



# Rose's Heavenly Cakes

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Rose's Heavenly Cakes

Rose Levy Beranbaum

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## Dedication

For my wise husband, Elliott, who, at the beginning of our marriage and my career, gave me golden advice that I cherished and took to heart: "Set your objective and then forget about it. Rely on your instincts—the distance between you and your goal is a straight line."

## Foreword

John W. Foster, a British essayist, was quoted as saying, "One of the strongest characteristics of genius is the power of lighting its own fire." Rose Levy Beranbaum sparks a creative flame when she introduces a collection of new recipes. Cake—its flavor, its texture, its essence, all wrapped up in a detailed package of measurements and words—is her calling.

The Rose I know is a devoted chemist, mixing, baking, and responding to batters with precision, and an author eager to enlighten. In fact, she has the ability to translate the chemistry of those batters into a delicious art. Her depth of knowledge, coupled with an inherent sensitivity, impresses, just as does her [Southern \(Manhattan\) Coconut Cake with Silk Meringue Buttercream](#): That dessert could be considered the perfect expression of her professional style. The cake, silky of crumb, moist, perfectly fine grained, and concealed by an ethereal buttercream, is a skillful balance of flavor and texture. I want to dive right into it with fork in hand (actually, I have). It's like a sweet comforter.

As a baker, I admire Rose's depth of knowledge offered so completely on the printed page. Instruction on the technicalities of sponge cake becomes a graduate course in the workings of eggs, sugar, oil, and flour. Readers requiring the last word on baking, layering, unmolding, syruping, glazing, and assembling a wedding cake will not lack for the necessary details. And if your idea of celestial is sweet-and-tart creaminess, then just the idea of her petite lemon cheesecakes will send you straight into the kitchen. In this stunning volume, we are treated to a firsthand experience of the cakes Rose has refined since her landmark book, *The Cake Bible*, was published in 1988. Rose's *Heavenly Cakes* is not merely a successor to it, it is a bright new guide to the glories of cake baking.

Lisa Yockelson

Author of *Baking by Flavor* and *Chocolate*

Washington, D.C.



## Acknowledgments

I am blessed to have a community of wonderful relatives, friends, and colleagues, all of whom continue to add to the joy of my life and to the quality of my work. I could write a second book describing in full detail all they contributed and the adventures we have experienced together.

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My dear friends David Shamah and Angelica Pulvirenti and, more recently, Woody Wolston and Zach Townsend, who kept me enlightened and were entertaining company during the arduous process of book creation.

Over the past two years, my many bloggers have made a major contribution to keeping my work life from being solitary. I am also indebted to them for letting me know what information they appreciate and what they need to know to bake successfully. And, of course, my gratitude and heart go out to those bloggers who help me answer others' questions—too many to list, but special thanks goes to Hector Wong, who wins the prize for the most postings and who tirelessly offers his great technological skills to edit some of my appearances and put them on the Internet for all to enjoy.

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Finally, and most of all, I would like to thank my guardian angel, Woody Wolston, for the more than three hundred tests he has performed on the recipes in this book. During his five-year association with me, he has involved himself enthusiastically and joyfully in every aspect of the creation of this book. When Woody Wolston is not testing recipes or baking cakes for his friends, he's more often than not playing broomball or practicing t'ai chi. The lucky broomballers and t'ai chi group have gotten to taste most of the cakes in this book, and I've been lucky enough to get invaluable feedback from them. When I congratulated Scott Peacock at the 2007 James Beard Foundation cookbook awards for his award-winning *The Gift of Southern Cooking*, which he wrote in loving professional collaboration with Edna Lewis, I confided in him that I hoped someday to have a "Scott Peacock" in my life. I have been slow to realize that my wish had already come true.



Woody Wolston with his measuring device

## Introduction

A generation has passed since I wrote *The Cake Bible*. In recent years, it has been a great pleasure to hear people tell me they grew up with birthday cakes from my book or that they built careers on my recipes. But the greatest happiness has been, and continues to be, the connection to the universe of bakers that my books have provided and the knowledge that my work has touched other people's lives in a positive way.

People often expressed surprise when I told them I was working on a new cake book, saying, "I thought you'd already 'done' cakes." I respond now with a quote from Michael Batterberry, publisher of *Food Arts* magazine, who in his opening address of the International Association of Culinary Professionals meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, in 2000 extolled the virtues of creativity by referring to it as "a bottomless well of inspiration." This is my mantra.

*The Cake Bible*, with its basic recipes and explanations of how cake baking works, gave me a reliable foundation from which to create new recipes. But I also must credit my brilliant, innovative friend and honorary son, David Shamah, who over the years has been pushing me, despite my initial and long resistance, to try new frontiers in cakes, such as cakes made with oil. These cakes have turned out to be some of the most exciting cakes I've included in this book.

Julia Child once shared with me her observation that writing cookbooks is very lonely. This was mostly true for me until the universe presented Woody Wolston, who asked me to be his sifu, or baking master. Gradually, as I learned to trust him (long distance from Minnesota to New York), I opened my world to him, and a fantastic partnership and friendship emerged. (It was much to my husband's credit that he was happy for me to have found such an asset to my work.) Woody wholeheartedly tested every recipe in this book numerous times, and by teaching him to help me, I learned so much more about what people needed to know. Woody sent me hundreds of photographs of different stages of each recipe, and we've had at least as many e-mail and phone conversations. His contributions have extended this book well beyond the parameters of my own vision. This book has become "our" book, and his presence in it was significant to making it the best that it could be.

I am also very grateful to Zach Townsend, whose expertise with chocolate proved invaluable. In addition to testing many of the chocolate recipes, even e-mailing me motion pictures to illustrate the consistency of sauces, he contributed [Zach's La Bomba](#), one of my most treasured cakes.

Things change over twenty years. The standard cake pan that used to be 9 by 1½ inches is now 2 inches high. This change made it necessary for me to rework several favorite *Cake Bible* recipes. Now, my taste embraces less buttercream and less fancy décor, prompting me to make these cakes more approachable and delicious. I also, more than ever, value simplicity over complexity—truly achievable only with top-quality ingredients and equipment. New technology and the availability of ingredients and equipment to the consumer have made simplicity possible. In addition, chocolate has changed. No longer is it enough to recommend my favorite brands; now it is essential that I specify the percentages of cacao that different chocolates contain.

Writing *The Bread Bible* taught me how appealing it is to let a bread, and now a cake, sometimes be its beautiful, unadorned self. I no longer routinely disguise a cake with frosting. Making bread, more than any other baking experience, also revealed more about flour and the profound differences among the various varieties. This knowledge made it possible for me to create entirely new cake recipes.

Today, my goal in baking is to translate the chemical into the practical—taking my understanding of how ingredients in a cake batter work to reach my idea of the ultimate taste and texture style. I adore the logic of science, but also the wild creativity provided by the empirical hands-on method. It is this blending of approaches that helps me to draw closer to my ideal. A most gratifying affirmation came when my friend Jesus Renta's daughter Jennifer ate a piece of one of my cakes and afterward said, "The flavors are still dancing in my mouth!"

My goal in writing this second cake book is to continue to share the incredible, extraordinary, and unequalled joy of cake eating and baking. Here are some of the special highlights you will find in this book:

- A collection of moist cakes that have a long shelf life, such as the Orange-Glow Chiffon as a layer cake and the Shamah Chiffon, also as a layer cake but with the addition of almonds.
- Four exceptionally moist new wedding cakes with a long shelf life: the Grand Marnier (much beloved from *The Cake Bible*, where it was baked in a fluted tube pan), the Golden Dream (for lemon lovers who prefer cake with no alcohol), a banana butter cake with passion mousseline, and the most amazing of all chocolate cakes, the Deep Chocolate Passion.
- A fabulously chocolaty groom's cake (the Double-Chocolate-Whammy) that has chunks of rich brownie suspended within the chocolate cake.
- The Black Chocolate Party Cake with cocoa glaze, so delicious and dark that it's almost black.
- The most-tender-possible sponge cakes, including angel food, ladyfingers, biscuit de Savoie, and génoise, using magical Wondra flour.
- A collection of favorite flourless and mostly flourless cakes: new cheesecakes, nut cakes, chocolate cakes, and even the drop-dead delicious chocolate blackberry mousse cake, *Zach's La Bomba*.
- A chocolate lacquer glaze from Japan, so brilliantly shiny that it resembles a baby grand piano.
- A new technique for making everyone's favorite, but sometimes temperamental, buttercream—mousseline—almost foolproof.
- A fabulously creamy and delicious white chocolate cream cheese frosting that I have to call Dreamy Creamy.
- Spectacular decorating ideas such as crystallized roses made of lemon or orange peel.

This is just a sampling of what is included. Turn the page. There is so much more.

## Rose's Rules of Cake Baking

Cake baking is really very easy, but it is the little things that make the difference between ordinary and extraordinary. Here are the rules I use in my kitchen every day, my ten golden rules of baking.

