In the top of a double boiler, place cream cheese and chopped chocolate. Cook, without stirring, over simmering water until chocolate is almost melted. Gently stir until combined. Remove from heat. Add 1¼ cups (106 grams) cocoa and ½ cup (120 grams) boiling water, whisking until combined. Whisk in vanilla.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and granulated sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 5 to 7 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until well combined after each addition.
4. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, salt, espresso powder, and baking powder. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture in three additions alternately with chocolate mixture, beating just until combined after each addition and stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
5. Spray a 15-cup, straight-sided, light-colored metal tube pan with baking spray with flour. Spoon batter into prepared pan. Tap pan on a kitchen towel-lined counter a few times to release any air bubbles. Smooth top with an offset spatula.
6. Bake until a wooden pick inserted near center comes out clean, 1 hour and 20 minutes to 1½ hours, loosely covering with foil to prevent excess browning during last

15 minutes of baking, if necessary. Invert cake onto a wire rack; immediately flip cake so that crust is top-side up. Let cool completely.

7. In a small bowl, whisk together confectioners' sugar and remaining 2 teaspoons (4 grams) cocoa. Using a fine-mesh sieve, dust top of cake with sugar mixture. Serve with Ganache and Cocoa Whipped Cream. Garnish with grated chocolate, if desired.

GANACHE

Makes 3¾ cups

- 12 ounces (340 grams) 60% cacao dark chocolate, finely chopped
 - 1¾ cups (420 grams) heavy whipping cream
 - 2 tablespoons (42 grams) light corn syrup
 - 2 tablespoons (28 grams) unsalted butter, softened
 - ½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract
1. In a medium heatproof bowl, place chocolate.
 2. In a small saucepan, heat cream and corn syrup over medium heat, stirring frequently, just until steaming. (Do not boil.) Pour hot cream mixture over chocolate; let stand for about 2 minutes. Using a silicone spatula, slowly stir small circles in center of bowl until mixture comes together and is shiny and smooth. Stir in butter and vanilla until fully combined. Serve warm or at room temperature. Refrigerate in an airtight container.

COCOA WHIPPED CREAM

Makes 3 cups

- 1½ cups (360 grams) cold heavy whipping cream
 - ⅓ cup (40 grams) confectioners' sugar
 - 2 tablespoons (10 grams) Dutch process cocoa powder
1. Refrigerate a large bowl and a whisk for 15 minutes.
 2. In chilled bowl, using chilled whisk, whisk together all ingredients until soft to medium peaks form. Serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate until ready to use. Best used same day.



MISE EN PLACE

A practice used in professional kitchens and bakeries, “mise en place” refers to assembling all of your tools and ingredients before you begin cooking. This is an especially helpful practice for making our Chocolate Cream Cheese Pound Cake. Below is a checklist of things to have prepared and ready before you even reach for your stand mixer.

1. Preheat your oven to 325°F (170°C). Our fudgy pound cake needs a properly heated oven to bake all the way through in the time frame of 1 hour and 20 minutes to 1½ hours. If you forget to preheat your oven before mixing your batter, you risk an improperly baked cake. And instead of using your oven’s digital read to tell you when your oven has properly preheated, invest in an oven thermometer, and let that be your guide to an accurate oven temperature gauge.

2. Make sure your eggs are at room temperature and your butter and cream cheese are softened.

Having a smooth, uniform pound cake requires ingredients to be at the right temperature. Cold butter won’t properly cream with sugar. Cold eggs can firm up your creamed butter and sugar. And if your cream cheese is too cold, it won’t melt in sync with your chocolate.

3. Chop your chocolate. Much like the temperature of the cream cheese is important to melting uniformly, the size of your chocolate is an important melting factor. Whole blocks or bars of chocolate will take longer to melt and won’t heat evenly in the double boiler. Also, abstain from cutting corners by using chocolate chips. Although the pieces are smaller, chocolate chips often contain chemical stabilizers that help them keep their shape during baking, making them less than ideal for our melted chocolate mix-in for the cake.

4. Measure out your dry ingredients. Don’t be tempted to measure your dry ingredients while you’re creaming your butter and sugar or when melting the chocolate and cream cheese. They may seem like uninvolved processes, but you want to keep your focus on each activity to nail timing. Save yourself the added stress and measure in advance.



PRO TIP

One thing you won’t have prepped before making your cake? Your tube pan. You should spray your tube pan with baking spray with flour only right before filling it with the cake batter. Why not before? Baking spray with flour, and other cooking sprays, has a tendency to slide down the sides of a pan and pool in the base over time, creating an uneven coating overall. Instead, opt to spray the pan right before filling and baking.

MAKING THE CHOCOLATE BASE

How to make the cocoa and chocolate-rich beginning to your cake



1. In the top of a double boiler, place cream cheese and chocolate. Cook, without stirring, over simmering water until chocolate is almost melted. Gently stir until combined. Remove from heat. Why do we melt the cream cheese with the chocolate? During testing, we found that creaming softened cream cheese with the butter and sugar caused the sugar to melt, removing the air bubbles we need to make during the creaming process and creating gaps that made our cake sink. Melting the cream cheese with the chocolate created a smoother mixture that didn't overwhelm our creamed butter and sugar.



