

Dark Chocolate Peppermint Cake

Poetry & Pies

prep time: 50-60 minutes

bake time: 25-30 minutes

total time: 1 hour, 30 minutes *(plus at least 30 minutes for cake to cool)*

servings: 12-16



Ingredients

for the black chocolate cake

- 1 ½ cups (350g) granulated sugar
- 1 ⅔ cups (226g) flour, spooned then leveled and sifted
- ¾ cup (75g) [black cocoa powder](#), spooned then leveled and sifted
- 2 teaspoons (8g) baking powder
- 1 teaspoon (5g) baking soda
- ½ teaspoon (3g) sea salt
- 3 eggs, room temperature
- 1 cup (236g) buttermilk, room temperature*
- ⅓ cup (108g) avocado oil (can sub vegetable, grape seed, or canola oil)
- 1 tablespoon (13g) pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup (240g) hot, light roast coffee (or hot water)

for the buttercreams (you'll reserve some for the filling, making two types of buttercream)

- 4 ounces (113g) baking chocolate, chopped, or chocolate chips (see note)
- 3 ounces (85g) heavy whipping cream
- 2 cups (454g) unsalted European style butter, softened
- 1 batch [marshmallow fluff](#) (or two 7oz jars store bought [marshmallow cream](#))
- 4-6 cups (520-780g) powdered sugar
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 tablespoon (13g) vanilla extract

for the peppermint ganache drip

- 6 ounces (170g) dark chocolate, chopped (or chocolate chips)
- 4 ounces (113g) heavy whipping cream
- ½ teaspoon (1g) peppermint extract

to assemble

- [crushed candy canes](#) (or you can make your own)

Instructions

make the black chocolate cake layers

1. Preheat your oven to 325F/165C. Lightly grease and flour two 8" or three 6" cake pans (or use [baking spray](#)) and line the bottom with [parchment paper](#) or [silicone baking mats](#). This is also a great time to set your coffee to percolate (unless using hot water or espresso and hot water, which is what I do).
2. Whisk together the sugar, flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in the bowl of your stand mixer or a large mixing bowl, sifting everything but the sugar (unless yours is fine enough to sift--go for it!). Set aside.
3. In a separate medium mixing bowl, whisk the eggs, buttermilk, oil, and vanilla together until well-blended and fully emulsified, about 1 minute.
4. Very, very slowly stream the hot coffee or water into the wet ingredients, whisking vigorously and constantly as you pour to avoid scrambling the eggs. Feel free to do this in segments if it's easier. If you do scramble some of the eggs, you can run the mixture through your [fine mesh sieve](#) to remove the cooked egg bits.
5. Using the paddle attachment, turn your stand mixer to low (or use a hand mixer) and slowly pour the wet ingredients into the dry. This should take about 30 seconds or so. The batter will clump up then thin out. Once you've poured all the wet ingredients, immediately turn off the mixer. Scrape down the bottom and sides. Beat on medium for exactly 2 minutes (set a timer).
6. Evenly divide batter between the prepared cake pans.
7. Bake for 25-30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out with just a few moist crumbs (ideally not fully clean, as this could mean they're over baked). Check early and rotate halfway if not using convection. Be sure to check each pan separately, as one might bake faster than the other.
8. Let cool 5-10 minutes in the cake pan then remove to a cooling rack to cool completely.

make the buttercreams

9. While the cake layers cool, make the marshmallow buttercreams. You will remove some plain marshmallow buttercream before adding the ganache, resulting in a filling that's just like the one in the Dark Chocolate Covered Peppermint Joe Joe's.

optional: you can also make the buttercream ahead of time, chill it, then let it come to room temperature on the counter for 1-2 hours while you make the cake, just be sure to give it a good stir if it was refrigerated longer than overnight.

10. If using [homemade marshmallow fluff](#), make that first. You can immediately start on the buttercream once the fluff is done, but remove it to a separate bowl to cream the butter.
11. Make the buttercream ganache (separate from the drip ganache). Combine the chocolate and heavy cream in a heatproof bowl. (See note about using just chocolate to make a sturdier frosting. This will hold up fine indoors but may get fairly soft in direct sunlight or a warm house). Bring 1-2" water to a boil in a small to medium saucepan that can hold the bowl on top in such a way that all or almost all of the ingredients are over the water and not over the stove. Once the water boils, turn down the heat to medium low or low and place the bowl over it. You want it to stay simmering without getting too hot. Stir constantly with a rubber spatula until the chocolate is mostly melted. Remove from heat and stir or whisk vigorously until it is all melted and smooth. Return to heat if some chunks remain, but don't worry if the color looks a little streaky (usually only noticeable in a glass bowl). It's best not to overheat the chocolate because it will become grainy and separated. Set aside to cool slightly, about 20 minutes.
12. In the bowl of your stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment or in a large mixing bowl using your hand mixer, cream butter on high until smooth, about 1 minute.
13. Scrape bowl with a rubber spatula then add in powdered sugar, 1 cup at a time. Blend on low then slowly increase speed to high and mix until smooth before adding more. After 4 cups, scrape the bowl, then add the marshmallow fluff. Mix on high until well-blended, about 30-60 seconds. Add the salt and vanilla and mix on high for about 30 seconds until well-blended.
14. At this point, taste to see if it needs more sugar. If so, add 1-2 more cups, until the taste is to your liking. If it's sweet enough but not holding its shape like in the photos, refrigerate 10-20 minutes.
15. Remove about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the frosting (a little more of you're cutting the cake layers in half) to a separate bowl, to be used in the filling.