**FLOUR.** Be sure to use the flour specified in the recipe. Bleached cake flour and bleached all-purpose flour can be used interchangeably when either is indicated as long as the weight used is the same. If you plan to use a volume measure instead, you will find it listed on the ingredient charts. If a recipe calls for cake flour as the first choice, using it results in a more tender crumb, so if you desire to achieve this level of tenderness, and you have only bleached all-purpose flour, you will need to use the suggested amount of cornstarch in place of some of the all-purpose flour or a slight increase in baking powder (see [Ingredient Equivalencies and Substitutions](#)). Do not, however, substitute cake flour in recipes calling only for all-purpose flour as the cakes will be too tender and fragile.

I also use Wondra flour (see [Flour](#)). It is the ideal flour for sponge cakes such as génoise, biscuit, and chiffons, except for chocolate ones. The slight decrease of 1/8 to 1/4 inch in height in these cakes baked in 9 by 2-inch round cake pans is more than compensated for by the exquisite tenderness and airiness of texture, and the superior flavor. Cakes baked in sheet pans lose about 1/8 inch in height, so I prefer cake flour or a combination of cake flour and cornstarch in these cases, especially if the cake will be rolled; it gives the rolled cake a much more attractive appearance. As for replacing bleached cake flour or bleached all-purpose flour, substitute equal weights of Wondra (for volume measures, see [Ingredient Equivalencies and Substitutions](#)).

**BUTTER.** Use high-quality unsalted butter with standard fat content unless high butterfat is called for in the recipe. Most of the cakes in this book require standard AA-grade unsalted butter. Unsalted butter is preferable because it makes it easier to control the amount of salt added to the cake and because of its fresher flavor. I recommend high-quality butter such as Organic Valley Cultured, Hotel Bar, or Land O' Lakes. When butter is used in its solid form, it is essential that the butter be cool room temperature (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C).

**EGGS.** Use USDA-grade large eggs for most recipes and weigh or measure the volume. The weight of the eggs and thickness of the shell can vary a great deal from egg to egg, even within a given grade. The correct amount of whole eggs, yolks, or whites is essential to the volume and texture of a cake. The ratio of white to yolk can vary to such a degree that a recipe calling for six yolks may need as many as ten. To achieve the ideal results, weigh or measure whole eggs—yolks and whites. Values for recipes in this book are given for weight and volume, so it's fine to use any size eggs if you weigh and measure them. The weights for eggs are always without the shells. Use eggs at room temperature: Place the eggs, still in their unbroken shells, in hot water for five minutes.

**CREAM OF TARTAR FOR BEATING EGG WHITES.** Use 1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar per egg white. This magic formula stabilizes the egg whites so that you can achieve maximum volume without ever drying them out and deflating them by overbeating. Add the cream of tartar with the beater off and after the egg whites start to foam. Do not add more than this recommended amount as it will destabilize the egg whites. It is also important to remember that there must not be even a trace of fat on the bowl, beater, or in the egg white itself (this includes even a speck of yolk) or the egg white will not increase in volume. Use beaten egg whites as soon as possible after beating them or they will start to stiffen and break down when being folded into another mixture.

**CHOCOLATE.** Use the cacao content that I specify in the recipe. If cacao content is not indicated on the package label, you can evaluate the percentage by taste comparison. There is a vast range of percentage of cacao versus sugar in what are usually labeled dark or bittersweet chocolate, which is why I've listed the recommended percentage for each recipe that calls for chocolate. If you use chocolate that is higher in chocolate components (cocoa solids and cocoa butter) and lower in sugar than is called for in a recipe, the cake will have a heavier texture and a bitter taste, and the buttercream or ganache will have a stiffer texture. The reason is that, in effect, you are adding more chocolate and less sugar to the recipe (see [Chocolate](#)).

**WEIGHING OR MEASURING.** Use care when you weigh or measure your ingredients. Doing so helps you achieve consistent flavor and texture. Weighing ingredients is faster and easier, but measuring will produce just as good a cake, providing you measure carefully. Dry ingredients such as flour and sugar should be measured in solid measuring cups, that is, ones with unbroken rims (see [Equipment](#)).

Sifting into the measuring cup and leveling off the excess flour with a long metal spatula or knife, without tapping the cup, is the most accurate way to measure flour and will result in the correct amount compared with scooping the cup into the flour or even lightly spooning the flour into the cup and leveling it off, both of which will result in a much greater weight of flour, which will produce a denser and drier cake (see [How to Measure Ingredients](#)). If measuring liquids such as water, milk, sticky syrups, and juices, use a measuring cup with a spout designed for measuring liquids and read the volume at eye level from the bottom of the meniscus (the curved upper surface of the liquid). Be sure to set the cup on a solid surface at eye level, not in your hand, which won't be as level a surface.

**MIXING.** Mixing ingredients on low speed in a stand mixer and gradually increasing speed, as I indicate in the recipes, will keep the ingredients from jumping out of the bowl. On a KitchenAid stand mixer, low means number 2; medium-low, number 3; medium, number 4; medium-high, numbers 7 and 8; high, number 10. On a Cuisinart stand mixer, I use number 6 for medium. If you are using a handheld mixer, use a higher speed than specified and a longer beating time. With both methods, it's important to scrape down the sides of the bowl to ensure that the batter on the sides gets mixed in evenly. Be sure to reach to the bottom of the bowl, especially when using the stand mixer.

**FILLING THE PAN.** Unless otherwise specified, fill the pan no less than half and no more than two-thirds full. The batter in fluted tube pans is an exception, as the pan is usually filled to about one inch from the top. (Avoid adding more batter because it could overflow and cause the cake to collapse.) The correct amount of batter for a specified pan size will affect the texture of the cake.

Batters maintain their leavening power effectively (whether the leavening is beaten egg or chemical leavening such as baking powder, baking soda, or both) when transferred to the pan immediately after mixing. Avoid refrigerating the batter in a bowl as it will lose leavening power.

**BAKING.** Preheat the Oven for a minimum of twenty minutes before baking. Use the correct oven temperature and, for proper air circulation, bake as close to the center of the oven as possible. When you transfer a batter leavened only with beaten egg into the pan, bake it as soon as possible after mixing because it maintains its leavening power most effectively this way. Chemically leavened batters (leavened with baking powder, baking soda, or both), however, can be held in the pan refrigerated for up to an hour if oven space does not allow for baking all the batter at once.

Cake pans should bake no closer than one inch from the walls of the oven and from each other. If you have an oven with sufficient internal height, the racks can be set just below and just above the middle position and the pans staggered so that one is not directly on top of the one on the rack below. To assure a level top and even front-to-back baking, unless the oven has a turntable, it is advisable to turn the cake halfway around, quickly

and gently, after two-thirds of the estimated baking time.

STORING. Cool cakes completely on wire racks and store them airtight. Once a cake has been cut, place a piece of plastic wrap against each side of the open cuts to keep the cake from drying. Cakes also stay freshest if they are covered with a cake dome. (For more storage options, see [Storing a Cake](#).)

Guidelines For Storing Cakes And Frosting at around 70°F/21°C

Times will vary depending on room or refrigerator/freezer temperature

Buttercream <sup>a</sup>	1 day at room temperature, 1 week refrigerated, and 8 months frozen.
Butter layer cakes or sponge cakes with syrup	3 days at room temperature, 5 to 7 days refrigerated, and 3 months frozen
Butter or oil layer cakes <sup>b</sup>	1 to 2 days at room temperature, 3 to 5 days refrigerated, and 3 months frozen
Cheesecakes	5 to 7 days refrigerated
Cupcakes	1 day at room temperature, 3 days refrigerated, and 2 months frozen
Flourless nut tortes	2 days at room temperature, 3 days refrigerated, and 3 weeks frozen
Ganache	3 days at room temperature, 2 weeks refrigerated, and 6 months frozen

<sup>a</sup> Beat the buttercream before using. If it is cold, be sure to allow it to reach room temperature before beating to prevent curdling.

<sup>b</sup> Bring butter layer cakes to room temperature before serving.



## Chapter 1: Butter and Oil Cakes

The butter cakes in this chapter are those that are made with butter in its solid form as opposed to those made with melted or clarified butter, such as a génoise, which are in the Sponge Cakes chapter. Most of the cakes here rely on chemical leavening (baking powder, baking soda, or both) for their soft, velvety textures. Flavorful, moist, and tender, yet substantial and satisfying, most of these cakes are quick and easy to make. The best part is that several of them take their shape from the fluted designs of the pans they are baked in, and are so moist and delicious that they need no further adornment or frosting. Of course, there are some fabulous new buttercreams and ganaches to go along with the time-honored cakes that everyone loves, and many exciting variations as well.

This chapter also includes five fabulous and quintessential oil cakes: for example, a groundbreaking, astonishingly fudgy and tender chocolate cake that is the base for a luscious German chocolate cake; a moist and mellow banana cake; and a classic carrot cake, all of which are, unlike butter cakes, soft enough to eat straight out of the refrigerator. Though butter offers more flavor than oil, oil cakes have the advantage of being exceptionally moist and tender while staying softer when chilled. Because of the extra tenderness, it is important to use all-purpose flour, which gives them more structure.

