German Chocolate Cake
Poetry & Pies

prep time: 45-50 minutes
bake time: 25-30
total time: 1 hour, 20 minutes (plus cooling time)

servings: 12-16

Ingredients

for the cake

- 1 ¾ cups (351g) granulated sugar
- 1 ⅔ cups (226g) flour, sifted
- ¾ cup (75g) unsweetened cocoa powder, sifted
- 2 teaspoons (8g) baking powder
- 1 teaspoon (5g) baking soda
- ½ teaspoon (3g) sea salt
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 1 cup (236g) buttermilk, room temperature*
- ½ cup (108g) avocado oil (can sub vegetable or canola oil)
- 1 tablespoon (13g) pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup (240g) hot, light roast coffee (or hot water)

for the filling

- ¾ cup (150g) brown sugar
- ¼ cup (50g) granulated sugar
- ½ cup (113g) salted butter**
- ¾ cup (189g) evaporated milk
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 tablespoon (13g) pure vanilla extract
- 1 ½ cups (150g) flaked coconut (can sub shredded)
- 1 cup (125g) chopped pecans

for the chocolate buttercream (double if you want a thicker frosting)

- ¾ cup (170g) unsalted European style butter, softened**
- 2-3 cups (260-390g) powdered sugar

- 2-3 tablespoons (14-21g) [unsweetened cocoa powder,](#) sifted
- ½ tablespoon (6g) [pure vanilla extract](#)
- ⅛ teaspoon (2g) sea salt (*or ¼ teaspoon table salt*)
- 1-2 tablespoons (15-30g) heavy whipping cream (*optional--omit if your cake will be outside*)

Instructions

make the chocolate cake layers

1. Preheat your oven to 325F/165C. Lightly grease and flour two or three [8" or 9"](#) or three to four [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 prepared pans. Bake for 25-30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the middle of each cake 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.

7. Let cool 5-10 minutes in the pans then remove to a cooling rack to cool completely.

make the German chocolate filling

8. While you wait for the custard to cool, make the German chocolate cake filling. If desired, you can toast the coconut and pecans. Place in a single layer on a [rimmed baking sheet](#) and bake at 350F/175C for 5-10 minutes, stirring halfway. If omitting the pecans, increase coconut to 2 cups.
9. Combine the brown sugar, sugar, butter, evaporated milk, and egg yolks in a [medium to large saucepan.](#) Cook over medium heat until boiling, stirring constantly. Let boil 5-10 minutes, until the sauce thickens an can coat the back of a spoon.
10. Once thickened, remove from heat and stir in vanilla. Once fully combined, stir in coconut and pecans. Set aside to cool (or place in a sealed container and refrigerate if not using right away–let come to room temperature while you churn the ice cream).

make the [chocolate buttercream](#)

11. In the bowl of your stand mixer, beat butter on high until smooth, about 30 seconds. Add in powdered sugar, one cup at a time, beating on low then increasing speed to high for 1 minute, until smooth. Scrape the bowl as needed. Taste as you go and only add as much powdered sugar as needed. You can add more after the cocoa powder if it's necessary.
12. Add sifted cocoa powder, starting with just 4 tablespoons (or ¼ cup). Beat until smooth then taste, adding more cocoa if it's not chocolatey enough for you. Add in the vanilla extract and salt and beat until smooth.
13. If it's too thick or grainy, add in heavy whipping cream, one tablespoon at a time, until spreadable. Don't worry if it's a little grainy--the next step will help with that. Don't add too much cream, as it's impossible to recover from making it too loose.
14. Once the flavor is well-balanced and to your liking, scrape the bowl then beat on high for 3-5 minutes, stopping once to scrape down the bowl. This will smooth it out quite a bit. Stir vigorously by hand for a minute to release the large air bubbles.

       i.   *Note: if, after beating for 5 minutes and adding some heavy whipping cream, it's still too grainy, you can refrigerate it for a few hours or overnight. This helps smooth out almost all frostings. Just remember to let it come to room temperature on the counter then stir well before using.*

assemble

15. Place one layer of cooled chocolate cake on her serving plate. Cut any domed tops off of the cake and discard (or save for taste testing). If you only baked two layers of cake, you can cut each one in half, depending on if you want to get in a little extra filling. I love baking three layers of cake so I don't have to cut any of it but still get a little more filling. You'll want to divide the coconut filling into as many layers as you're working with (2, 3, or 4). So, for a two layer cake, you'll spread half of the filling onto the bottom layer, ⅓ for a three layer cake, etc. Continue filling and stacking cake until you place the top layer on–do not put filling on the top layer quite yet.
16. Once all layers are stacked, frost the outside in a thin crumb coat. Refrigerate 10-20 minutes to set the frosting. Frost the sides as fully as you'd like, and create any decorating piping along the top, as desired. I used an 809 round top to pipe a rope of frosting.
17. Spread the remaining coconut filling on the top of the cake. Refrigerate 20 minutes to set the frosting. Keep the cake well-sealed at room temperature until serving.

Enjoy!

Store leftovers in an airtight container. Cake should last 3-5 days at room temperature.

*You can make the buttermilk by adding 1 tablespoon of white vinegar to a 1 cup measuring cup then filling it to the 1 cup line with room temperature whole milk. Stir and let sit 5 minutes while you prep the rest of the cake.

**Use European butter, if possible. It has less water and will make a better filling and frosting. If you only have unsalted butter, add a couple pinches of salt.