2. Add 1¼ cups (106 grams) cocoa and ½ cup (120 grams) boiling water, whisking until combined. Whisk in vanilla. Make sure you whisk in the cocoa, boiling water, and vanilla well so everything is homogenous. Now that you've finished the chocolate base, you'll let it cool slightly on the counter while you cream your butter and sugar and add your eggs. This time of rest is perfectly calculated so the chocolate mixture won't be too hot when added to your egg-packed batter and won't be so cool that it resolidifies.

LEAVENING TRIPLE THREAT: BUTTER, SUGAR, AND EGGS

Find out how these three ingredients help create a lofty pound cake



1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and granulated sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 5 to 7 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Creaming butter and sugar incorporates precious air into the batter. Every minute you mix, more air is incorporated—but take time to scrape the bowl. Certain spots of butter will stubbornly stick to the sides, not getting proper creaming attention. If not scraped before creaming is done, these leftover spots become dreaded butter streaks in your cake batter, creating greasy pockets in your cake. Properly creamed butter and sugar will be fluffy like whipped cream and pale yellow. Creamed too little, it'll look and feel like gritty clumps of sand, creating a flatter, denser cake. Butter that has been creamed too much will look soupy and greasy and will make a gummier cake. You can't salvage over-creamed butter, so pay attention to the changing consistency of your mixture carefully.

2. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until well combined after each addition. Why beat them in one at a time? Eggs are emulsifiers, which means they help bind ingredients together to create a homogenous mixture. However, if you add them all at once, they emulsify with each other first, creating a large, scrambled mixture that resists smooth incorporation with other ingredients. You need the eggs to create a protective coating for the air bubbles created during the creaming process, and if you add them all at once, you're leaving that air vulnerable.

FINAL MIXING

Perfect the finishing touches to your pound cake batter



1. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, salt, espresso powder, and baking powder. Give your dry ingredients a quick whisk to make sure everything is evenly incorporated.
2. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture in three additions alternately with chocolate mixture, beating just until combined after each addition and stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Alternately adding dry and wet ingredients is an essential step in nailing our pound cake. If you add one or the other all at once, incorporation becomes difficult, leading you to mix for longer, which results in a tough cake. To keep the final mixing gentle, make sure to work in alternating batches.

THE BIG BAKE

Time to fill your pan and bake



1. Spray a 15-cup, straight-sided, light-colored metal tube pan with baking spray with flour. Spoon batter into prepared pan. Tap pan on a kitchen towel-lined counter a few times to release any air bubbles. Smooth top with an offset spatula. We opt for a light-colored metal tube pan to keep our cake crust from turning too dark. Our pan tap ensures that any large air bubbles find their way to the surface for a big pop, and smoothing the batter ensures that you have a level cake top after baking.

2. Bake until a wooden pick inserted near center comes out clean, 1 hour and 20 minutes to 1½ hours, loosely covering with foil to prevent excess browning in last 15 minutes, if necessary. Let cool in pan for 15 minutes.

Invert cake onto a wire rack; immediately flip cake so that crust is top-side up. Let cool completely. Pound cakes need to bake low and slow, so be patient with the bake time. Then, once you pull it from the oven, let the cake cool in the pan for 15 minutes so you can make sure a smooth, baked cake comes out.

3. In a small bowl, whisk together confectioners' sugar and remaining 2 teaspoons (4 grams) cocoa. Using a fine-mesh sieve, dust top of cake with sugar mixture. Serve with Ganache and Cocoa Whipped Cream. Garnish with grated chocolate, if desired. Don't skip the Ganache and Cocoa Whipped Cream! You'd be missing out on triple-chocolate excellence.

GOOD AS GANACHE

Learn how to make our pretty, pourable ganache



- 1. In a medium heatproof bowl, place chocolate.** Make sure you've chopped your chocolate, as large blocks or bars of chocolate will not melt smoothly to create a silky ganache.
- 2. In a small saucepan, heat cream and corn syrup over medium heat, stirring frequently, just until steaming. (Do not boil.)** At this step, you're just trying to "scald" your heavy whipping cream. Scalding is where you heat your dairy until steam is released but it doesn't come to a rolling boil. If you boil your cream, you risk creating a broken ganache.
- 3. Pour hot cream mixture over chocolate; let stand for about 2 minutes.** The hot cream mixture needs time to gently heat and melt the chopped chocolate, so don't be tempted to stir the mixture before the 2 minutes are up. If you stir before then, you risk cooling down the cream and keeping it from thoroughly melting the chocolate.



- 4. Using a silicone spatula, slowly stir small circles in center of bowl until mixture comes together and is shiny and smooth.** Stirring in small circles at the center of the bowl keeps you from creating pesky air bubbles within the ganache.



- 5. Stir in butter and vanilla until fully combined.** Butter and vanilla add a boost of flavor.

- 6. Serve warm or at room temperature.** When warm, the ganache will be a thinner, pourable consistency. At room temperature, it will be a thicker, spoonable consistency.