Most of the cakes in this chapter are enjoyable soon after baking and, depending on how you store them, also the following day(s). Refrigeration obviously extends their shelf life. (For the softest texture, the cakes made with butter should be brought to room temperature before serving.) With or without refrigeration, they change in texture from very soft and tender with a crisp crust to a softer crust and a firmer and easier-to-slice crumb the following day.

### The Special Two-Stage Mixing Technique

This method of mixing batter, described below and used so successfully in commercial baking with high-ratio shortening, is the method I adapted for *The Cake Bible* twenty years ago.

I find it to be faster, easier, and better—it produces a finer, more velvety crumb. The two stipulations about using it are that the butter needs to be no colder than 65°F/19°C and no warmer than 75°F/23°C. Also, the eggs must always be at room temperature in order to achieve the best texture in the finished cake.

The reason the crumb is finer and more tender is because at the beginning of mixing, the butter is added to the flour together with a minimum amount of the cake's liquid (just enough to disperse the butter). The butter coats some of the gluten-forming proteins in the flour, preventing excessive gluten formation. This gives the batter a larger window of mixing without risk of becoming tough.

Another advantage of this mixing method, and a difference from the conventional creaming of butter with the sugar, is that all the dry ingredients (the flour, sugar, leavening, and salt) are added together at the beginning so it is possible to disperse them evenly with the beater instead of needing to sift them together beforehand. Sifting does not uniformly disperse dry ingredients unless it is repeated many times, so using the mixer instead is a great time and energy saver.

While the main purpose of sifting flour is to ensure having the correct amount if you are measuring the flour instead of weighing it, it also serves to aerate and separate the particles, enabling the flour to absorb moisture more evenly. However, since I developed this method, I never sift at all for butter cakes and I see no difference in the cakes.

It has been reported to me by many bakers that the method works for recipes that normally would use the method of creaming the butter with the sugar, and that they have converted to this method of mixing for all their butter layer cakes.

Because stand mixers and handheld mixers are not the same, when mixing it is helpful to look for signs that you have beaten the batter sufficiently. During the beating process, the batter increases in volume, becoming airy and lighter in color.

### Highlights for Successful Butter Cakes

Weigh or measure ingredients carefully.

Use cake flour without leavening or bleached all-purpose flour except where otherwise indicated.

Use superfine sugar for the finest texture. (You can make a close equivalent by processing fine granulated sugar in the food processor for a few minutes.)

Use AA-grade unsalted butter for the best flavor, not high fat except if indicated, and be sure the butter is 65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C.

Use fresh baking powder: Check the expiration date and, if in a humid environment, replace it sooner.

When mixing the batter in a stand mixer, always start the mixer on low speed to prevent the batter from flying out of the bowl. Gradually raise the speed to medium (number 4 on a KitchenAid stand mixer, number 6 on the Cuisinart stand mixer) or high speed, if using a handheld mixer.

Stop the mixer and scrape down the sides of the bowl several times during mixing, being sure to go to the bottom of the bowl beneath the beater.

If using a handheld mixer, use a deep bowl to avoid spattering. Begin on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened and then raise the speed to high. Beat for 2 minutes after the dry ingredients are moistened and then for 45 seconds after each addition of the egg mixture. You may need to make two-layer cakes in two batches.

Use the pouring shield or splash guard, or cover the top of the mixer bowl with plastic wrap, until the dry ingredients are moistened.

Use the correct pan size.

For a very even layer, and to keep the crust from browning too deeply, wrap the cake pan with a cake strip (see [Cake Strips](#)).

Check for accurate oven temperature.

Avoid underbaking or overbaking the cake. It may spring back before fully baked. Use a wire cake tester or wooden toothpick, as indicated in the

recipe. An instant-read thermometer will register 190° to 205°F/88° to 96°C. If a wire cake tester comes out with crumbs, the center of the cake will sink a little on cooling.

Wrap cake layers airtight or frost them when completely cool.

For more details please read the ingredients and equipment sections.

Preparing the Pan

Butter cakes in layer cake pans bake most evenly when encircled with cake strips (see [Cake Strips](#)). The strips serve to slow down the baking at the perimeter of the pan so that the batter rises at the same rate on the sides as in the center, preventing a peaked surface. To use one, turn the unfilled pan upside down and gently stretch the silicone strip to fit around the sides.

Line the bottom of layer cake pans with parchment rounds to ensure the complete release of the cakes, especially chocolate cakes. Coat the bottom of the pans with solid vegetable shortening before affixing the rounds. Coat the entire insides of the pans with baking spray with flour or with solid shortening and flour, tapping out any excess.

Fluted tube pans should be sprayed with baking spray with flour (use a pastry brush if necessary to brush away any excess) or solid vegetable shortening and Wondra flour. (Briskly tap the pan on the palm of your hand to distribute the flour evenly and then invert the pan and tap it lightly on the counter to get rid of any excess flour.) To ensure that the batter enters smoothly and without air pockets into the fluted designs of the pan, first fill the pan about 1 inch full and, using the back of a spoon, with a side-to-side motion, press down the batter. Then add the remaining batter.

Unmolding a Cake

Cakes 9 inches or larger risk breaking if they are unmolded too soon. For cakes up to 10 inches, it is best to allow them to cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes before unmolding, 20 minutes for larger cakes.

Except when baking the cake in a fluted tube pan, always run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing the spatula against the pan to ensure complete release of the cake's sides with its crumb intact.

Always invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been lightly coated with nonstick cooking spray. If the parchment is still attached to the cake, peel it off. Unless it is baked in a tube pan, reinvert the cake onto a second lightly coated wire rack. This prevents splitting if the top is slightly domed and maintains the maximum height of the cake layer.

Allow cakes to cool until they are no longer warm to the touch before storing or frosting. Any residual heat will make them soggy and melt the frosting.

Troubleshooting

Problem	Possible Cause
Cracked or peaked surface or large tunnels	Oven is too hot, batter is overmixed, cake strip was not used, or too little leavening
Coarse grain and sunken center	Oven is too cold, batter was undermixed, or too much leavening
Poor volume, compact structure	Old or inadequate amount of baking powder, or cold butter or eggs
Dry cake, tough crust	Overbaking or pan is too big
Burnt bottom and undercooked batter	Inadequate air circulation in the oven
Denser, darker line at bottom of chocolate cake	Butter too cold or insufficient mixing

Apple Upside-Down Cake  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 35 to 45 minutes

Caramelized apples and walnuts atop a tender butter cake are a fabulous combination, and bourbon whipped cream is the perfect accompaniment to balance the sweetness of the caramel. This cake is most delicious in the fall at the height of apple season and is much quicker to make than a conventional apple pie. Use baking apples that hold their shape well: My favorites are Macoun, Northern Spy, Rhode Island Greenings, and Golden Delicious.





Apple and Walnut Topping

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
1¼ pounds of apples (about 2 large), peeled, cored, and sliced ¼ inch thick	3¼ cups	1 pound	454
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	1 teaspoon	.	.
light brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	1/3 cup, firmly packed, divided	2.5	72
unsalted butter	4 tablespoons (½ stick), divided	2	57
walnut halves	2/3 cup	2.2	66

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round | Baking stone (optional)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven, set a baking stone, if using, on the rack and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Make the Apple Topping

In a medium bowl, toss together the apples, lemon juice, and 2 tablespoons of the brown sugar. Allow the mixture to sit for at least 30 minutes or up to 1½ hours. Drain the apples, reserving their liquid.

In a small heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, melt the butter. Use about 1 tablespoon to coat the parchment-lined bottom and the sides of the cake pan.

Add the remaining brown sugar and the reserved liquid that has drained from the apples to the butter remaining in the saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly with a light-colored silicone spatula, then stop stirring, but leave the spatula in place to judge the color, and simmer for about 3 minutes, until bubbling thickly and deep amber in color.

Pour this mixture (do not scrape) into the prepared cake pan, tilting to coat the entire bottom. Don't worry if the mixture hardens; it will melt during baking. Place the apple slices, overlapping slightly, on the bottom and around the sides of the pan. Set aside.

Toast the Walnuts

Spread the walnuts evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes to enhance their flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely. Chop coarsely and set aside.

Highlights for Success

To core apples, cut them in half and use a melon baller to scoop out the core. Slice each half quarters and then each piece into three pieces.

The baking stone helps to darken the caramel on the apples.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
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about 3 large egg yolks, at room temperature	3½ tablespoons (1.7 fluid ounces)	2	56
sour cream	½ cup, divided	4.2	121
pure vanilla extract	1¼ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1½ cups (or 1 1/3 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	5.3	150
superfine sugar	¾ cup	5.3	150
baking powder	¾ teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	¼ teaspoon	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	9 tablespoons (1 stick plus 1 tablespoon)	4.5	128

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the yolks, 2 tablespoons of the sour cream, and the vanilla just until combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining sour cream. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture to the batter in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a silicone spatula, drop the batter in big blobs on top of the apples. Then smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula while keeping the apples in an attractive pattern.