16. Pour the cooled ganache (or cocoa powder—see note below) into the remaining $\frac{2}{3}$ buttercream and mix on low until well-blended, about 30 seconds. Scrape the bowl then mix again on low for a few seconds, just to make sure it's fully incorporated. If it's too thin, refrigerate for 10-20 minutes while you assemble the cake.

frost the cake

17. Cut any domed tops off of the cake layers. (Save these in a bowl to eat with leftover frosting!) If desired, cut each cake layer in half with a serrated knife. Spread a layer of plain marshmallow buttercream on the bottom layer of cake. Sprinkle liberally with crushed candy canes (you can make your own by placing some unwrapped candy canes in two layers of freezer safe plastic baggies then whacking them with a rolling pin or meat tenderizer until crushed).
18. Continue this process until all layers of the cake are stacked. Stir any remaining plain buttercream into the chocolate (optional).
19. Spread a thin layer of chocolate marshmallow buttercream on the cake then chill 5-10 minutes. Frost to desired thickness, trying to get it roughly straight and smooth. There's no special trick to this, just patience and practice.
20. Chill the fully frosted cake at least 20 minutes (or freeze, if you have room in the freezer).

decorate the cake

21. While the cake chills/freezes, make the peppermint ganache. Place all of the ingredients in a heatproof bowl. Bring 1-2" water to a boil in a small to medium saucepan that can hold the bowl on top in such a way that all or almost all of the ingredients are over the water and not over the stove. Once the water boils, turn down the heat to medium low or low and place the bowl over it. You want it to stay simmering without getting too hot. Stir constantly with a rubber spatula until the chocolate is mostly melted. Remove from heat and stir or whisk vigorously until it is all melted and smooth. Return to heat if some chunks remain, but don't worry if the color looks a little streaky (usually only noticeable in a glass bowl). It's best not to overheat the chocolate because it will become grainy and separated. Set aside to cool slightly, until the cake is nice and firm.
22. Place the peppermint ganache in a [squeeze bottle](#) or piping bag with a very small hole cut open. It should feel just slightly warm to the touch. You can test if it's ready (not too hot, not too cold) but testing a drip on a cup or even your finger. You want it to not

burn and not drip straight down right away—you want it to take a little bit of time to drip down the cake so it turns out just right.

23. With the tip of the squeeze bottle held just above the very edge of the cake, begin to slowly squeeze the ganache out of the bottle, rotating the cake as you go. You want to stop and let a little extra squeeze out every inch or so, to create the drips. Just let gravity do its thing by squeezing some extra—you don't need to try to drag the bottle down the side of the cake. If it's dripping too fast, let the ganache cool a little longer. If it's refusing to drip at all, place the bottle in a cup of hot water (don't let the lid become submerged) until it softens a bit. Continue dripping and rotating until you've gone all the way around the cake. Feel free to go back and add in drips to any bare areas. Drizzle more ganache on top and spread evenly with an offset spatula.
24. Sprinkle with more crushed candy canes. Chill the cake for 5-10 minutes, to set the ganache, then store at room temperature until ready to eat.

Enjoy! If not serving right away, store in an airtight container until ready to eat. Cake will last for 3-5 days. Cut cakes will last longer if you place a piece of plastic wrap right along the cut edges and seal it by pressing it into the buttercream along the edge, then store the whole cake in an airtight container.

Notes:

**You can make your own buttermilk by adding 1 tablespoon white vinegar with enough room temperature whole milk to equal 1 cup total. Stir and let sit 10 minutes while you prep the rest of the ingredients.*

Note about the buttercream: this makes a rather soft buttercream, which is only a problem in warm climates/homes or if traveling with the cake. In that event, sub 2-4 tablespoons cocoa powder for the ganache (chocolate chips and whipping cream).