

Chocolate Candy Cane Cake

Poetry & Pies

prep time: 15-20 minutes

bake time: 25-30 minutes

total time: 50 minutes (including time to make the buttercream)

servings: 12-16



Ingredients

for the chocolate cake

- 1 ½ cups sugar
- 1 ⅔ cups flour, sifted
- ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa or cacao powder, sifted
- 2 teaspoons baking powder, sifted
- 1 teaspoon baking soda, sifted
- ½ teaspoon fine ground Himalayan sea salt (or 1 teaspoon table salt, but sea salt gives a better flavor)
- 3 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 cup buttermilk, room temperature
- ⅓ cup avocado or olive oil
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup very hot coffee

for the peppermint buttercream

- 2 cups (4 sticks) unsalted European style butter, left out about an hour
- 6 cups powdered sugar (or to taste)
- 1 ½ tablespoons vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon sea salt (or to taste--I needed a pinch more)
- ¼ teaspoon peppermint extract

for assembly and decoration

- one box candy canes

Instructions

make your cake layers

1. Preheat oven to 325. Lightly grease and flour (or use baking spray) two or three 8" or 9" round cake pans. You can also use three 6" pans. I like doing 3 pans so I get more filling without having to cut the layers in half. Line bottoms with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of stand mixer (or large bowl), whisk together sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda, and salt, being sure to sift as instructed. I prefer using a hand whisk for this step as the whisk attachment doesn't always get the very bottom mixed in. Fit this to your stand mixer with the paddle attachment. You can also use a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer. * I also like to make my coffee at this time so it's fresh and hot.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk together eggs, buttermilk, oil, and vanilla. VERY slowly, begin to pour in the hot coffee, whisking quickly and constantly to avoid scrambled eggs. Feel free to do it in increments if this is your first time.
4. Turn mixer to low. Slowly pour wet ingredients into dry. It will clump up halfway through then settle into a liquid-y consistency. Immediately turn off mixer once all ingredients are combined then scrape down sides with a rubber spatula, making sure to get to the very bottom. Beat on medium for exactly 2 minutes. Do not overmix!
5. Pour batter evenly into prepared pans. I highly recommend using Wilton Bake Even Strips to avoid a domed cake (or you can cut this off with a large, serrated knife and have a little pre-cake snack). Gently tap pans on the counter a couple times to get some of the bubbles out.
6. Bake for 20-35 minutes, depending on how many of what size pan you used--three 9" will bake the fastest, until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out with some moist crumbs but no raw batter. Always check cakes a little early. If not using a convection oven, rotate cakes halfway through.
7. Cool in pans 5-10 minutes then remove to a cooling rack until completely cooled.

make your frosting

8. While the cakes cool (you can speed this up in the fridge or freezer), make the frosting. Beat the butter in a stand mixer with a paddle attachment or hand mixer on high until smooth, about 30 seconds.
9. Add powdered sugar 1 cup at a time, each time beating on low then slowly increasing to high for about 30 seconds to 1 minute, until smooth. Keep adding powdered sugar, scraping the sides and bottom of the bowl every so often, until you've added about 6 cups.

10. Scrape the bowl again then add the salt, vanilla, and peppermint extract. Mix on low then increase to high until combined. Taste frosting. If needed, add a little more sugar or peppermint (or salt or vanilla, but those usually aren't what's lacking), but don't go overboard, as the crushed candy canes will add both sweetness and peppermint.
11. If needed, add some heavy cream, one tablespoon at a time, until smooth. If it begins to look separated, you can chill it for 20 minutes to help it come back together. This can happen if it's warm in your house or if you left the butter out too long. See note for getting a pure white color.
12. Once the flavor is good, scrape the bowl, then turn up the mixer to high for 2 minutes. Scrape the bowl again (yep), then beat on high for another 2-3 minutes. Stop the mixer and remove the bowl. Stir by hand with your rubber spatula or a wooden spoon for about a minute, to release the air bubbles.

assemble your cake

13. Before assembling the cake, make sure the cake layers are fully cooled or even chilled a little. Crush the candy canes by removing the wrappers, placing them in a strong plastic bag (or double up) and crush with a rolling pin or meat tenderizer. Your bag may rip, so watch carefully for flying candy canes. #Christmasproblems
14. Next, trim any rounded tops off of the cake layers with a long serrated knife or cake leveler. If desired, carefully cut each layer in half to make room for more filling. Place the first layer on a cake plate or board. Frost generously with the peppermint buttercream, about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch if doing 3 or 4 layers and about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch or so if just doing two layers of cake. Use a spoon to sprinkle the crushed candy canes in a thin layer on top of the frosting. If needed, repeat with the next cake layer.
15. Place the top layer on top side down (this helps create a straight edge). Frost top and sides with a thin coat of frosting (called a crumb coat). Chill for at least 10 minutes. Frost to desired thickness.
16. Decorate the sides and/or top with the remaining crushed candy canes (or as much as you'd like). To do the sides, place on a cake stand set in a rimmed baking sheet. Use your hands or a spoon to press the candy canes into frosting. This will get sticky, so stop when your hands are coated, scrape off the candy canes, and let them dry for a few seconds then separate them with the back of a spoon and keep going. Be sure to do this before chilling, so the frosting is still "wet" for the candy canes to easily attach to.

Enjoy! Cake will last covered at room temperature 3-5 days. If traveling with it, refrigerate for a few hours first to help the frosting stay put in the car.