Bake the Cake

Place the pan in the oven on the stone, if using it. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, or until golden brown, a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean, and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center.

Unmold and Cool the Cake

Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake at once onto a serving plate. Leave the pan in place for 1 to 2 minutes before lifting it off. If any apple slices have stuck to the pan, use a small metal spatula to place them back on the cake. Scatter the toasted walnuts on top. Serve warm or room temperature. If warm, serve the bourbon whipped cream, if using, on the side instead of on top of the apples.

Bourbon Whipped Cream  
Makes: 1 1/3 cups/4 ounces/116 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
heavy cream, cold	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4	116
bourbon, such as Maker's Mark	1 tablespoon	0.5	14

Make the Bourbon Whipped Cream

In a mixing bowl, combine the cream and bourbon and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside the bowl.) Whip the mixture, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, until the cream mounds softly when dropped from a spoon. If not serving it at once, cover and refrigerate for up to 6 hours.

Variation  
Peach Upside-Down Cake

Caramelized peaches offer a delicious variation to the classic apple upside-down cake.

Replace the apples with about 4 medium ripe peaches/1 pound 2 ounces/510 grams (peeled and sliced, 2¾ cups/15.7 ounces/450 grams). To peel the peaches, set them in a medium bowl and pour boiling water on top to cover them. Allow them to sit for about 1 minute and then transfer

them with a slotted spoon to a bowl of ice water. If they don't peel easily, repeat the process. Peel the peaches and slice them ¼ inch thick. As you slice them, add them to a medium bowl containing the lemon juice and 2 tablespoons of the brown sugar. Toss occasionally to prevent browning. Proceed as for the apple cake, but replace the walnuts with almonds, and the vanilla extract with ½ teaspoon pure almond extract.

Plum and Blueberry Upside-Down Torte  
Serves: 12 to 16  
Baking Time: 40 to 50 minutes

This special recipe comes from Darina Allen of the famed Ballymaloe cooking school in County Cork, Ireland. Darina also likes to use other fruits in season, such as apricots, peaches, or other varieties of plums, but I adore the greengage plums, which are tart and perfumed; the blueberries, when baked, lend their deep purple color to the fruit topping. The torte is firmer and less sweet than most because it has no added liquid: The fruit's juices moisten it. Making this torte a day ahead allows it to moisten evenly.

Caramel Sauce

Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons	8	225
water ¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59

Special Equipment

One 10 by 2-inch round cake or sauté pan (11 cups; see [Note](#)), coated with nonstick cooking spray

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Make the Caramel Sauce

Have ready the prepared pan. In a small saucepan, preferably nonstick, stir together the sugar and water and heat, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and comes to a boil. Continue boiling, without stirring, until the syrup caramelizes to deep amber (about 370°F/188°C or a few degrees lower because its temperature will continue to rise). Immediately remove the pan from the heat and pour the caramel (do not scrape) into the prepared pan, tilting it to coat evenly. Don't worry if it hardens, it will melt during baking.

Plum Blueberry Topping

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
greengage or purple plums, rinsed and dried	3 cups	1 pound	454
blueberries, rinsed and dried	2½ cups	12.3	350

Make the Plum Blueberry Topping

Cut the plums in half and remove the pits. If using purple plums, cut the pitted plums in half. Arrange them cut side down in a single layer over the caramel. Tumble the blueberries evenly over the top.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
bleached all-purpose flour	1¾ cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	7	200
superfine sugar	¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons	6.2	175
baking powder	2½ teaspoons	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	10½ tablespoons (1 stick plus 2½ tablespoons)	5.3	150
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.

## Make the Batter

In a food processor, process the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt for a few seconds to combine. Add the butter and process for a few seconds until the dry ingredients are moistened and clumpy. Add the eggs and vanilla and process for a few seconds just until the mixture comes together.

Using a silicone spatula, drop the batter in big blobs on top of the plums. Then smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula, keeping the fruit in an attractive pattern. The pan will be almost three-quarters full (about ½ inch from the top).

## Bake the Cake

Bake for 40 to 50 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center.

## Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 5 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake at once onto a serving plate. Leave the pan in place for 1 to 2 minutes before lifting it off. If any fruit has stuck to the pan, use a small metal spatula to place it back on the cake.

## Note

If using a sauté pan instead of a cake pan, you can prepare the caramel in the pan, but be sure to remove it from the heat as soon as the syrup begins to caramelize in order to stop it from getting darker.

## She Loves Me Cake

Serves: 12 to 14

Baking Time: 40 to 45 minutes; 45 to 55 minutes in a fluted tube pan

I adapted this cake from one of the most popular cakes in *The Cake Bible*: the All-Occasion Downy Yellow Butter Cake. I adore the beauty of a daisy pan as well as its rectangular shape, which makes serving a dream, but the cake also bakes perfectly in a fluted tube pan. Either way, the crumb is velvety soft, tender, and imbued with the flavor of butter and vanilla.



## Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
about 5 large egg yolks, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.2	93
milk	¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon (6.5 fluid ounces), divided	7	200
pure vanilla extract	2 teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2½ cups (or 2 cups plus 3 tablespoons), sifted into the cup and leveled off	8.7	250
superfine sugar	1¼ cups	8.7	250
baking powder	3 1/8 teaspoons	.	.
salt	¾ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	10 tablespoons (1¼ sticks)	5	142

Special Equipment

One 10-cup Nordic Ware Daisy Cake Pan or metal fluted tube pan, coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C (325°F/160°C if using a dark pan).

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the yolks, ¼ cup of the milk, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining milk. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 40 to 45 minutes in the rectangular pan, 45 to 55 minutes in the fluted tube pan, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Invert it onto a wire rack and cool completely. Meanwhile, wash and dry the pan. Place it on top of the cake and invert the cake into the pan. Place a serving plate on top and reinvert the cake onto the plate. The texture of the cake is best eaten at room temperature the day it is baked, and it is still good 1 day later. Unfilled it can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.

Variations  
Lemon Daisy Cake

When it is completely cool, split the cake in half horizontally and spread one half with one recipe [Lemon Curd](#) and 1½ cups small fresh blueberries. Place the other half on top and press down lightly to bring the lemon curd to the edge or a little past. For special celebrations, you may opt to paint the daisy petals with thin royal icing and pipe a dollop of lemon curd in the middle of each flower.

Berry Shortcake

Use any berries of your choice, such as raspberries or sliced strawberries. Replace the lemon curd with 1½ cups heavy cream processed in a food processor with 3 tablespoons/1.3 ounces/38 grams superfine sugar just until thick enough to hold a soft peak. (Check every few seconds once the cream starts thickening as overprocessing will turn it to butter.) If using the whipped cream filling, it will keep at cool room temperature for up to 6 hours.

White Velvet Cake with Milk Chocolate Ganache  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

With just minor modifications of the baking powder, this recipe works in just about any size or shape pan—from cupcakes to wedding cakes. With its fine soft crumb, the cake remains one of the most popular and useful in The Cake Bible. Marrying it here with the milk chocolate ganache doesn't overwhelm its delicate buttery flavor as would a bittersweet ganache.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
3 large egg whites, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.2	90
milk	2/3 cup (5.3 fluid ounces), divided	5.6	160
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2 cups (or 1¾ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	7	200
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking powder	2½ plus 1/8 teaspoons	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	8 tablespoons (1 stick)	4	113

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the egg whites, 3 tablespoons of the milk, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining milk. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture to the batter in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a large silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until golden brown, a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean, and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cake so that the top side is up. Cool completely.

Milk Chocolate Ganache  
Makes: 2 cups/19.2 ounces/544 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
milk chocolate, Valrhona 40% cacao, Scharffen Berger 41% cacao, or Cluizel 42% cacao, chopped (or 8 ounces 30% to 34% milk chocolate and 4 ounces 60% to 62% dark chocolate)		12	340
	½ cup plus 2		

heavy cream, warm	tablespoons (5 fluid ounces)	5	145
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	5 tablespoons (½ stick plus 1 tablespoon)	2.5	70
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Milk Chocolate Ganache

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Gradually stir in the cream until it is uniform in color. Allow the chocolate mixture to cool just until no longer warm to the touch, about 30 minutes.

With a whisk, very gently, so as to avoid incorporating air and lightening the ganache, stir in the softened butter 1 tablespoon at a time. Stir in the vanilla.

Use at once or cover it with plastic wrap and allow to sit for a few hours. The ganache will continue to thicken at room temperature. It keeps in an airtight container for 3 days at room temperature, for 3 weeks refrigerated, and for 6 months frozen.

Compose the Cake

Split the cake in half. Set one layer on a 9-inch cardboard round or serving plate. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Fill and frost with the milk chocolate ganache. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

Highlights for Success

You can use 100 percent milk chocolate, but, to my taste, it is a little too sweet unless you are using a high-percentage milk chocolate such as Cluizel, Scharffen Berger, or Valrhona. (A lower-percentage milk chocolate will be paler in color.)

