

Peppermint Hot Cocoa Cake

Poetry & Pies

prep time: 45-50 minutes

bake time: 25-30 minutes

total time: 1 hour, 20 minutes (plus cooling time for cake; can be broken up)

servings: 12-16



Ingredients

for the hot cocoa cake layers

- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups (238g) flour, sifted
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (75g) unsweetened cocoa powder, sifted
- 2 teaspoons (8g) baking powder
- 1 teaspoon (5g) baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (3g) sea salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon (or a few dashes) ground cinnamon
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (134g) granulated sugar
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (134g) brown sugar
- 3 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 cup (236g) buttermilk, room temperature*
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (72g) avocado oil (can sub vegetable or canola oil)
- 1 tablespoon (13g) pure vanilla extract
- optional: 1 teaspoon (4g) [peppermint emulsion](#) (or [extract](#))
- 1 cup (240g) hot, light roast coffee (or hot water)

for the peppermint marshmallow buttercream

- 4 ounces baking chocolate or chocolate chips (see note)
- 3 ounces heavy whipping cream
- 1 cup (8oz) unsalted European style butter, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$ batch [marshmallow fluff](#) (or one 7oz jar store bought [marshmallow cream](#))
- 3 cups powdered sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon (6g) vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon (4g) [peppermint emulsion](#) (or [extract](#))

to assemble

- a few handfuls of mini marshmallows (or [peppermint marshmallows!](#))
- optional: [sprinkles](#) or [crushed candy canes](#)

Instructions

make the hot cocoa cake layers

1. Preheat your oven to 325. Lightly grease and flour two 8" to 9" 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. Sift and whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon in the bowl of your stand mixer or a large mixing bowl. Add the sugars and whisk well. Set aside.
3. In a separate medium mixing bowl, whisk the eggs, buttermilk, oil, vanilla, and peppermint emulsion/extract (optional) 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. If not assembling the cake right away, wrap fully, 100% cooled cake layers in two layers of plastic wrap and freeze until ready to use. Let defrost on the counter, still wrapped, for 1-2 hours, until defrosted enough to level and cut in half (if desired--if not, you can frost a frozen cake!).

make the peppermint chocolate buttercream

8. If using [homemade marshmallow fluff](#), make that first. You can immediately start on the buttercream once the fluff is done.
9. Make the 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 summer heat). 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.
10. 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.
11. Scrape the bowl with a rubber spatula then add in about half of the powdered sugar. Blend on low then slowly increase speed to high and mix until smooth before adding more. Scrape the bowl then add in the marshmallow fluff. Mix on high until well-blended, about 30 seconds. Add the rest of the sugar and again beat on low then increase slowly to high for about 30 seconds or until smooth. Add salt, vanilla, and peppermint, and blend until fully incorporated.
12. Add in about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cooled ganache and beat on low for a few seconds then increase speed to high until smooth. Stop and scrape the bowl. Taste to see if you need more powdered sugar or more chocolate. I used almost all of my chocolate and no extra powdered sugar and it was perfect. If it's sweet enough but not holding its shape like in the photos, you can fix this with some refrigeration. If it's too stiff or grainy, try beating it on high a little longer or, as a last resort, mix in heavy cream one tiny splash at a time until smooth.
13. Once taste and texture are to your liking, scrape the bowl then mix on high for 30-60 seconds, until smooth and fluffy then stir by hand with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula for 1 minutes to release any large air bubbles that formed.

assemble cake

14. Trim any domed tops off the cakes using a serrated knife or [cake leveler](#). Cut each cake layer in half (optional, but makes room for more frosting!). Assemble the cake by spreading a layer of buttercream about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick on the bottom layer of cake then sprinkling some marshmallows. Continue this process until all layers are stacked. Be sure to place the top layer with the cut side down (reserve a bottom slice if you halved your layers so you can have the bottom, uncut side facing up--it creates far fewer crumbs).

Optional: sprinkle some crushed candy canes with the marshmallows in between each layer.

15. Frost the entire cake in a thin crumb coat of buttercream. Refrigerate 10 minutes or so. Add another layer of buttercream, to desired thickness, then decorate with sprinkles, crushed candy canes, or more marshmallows!

Enjoy!

Cake should be stored in a truly airtight container. If you have any leftovers, place a piece of plastic wrap right against the cut sides to seal it.