If you are combining a high-percentage milk chocolate (40 to 42 percent) with a high-percentage dark chocolate (over 53 percent), you will need to add a little more heavy cream to ensure a soft consistency (see [Ganache Proportions](#) and [Chocolate](#)).

For slightly softer and less creamy ganache, prepare it without butter. Use a total of ¾ cup plus 3 tablespoons/7½ fluid ounces/7.5 ounces/213 grams heavy cream.

Heavenly Coconut Seduction Cake  
 Serves: 8 to 10  
 Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

Imagine an impossibly tender coconut cake mounded with a billowy cloud of coconut-imbued unsweetened whipped cream and then a generous crowning of sweetened coconut flakes. The taste is like a gentle explosion of coconut flavor, accentuated with a light spray of sugar.

Although the cake still has a wonderful, albeit denser, texture when made ahead, it is at its most ethereal when prepared à la minute. In other words: Bake it, cool it, top it with whipped cream and coconut, call the neighbors, and eat it.





3 large egg whites, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.2	90
canned cream of coconut, not coconut cream (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	2/3 cup (5.3 fluid ounces) processed in a food processor before measuring, divided	6.7	190
pure vanilla extract	¾ teaspoon	.	.
coconut extract	¾ teaspoon	.	.
superfine sugar	½ cup minus 1 tablespoon	3	88
desiccated unsweetened grated coconut	½ cup	1.2	35
cake flour (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	2 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	7	200
baking powder	2¼ teaspoons	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	8 tablespoons (1 stick)	4	113

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the egg whites, 3 tablespoons of the cream of coconut, the vanilla, and coconut extract just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In a food processor, process the sugar and coconut until the coconut is powder fine.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the coconut mixture, flour, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining cream of coconut. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg white mixture in two parts, beating for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake just starts to come away from the sides of the pan. It will be underbaked in the center if it is removed before it starts shrinking. The cake is so fluffy that it will not spring back readily when pressed in the center. Because it is so wondrously tender, the top will dip slightly on cooling.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cake so that the top side is up. Cool completely.

Notes

The cake is also very delicious with coconut milk and it will not dip in the center. To substitute, use 2/3 cup/5.3 fluid ounces/5.7 ounces/163 grams canned coconut milk (stirred well before measuring). Be sure to increase the sugar to 1 cup/7 ounces/200 grams and the baking powder to 2½ teaspoons. You can also use the same weight of bleached all-purpose flour instead of cake flour, but the volume is 1¾ cups instead of 2 cups.

Cream of coconut contains solid coconut oil and needs to be processed in the food processor until smooth, or thoroughly whisked, to break it up into small pieces.

I love the flavor and incredibly tender texture offered by the cream of coconut, but if you use it, you also need to use cake flour to prevent serious



dipping in the center.

Coconut Whipped Cream Topping  
Makes: 3 cups/13 ounces/370 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
heavy cream, cold	1½ cups (12 fluid ounces)	12.3	348
coconut cream powder (optional)	¼ cup	1	32
sweetened flaked coconut	1 cup	3	85

Make the Coconut Whipped Cream Topping

In a mixing bowl, combine the heavy cream and coconut cream powder, if using, and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside the bowl.)

Whip the mixture, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, only until the cream mounds softly when dropped from a spoon.

Mound the cream on top of the cake and sprinkle evenly with the flaked coconut. Serve immediately. Be prepared to swoon.

Highlights for Success

If you want to top the cake with whipped cream more than 30 minutes before serving, you will need to add ½ teaspoon Cobasan (see [Commercial Stabilizers](#)) before beating, or use Gelatin-Stabilized Whipped Cream (see [Stabilized Whipped Cream](#)) to enable it to stand for up to several hours at room temperature without watering out (or twenty-four to thirty-six hours refrigerated) or Cornstarch-Stabilized Whipped Cream (see [Stabilized Whipped Cream](#)), which will keep it from watering out for twenty-four hours refrigerated.

The powdered coconut cream in the whipped cream topping adds an extra dimension so it is well worth purchasing. Powdered coconut cream is available in specialty food supply stores such as Kalustyan's (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

This coconut cake is not as moist as the [Southern \(Manhattan\) Coconut Cake with Silk Meringue Buttercream](#) when held for several days because of the slightly drying effect of the dried coconut and the low-liquid, high-fat content of the cream of coconut. The flaked coconut, however, gives it extra coconut flavor, and the higher fat content gives it its meltingly tender texture.

Southern (Manhattan) Coconut Cake with Silk Meringue Buttercream  
Serves: 16 to 20  
Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

Seven-minute frosting is just too sweet for my northern tastes, so I have created my own version using one of my favorite airy buttercreams, the Silk Meringue, for this beloved southern cake. The cake itself has wonderful keeping qualities, and if baked a day ahead, the coconut flavor actually intensifies. Although the finished cake stays fresh and moist in the refrigerator for up to one week, it must be eaten at room temperature to have the softest texture and so you can enjoy the light, voluptuous coconut buttercream, which becomes very solid when chilled. Fresh or frozen coconut is ideal for the buttercream, as it keeps the frosting from being too sweet.



Batter

Volume

Ounce Gram

6 large egg whites, at room temperature	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.3	180
canned coconut milk (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1 1/3 cups (10.6 fluid ounces), divided	11.5	327
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
coconut extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	4 cups (or 3½ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	14	400
superfine sugar	2 cups	14	400
baking powder	5 teaspoons	.	.
salt	1 teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227

Special Equipment

Two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, encircled with cake strips, bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the egg whites, 1/3 cup of the coconut milk, the vanilla, and coconut extract just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining coconut milk. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg white mixture in three parts, beating on medium speed for 20 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pans and smooth the surfaces evenly with a small offset spatula. Each will be about half full (27 ounces/773 grams).

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the center. The cakes should start to shrink from the sides of the pans only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cakes

Let the cakes cool in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and invert the cakes onto wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cakes so that the tops are up. Cool completely.

Note

Before measuring coconut milk, pour it into a bowl and whisk or stir it to a uniform consistency.

Silk Meringue Buttercream  
Makes: about 5½ cups/2 pounds 5 ounces/1 kilogram 50 grams  
Crème Anglaise

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
about 5 large egg yolks, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.2	93

canned coconut milk (see [Highlights for Success](#)) ½ cup (4 fluid ounces) 4.3 123

pure vanilla extract 1 teaspoon . .

coconut extract 1 teaspoon . .

Make the Crème Anglaise

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium bowl.

In a medium heavy saucepan, combine the sugar and yolks.

In a small saucepan, bring the coconut milk to a boil. Add 2 tablespoons to the yolk mixture, stirring constantly. Gradually stir in the remaining coconut milk and cook over medium-low heat, continuing to stir constantly, just until below the boiling point. The mixture will start to steam slightly and an instant-read thermometer will register 170°F/76°C. Immediately pour the coconut milk through the strainer, scraping up any clinging to the bottom of the pan. With the back of a spoon or silicone spatula, press the mixture through the strainer into the bowl. Cool, stirring occasionally. Stir in the vanilla and coconut extract. (To speed cooling, put the bowl inside another bowl partially filled with ice water.)

Set a piece of plastic wrap, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, directly onto the surface of the crème anglaise to keep a skin from forming. Refrigerate for up to 5 days, or until ready to complete the buttercream.

Italian Meringue

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
2 large egg whites, at room temperature	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	60
superfine sugar	1/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons, divided	3.2	91
water	2 tablespoons	1	30
cream of tartar	¼ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Italian Meringue

Have ready a 1-cup or larger heatproof glass measure.

Place the egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, or in a medium bowl and have ready a handheld mixer.

In a small heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, stir together the 1/3 cup of sugar and the water until all the sugar is moistened. Heat on medium-high, stirring until the sugar dissolves and the mixture is bubbling. Stop stirring and reduce the heat to low. (On an electric range, remove the pan from the heat.)

Beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the whisk is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar until stiff peaks form when the whisk is raised slowly.

Increase the heat under the sugar syrup to medium-high and boil for a few minutes until an instant-read thermometer registers 248° to 250°F/120°C (the firm-ball stage). Immediately transfer the syrup to the glass measure to stop the cooking.

If using a stand mixer, with the mixer off to keep the syrup from spinning onto the sides of the bowl, add the syrup to the egg whites. Begin by pouring in a small amount of the syrup. Immediately beat on high speed for 5 seconds. Add the remaining syrup in the same way in three parts. For the last addition, use a silicone spatula to remove the syrup clinging to the glass measure and scrape the syrup off against the beater. If it has hardened before most of it has been poured, soften it to pouring consistency for a few seconds in a microwave.

If using a handheld mixer, beat the syrup into the egg whites on high speed in a steady stream. Don't allow the syrup to fall on the beaters or they will spin it onto the sides of the bowl.

Lower the speed to medium and continue beating for 2 minutes. If you don't have a second mixer bowl, transfer the Italian meringue to another bowl.

Completed Silk Meringue Buttercream

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	4 sticks	1 pound	454

Crème Anglaise . . .

Italian Meringue

CocoRibe (optional) 2 tablespoons 1 32

fresh or thawed and towel-dried frozen coconut (see [Coconut](#)), finely grated 2¾ cups, loosely packed 9.7 275

Complete the Buttercream

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the butter on medium speed for 30 seconds, or until creamy. Gradually beat in the crème anglaise until smooth. Add the Italian meringue and beat until just incorporated. If the mixture looks curdled instead of smooth, it is too cold. Allow it to sit at room temperature to warm to 70°F/21°C before continuing to beat, or suspend the bowl over a pan of simmering water (don't let the bottom of the bowl touch the water) and heat very briefly, stirring vigorously when the mixture just starts to melt slightly at the edges. To stop the warming, dip the bottom of the bowl into a larger bowl filled with ice water for a few seconds to cool it. Remove the bowl from the ice water and beat the buttercream by hand until smooth. Beat in the CocoRibe, if using, and 2 cups of the coconut.

Use the buttercream to frost the cake or transfer to an airtight bowl until ready to use.

Compose the Cake

When the cakes are completely cool, spread a little buttercream on a 9-inch cardboard round or serving plate and set one layer on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean.

Evenly spread about 1¼ cups/8.5 ounces/240 grams of buttercream on top before adding the second layer. Frost the top and sides with buttercream. (You will have about 1½ cups left over, which you can freeze to have on hand for frosting cupcakes.)

Place the remaining coconut in a large bowl. Lift the cake and support it on the palm of one hand. Hold the cake over the bowl, tilting it slightly toward the bowl. Cup your other hand and gently apply coconut to the sides of the cake. Sprinkle the top of the cake with the remaining coconut. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

Highlights for Success

Use whole (not "light") coconut milk.

Use "natural" coconut extract available at health food stores.

If using frozen coconut, defrost it overnight in the refrigerator or for several hours at room temperature. Break it up with your fingers onto a few layers of paper towels and cover and press to remove any excess moisture. Loosen the coconut again with your fingers so that it falls in separate pieces.

Large flakes of unsweetened coconut, called coconut chips, make a very attractive garnish. They are available at specialty food supply stores, such as Kalustyan's (See [Ingredients Sources](#)).

Whipped Cream Cake

Serves: 8 to 10

Baking Time: 25 to 35 minutes

This unusual old-time recipe was sent to me by chef Anthony Stella, a restaurateur in Delaware, who asked if I could perform a makeover on it. What intrigued both of us about the recipe was that at first glance it seemed to contain no butter or oil. But on closer analysis, I discovered that the butterfat contained in the cream was more than equal to the usual amount of butter added. My makeover involved a nip and tuck, decreasing the sugar and baking powder and increasing the salt to compensate for the saltiness previously provided by a higher amount of baking powder. I also increased the overall yield by one and a half times and baked the cake in a fluted tube pan to give it an attractive appearance and more center support. The result is a perfectly even and exceptionally moist and tender cake.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2¼ cups (or 2 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	8	225
baking powder	2 teaspoons	.	.
salt	¾ teaspoon	.	.
heavy cream, cold (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	1½ cups (12 fluid ounces)	12.3	348
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
superfine sugar	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons	8	225

Special Equipment

One 10-cup fluted metal tube pan, coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F/190°C (350°F/175°C if using a dark pan).

Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk together the cake flour, baking powder, and salt and then sift them together to make the mixture easier to incorporate.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, whip the cream, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised.

In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs and vanilla just until lightly combined.

On medium-high speed, gradually beat the egg mixture into the whipped cream. The mixture will thicken into mayonnaise consistency (unless high-butterfat cream is used). Gradually beat in the sugar. It should take about 30 seconds to incorporate it.

Make the Batter

Add half the flour mixture to the cream mixture and, with a large silicone spatula, stir and fold in the flour until most of it disappears. Add the rest of the flour mixture and continue folding and mixing until all traces of flour have disappeared. Using a silicone spatula or spoon, scrape the batter into the prepared pan. Run a small metal spatula or dull knife blade through the batter to prevent large air bubbles, avoiding the bottom of the pan.

Smooth the surface evenly with a small metal spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted between the tube and the side comes out completely clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. With a small metal spatula, loosen the top edges of the cake and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Cool completely. The cake requires no adornment, but I love to serve it with a light dusting of powdered sugar or a large dollop of lightly sweetened [Whipped Cream](#).

Notes

Do not chill the bowl and beaters for the heavy cream because the eggs will not emulsify as readily if the whipped cream is too cold.

High-butterfat (40 percent) heavy cream produces a finer, more tender crumb. This cream is generally available only to bakeries and restaurants, but it is certainly worth asking your local baker to sell you a container.

Karmel Cake  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 25 to 35 minutes

This caramel cake is dedicated to one of my dearest friends, Elizabeth Karmel, a grilling expert and author of my grilling bible: Taming the Flame. Soft textured and deeply flavorful, the cake has the most golden brown, smooth crust of any cake I know. (The caramel makes the top crust sticky, so it helps to spray a thin sharp knife with nonstick cooking spray before cutting.) To feature the beauty of the crust, I leave it unfrosted and top each piece with a cloud of [Coffee Cream](#)—a perfect synergy of flavors and textures.



Caramel for the Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
light brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	1 cup, firmly packed	7.6	217
milk	1¼ cups (10 fluid ounces), divided	10.6	302
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	2 tablespoons	1	28

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Make the Caramel

Have ready a 2-cup or larger heatproof glass measure, coated with nonstick cooking spray.

In a medium heavy saucepan, with a silicone spatula, stir together the brown sugar, ¾ cup of the milk, and the butter. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium-low heat, stirring constantly. Stop stirring and boil until an instant-read thermometer registers 238°F/114°C (the soft-ball stage). (Tilt the pan to get enough depth for an accurate reading.) It will take about 10 minutes or more to reach this stage, and the mixture will look slightly curdled. When the sugar reaches temperature—or a few degrees lower because the temperature will continue to climb—immediately remove the pan from the heat and pour the mixture into the prepared glass measure to stop the cooking. You should have 1 cup (if less, add cold water to equal 1 cup). Scrape the mixture into a medium bowl and gently whisk in the remaining milk. (Don't worry if some of the liquid crystallizes on the bottom, it will dissolve during baking.)

Place the bowl on a wire rack and allow the mixture to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch. It will take about an hour, but to speed cooling, it's fine to set the glass measure in a bowl of ice water. If desired, stir the mixture a few times while cooling in order to equalize the temperature.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
pure vanilla extract	1¼ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2 cups (or 1¾ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	7	200
baking powder	3 teaspoons	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	6 tablespoons (¾ stick)	3	85
Caramel for the batter	.	.	.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs and vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the cooled caramel. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan, and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cake so that the top side is up. Cool completely.

Spice Cake with Peanut Buttercream

Serves: 8 to 10

Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

The interplay of earthy peanut buttercream and velvety tender cake with a mildly spicy edge is as delightful as it is unusual. Make the cake a day ahead to give the spices a chance to evolve to their fullest.





Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
low-fat buttermilk	2/3 cup (5.3 fluid ounces), divided	5.6	160
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2 cups (or 1¾ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	7	200
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	1½ teaspoons	.	.
baking powder	3 teaspoons	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
cinnamon	½ teaspoon	.	.
cloves	¼ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	8 tablespoons (1 stick)	4	113

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, 3 tablespoons of the buttermilk, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, cocoa, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and cloves on low speed for 30



seconds. Add the butter and the remaining buttermilk. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cake so that the top side is up. Cool completely.

Peanut Buttercream  
Makes: about 1½ cups/12 ounces/340 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
peanut butter, preferably Jif, at room temperature	½ cup	4.7	133
cream cheese (65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C)	½ cup minus 1 tablespoon	4	113
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	4 tablespoons (½ stick)	2	56
sour cream	2 teaspoons	.	.
powdered sugar	¼ cup (lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off) plus 3 tablespoons	1.7	50
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Peanut Buttercream

In a food processor, combine the peanut butter, cream cheese, butter, sour cream, powdered sugar, and vanilla and process, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary, until the buttercream is smooth and uniform in color.

Compose the Cake

When the cake is completely cool, spread a little buttercream on a 9-inch cardboard round or serving plate and set the cake on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Frost the top and sides with swirls of silky buttercream. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

Golden Lemon Almond Cake  
Serves: 12 to 14  
Baking Time: 45 to 55 minutes

So that people who avoid alcohol could still enjoy the extraordinarily moist yet soft texture of my Grand Marnier cake, I've adapted the recipe using ground almonds and lemon. The almonds are responsible for the wondrously moist and dense crumb. The divinely luscious flavor of lemon is punched up with zesty lemon oil.

Creating this cake presented a challenge. It required less leavening because more sugar was necessary to balance the lemon juice. I couldn't add the extra sugar to the syrup because it wouldn't dissolve, so it had to be added to the cake, which made the cake more tender. All-purpose flour with its higher protein compensated perfectly for the increased tenderness. I love this cake so much that I'm offering it in two sizes, first in a full-size 10-cup fluted tube pan, and also as a variation at two-thirds the size, in a 6-cup fluted tube pan, which is perfect for holiday giving. You can serve this cake the day it is made, but the lemon flavor mellows and becomes more pure, and the syrup distributes more evenly, by the next day.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor, complete the cake 1 day ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
blanched sliced almonds	2/3 cup	2	60
turbinado sugar	1¼ cups, divided	8.7	250
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
sour cream	1 cup, divided	8.5	242
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
pure lemon oil, preferably Boyajian	3/8 teaspoon	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	2 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus 3 tablespoons	8.7	250
baking powder	1¼ teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	¾ teaspoon	.	.
lemon zest, finely grated	2 tablespoons, loosely packed	0.5	12
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227

Special Equipment

One 10-cup metal fluted tube pan, coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C (325°F/160°C if using a dark pan).

Toast and Grind the Almonds

Spread the almonds evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes, or until pale gold. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely. In a food processor, process until fairly fine. Add ¼ cup of the sugar and process until very fine.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, ¼ cup of the sour cream, the vanilla, and lemon oil just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the ground almonds, the remaining sugar, the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and lemon zest on low speed for about 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining sour cream. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Using a spatula or spoon, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small metal spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 45 to 55 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted between the tube and the side comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. An instant-read thermometer inserted near the center should read 200° to 205°F/93° to 96°C.

Make the syrup shortly before the cake is finished baking.

Lemon Syrup

Makes: ½ cup/4 fluid ounces/5.6 ounces/160 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
turbinado sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2.2	62

Make the Lemon Syrup

In a 1-cup or larger microwavable glass measure (or a small saucepan over medium heat), heat the sugar and lemon juice, stirring often until the sugar is almost completely dissolved. Do not boil. A few undissolved grains form a sparkly, crackly finish to the crust. Cover it tightly to prevent evaporation.

Apply the Syrup and Cool and Unmold the Cake

As soon as the cake comes out of the oven, place the pan on a wire rack, poke the cake all over with a thin skewer, and brush it with about one-third of the syrup. Let the cake cool in the pan for 10 minutes. Invert it onto a 10-inch cardboard round or serving plate. Brush the top and sides of the cake with the remaining syrup. Cool completely and wrap airtight.

Variation  
Golden Gift Lemon Almond Cake

If you don't have a 6-cup fluted tube pan, the recipe also makes a lovely presentation if baked in an 8½ by 4½-inch loaf pan (6 cups). It's also fine to use a disposable aluminum foil pan.

Make two-thirds of the batter, but use ¾ teaspoon baking powder and ½ teaspoon of baking soda. Bake for 40 to 50 minutes. Make two-thirds of the syrup. When cool, wrap the cake in holiday-tinted plastic wrap and tie the package with a bow. This cake serves 8 to 10.

Lemon Poppy Seed-Sour Cream Cake  
Serves: 12 to 14  
Baking Time: 45 to 55 minutes

A combination of sour cream batter filled with bursts of fresh lemon, this is my signature cake, grown up into a larger, ever more flavorful version. It is breathtakingly delicious—buttery and tender and melts in your mouth. I love the little crunch of poppy seeds, but the cake is also fabulous without them.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor, complete the cake 1 day ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
about 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.6	18
sour cream	¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon, divided	7	200
pure vanilla extract	1¾ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2½ cups (or 2 cups plus 3 tablespoons), sifted into the cup and leveled off	8.7	250
superfine sugar	1¼ cups	8.7	250
baking powder	1½ teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
lemon zest, finely grated	5 teaspoons, loosely packed	0.5	10
poppy seeds	1/3 cup	1.7	50
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	14 tablespoons (1¾ sticks)	7	200

Special Equipment

One 10-cup Nordic Ware Elegant Heart Pan or metal fluted tube pan, coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C (325°F/160°C if using a dark pan).

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the whole eggs, yolk, ¼ cup of the sour cream, and the vanilla, just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, lemon zest, and poppy seeds on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining sour cream. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. The mixture will lighten in color and texture. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Using a silicone spatula or spoon, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small metal spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 45 to 55 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted between the tube and the side comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Shortly before the cake is finished baking, make the lemon syrup.

Lemon Syrup

Makes: 2/3 cup/5.3 fluid ounces/7 ounces/200 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon	4	112
lemon juice, freshly squeezed (2 large lemons)	6 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.3	94

Make the Lemon Syrup

In a 1-cup or larger microwavable glass measure (or in a small saucepan over medium heat), heat the sugar and lemon juice, stirring often, until the sugar is dissolved. Do not allow it to boil. Cover it tightly to prevent evaporation.

Apply the Syrup and Cool and Unmold the Cake

As soon as the cake comes out of the oven, place the pan on a wire rack, poke the cake all over with a thin skewer, and brush it with about one-third of the syrup. Let the cake cool in the pan for 10 minutes. Invert it onto a 10-inch cardboard round or serving plate. Brush the top and sides of the cake with the remaining syrup. Cool completely and wrap airtight.

Woody's Lemon Luxury Layer Cake

Serves: 14 to 16

Baking Time: 25 to 35 minutes

When Woody Wolston's t'ai chi Sifu Paul, got married, he requested this cake for his wedding celebration. The egg yolks and white chocolate in the cake batter result in the most golden, melt-in-the-mouth crumb imaginable. The slight acidity of the cocoa butter and milk solids in the white chocolate perfume the cake with a lemon essence that perfectly complements the lemon curd filling and white chocolate lemon buttercream. Yum!

Plan Ahead

Make the lemon curd at least 3 hours ahead. Make the buttercream at least 2 hours ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
white chocolate containing cocoa butter, chopped .		6	170
about 6 large egg yolks, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons (3.5 fluid ounces)	4	112
milk	1 cup (8 fluid ounces), divided	8.5	242
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	3 cups (or 2 2/3 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	10.5	300
superfine sugar	1 cup plus 3 tablespoons	8.5	240
baking powder	4¼ teaspoons	.	.
salt	¾ teaspoon	.	.
lemon zest, finely grated	1 teaspoon, loosely packed	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	9 tablespoons (1 stick plus 1 tablespoon)	4.5	128

### Special Equipment

Two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, encircled with cake strips, bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour

### Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

### Melt the White Chocolate

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the white chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Allow it to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid.

### Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the yolks, 1/3 cup of the milk, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

### Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and lemon zest on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining milk. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture to the batter in three parts, beating on medium speed for 20 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the melted white chocolate and beat to incorporate it. Using the silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pans and smooth the surfaces evenly with a small offset spatula. Each pan will be almost half full (21 ounces/600 grams).

### Bake the Cakes

Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until golden brown, a wire cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean, and the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers. The cakes should start to shrink from the sides of the pans only after removal from the oven.

### Cool and Unmold the Cakes

Let the cakes cool in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and invert the cakes onto wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cakes so that the tops are up. Cool completely.

### Lemon Curd

Makes: almost 1¾ cups/16.3 ounces/462 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
lemon zest, finely grated	3 teaspoons, loosely packed	.	6
about 7 large egg yolks, at room temperature	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.6	130
sugar	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons	8	225
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	6 tablespoons (¾ stick)	3	85
lemon juice, freshly squeezed and strained (about 3 large lemons)	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (4.5 fluid ounces)	5	141
salt	pinch	.	.

Make the Lemon Curd

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium bowl containing the lemon zest.

In a medium heavy saucepan, whisk the yolks, sugar, and butter until well blended. Whisk in the lemon juice and salt. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula (be sure to scrape the sides of the pan), until thickened and resembling hollandaise sauce, which thickly coats the spatula but is still liquid enough to pour. The mixture will change from translucent to opaque and begin to turn a yellow color on the spatula. Don't allow it to come to a boil or it will curdle. Whenever steam appears, remove the pan briefly from the heat, stirring constantly, to keep the mixture from boiling. When the curd has thickened and will pool thickly when a little is dropped on its surface, pour it at once into the strainer and press it through with the spatula. Stir gently to mix in the zest sitting in the bowl and allow the curd to cool for 30 minutes.

Divide the lemon curd into two containers: 6 tablespoons/3.5 ounces/100 grams for the buttercream, and the remainder for the filling and topping. Cover tightly and refrigerate until no longer warm, about 3 hours. It keeps in airtight containers for 3 weeks refrigerated. (Longer storage dulls the fresh citrus flavor.)

White Chocolate Lemon Buttercream  
Makes: 4½ cups/30.7 ounces/870 grams  
White Chocolate Custard Base  
Makes: 2¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons/22.6 ounces/640 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
white chocolate containing cocoa butter and vanilla seeds, preferably Green & Black's, chopped (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	.	10.6	300
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	10½ tablespoons (1 stick plus 2½ tablespoons)	5.3	150
4 large eggs, at room temperature	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	7	200

Make the White Chocolate Custard Base

In the top of a double boiler set over barely simmering water, melt the white chocolate and butter, stirring often until smooth and creamy. (Don't let the bottom of the container touch the water.) Whisk the eggs lightly to break them up and then whisk them into the melted white chocolate mixture. Continue whisking and heating until an instant-read thermometer registers 140°F/60°C. The mixture will have thickened slightly. Remove it from the heat, transfer it to a bowl, cover, and refrigerate for about 45 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes until cool to the touch. An instant-read thermometer should register 65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C.

Completed White Chocolate Lemon Buttercream

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	10 tablespoons (1 stick plus 2 tablespoons)	5	142
White Chocolate Custard Base	2¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons	22.6	640
Lemon Curd	6 tablespoons	3.5	100

Complete the Buttercream

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the butter on medium-low speed until creamy, about 30 seconds. Gradually beat the white chocolate custard base into the butter, scraping the sides of the bowl as needed, until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised. Cover and set aside for 1½ to 2 hours, or until the mixture is slightly thickened and spongy. It should be no warmer than 70°F/21°C. If necessary, chill it in an ice water bath (see [Water Baths](#)) for a few minutes, stirring constantly. Beat on medium-high speed for 30 seconds until smooth, light, and creamy. Add the lemon curd and beat just until incorporated.

Compose the Cake

Cut each layer in half. Spread ½ cup/4.3 ounces/122 grams of the remaining lemon curd on the bottom layer of each of the two sets of layers. Set the upper layers on top of each bottom layer. Spread it almost to the edges as the weight of the upper layer will push it out just to the edge. Reserve the remaining lemon curd to garnish the buttercream.

Spread a little buttercream on a 9-inch cardboard round or serving plate and place one set of layers on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Spread the top of the first set of layers with about ¾ cup/6.5 ounces/183 grams of the buttercream. Set the second set of layers on top of the first. Frost the top and sides with the remaining buttercream. With a small metal spatula, make attractive swirls in the frosting. Refrigerate the cake for about 1 hour to set the buttercream. Swirl dollops of the reserved lemon curd into the buttercream. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake. Serve at room temperature.

Note

Green & Black's white chocolate contains vanilla seeds. If using another high-quality white chocolate such as Valrhona, which doesn't contain vanilla seeds, you can add 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract and the seeds of one vanilla bean to the white chocolate mixture.

Apple-Cinnamon Crumb Coffee Cake  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 55 to 65 minutes

Classic apple cake with crumb topping is an all-time American favorite, but here are two tricks to make it even better. A talented friend and colleague, Dede Wilson, suggested the first: melting the butter for the topping to make it crisper. I discovered the other: letting the cake set before adding the topping so that no crumbs sink into the batter or overbrown on the top due to baking too long. Soft, moist, and buttery, with a crunchy topping, this is now my idea of coffee cake nirvana.



Cinnamon Crumb Topping

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
walnut halves	1 cup	3.5	100
light brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	1/3 cup, firmly packed	2.5	72
granulated sugar	2 tablespoons	1	25
cinnamon	1½ teaspoons	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	½ cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus 1 tablespoon	2.2	65
unsalted butter, melted	4 tablespoons (½ stick)	2	57



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In a food processor, pulse the walnuts, brown sugar, granulated sugar, and cinnamon until the walnuts are coarsely chopped. Remove and set aside ½ cup to use for the filling. To the remainder, add the flour, butter, and vanilla and pulse briefly to form a coarse, crumbly mixture. Scrape it into a medium bowl and refrigerate it for about 20 minutes to firm up the butter and make it easier to crumble.

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
1 small tart apple such as Rhode Island Greening or Granny Smith .		5.5	155
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	2 teaspoons	.	.
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
sour cream	2/3 cup, divided	5.6	160
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	6
bleached all-purpose flour	1¾ cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	7	200
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking powder	½ teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	12 tablespoons (1½ sticks)	6	170

One 9 by 2½- to 3-inch springform pan, encircled with a cake strip (see [Note](#)), bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Just before mixing the batter, peel, core, and slice the apple ¼ inch thick (1 heaping cup/4.6 ounces/130 grams of slices). Sprinkle with lemon juice and set aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, 3 tablespoons of the sour cream, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining sour cream and mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Using a silicone spatula, scrape about two-thirds of the batter (18 ounces/510 grams) into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula. Using your fingers, sprinkle lightly with the reserved ½ cup crumb topping (do not press it into the batter) and top with two rows of overlapping apple slices. Drop the remaining batter in large blobs over the apples and spread it evenly.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 35 minutes.

Meanwhile, use your fingertips to pinch together the refrigerated crumb topping, breaking up the larger pieces so that about one-third of the mixture is formed into ¼-inch balls or clumps and the rest is in small particles. (Do not make them larger because they will be hard to cut when serving.) Let them fall onto a large piece of parchment and add the rest of the lightly pinched crumbs.

Remove the pan from the oven and gently place on a wire rack. Using the parchment as a funnel, quickly and evenly strew the surface with the crumb topping. Return the pan to the oven and continue baking for 20 to 30 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The crumb topping could make it a little difficult to test for doneness, so using an instant-read thermometer offers added insurance. An instant-read thermometer will register about 208°F/98°C.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Loosen the sides of the cake with a small metal spatula and remove the sides of the springform. Cool completely, about 1½ hours. If desired, transfer the cake to a serving plate.

Variation  
Peach-Cinnamon Crumb Coffee Cake

Instead of apples, substitute frozen peaches available year round. Thaw 1 heaping cup/6.5 ounces/184 grams frozen peaches on paper towels. Slice ¼ inch thick while still partially frozen.

Blueberry-Cinnamon Crumb Coffee Cake

Instead of apples, substitute an equal amount of small fresh or frozen blueberries. Scatter them evenly over the assembled cake batter before topping with the crumbs. They will sink during baking.

Note

A cake strip (see [Cake Strips](#)) helps to keep the crust from browning too deeply during the exceptionally long baking period.

Marble Velvet Cake  
Serves: 12 to 14  
Baking Time: 50 to 60 minutes

So many people have requested a marble cake that I promised them my next cake book would include one. This is a marriage of my favorite yellow sour cream—based layer cake to a variation of my favorite chocolate sour cream—based layer cake. All you have to do is melt your favorite bittersweet chocolate, add it to part of the batter, and swirl away. To dress it up for special occasions, add the ganache glaze.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		3	85
about 6 large egg yolks, at room temperature ¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons (3.5 fluid ounces)		4	112
sour cream	1 cup, divided	8.5	242
pure vanilla extract	2 teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	3 cups (or 2 2/3 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	10.5	300
superfine sugar	1½ cups	10.5	300
baking powder	1 teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	¾ teaspoon	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	2 sticks plus 2 tablespoons	9	255

Special Equipment

One 10-cup metal fluted tube pan, coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C (325°F/160°C if using a dark pan).

Melt the Chocolate

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Allow it to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the yolks, ¼ cup of the sour cream, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining sour cream. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in three parts, beating on medium speed for 20 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Remove almost one-third of the batter (1½ cups/12.5 ounces/354 grams) to a bowl and stir in the melted chocolate until uniform in color. Spoon one-third of the remaining batter into the prepared pan. Top with dollops of half the chocolate batter. Spread gently but evenly. Top with another third of the plain batter and then with dollops of the remaining chocolate batter. Spread evenly and top with the remaining third of the plain batter, spreading it evenly over the top.

Use a regular tablespoon to marbleize the batter lightly. Dip in the tablespoon, without touching the bottom or sides, and lift up and over in a folding motion, like the roll of a wave, six to eight times, going all around the pan. Smooth the surface evenly.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 50 to 60 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted between the tube and the side comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven. During baking it will rise above the center tube, but on cooling it will be almost level with the sides of the pan.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Loosen the cake by jiggling it up and down until it moves slightly. Invert it onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Cool completely before applying the glaze, if using.

Ganache Glaze

Makes: 2/3 cup/5.3 fluid ounces/6.5 ounces/184 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		4	113
heavy cream	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces)	2.7	77
Cognac (optional)	1 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Ganache Glaze

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a small glass bowl. In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine. Remove it to a small heatproof glass bowl.

In a 1-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), scald the cream (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery) and pour it over the chocolate. Cover the bowl for 5 minutes to allow the chocolate to melt. Using a silicone spatula, gently stir together the chocolate and cream until smooth, trying not to create air bubbles. Press the mixture through the strainer, stir in the Cognac, if using, and cool until tepid. A small amount of glaze dropped from a spoon should mound a bit before smoothly disappearing. If the glaze is too thick and the mound remains on the surface, or if the glaze seems curdled, add more warm cream 1 teaspoon at a time. When the consistency is correct, use the glaze at once, or store covered and reheat it.

Glaze the Cake

Set the cake on a serving plate. Pour the glaze evenly over the top of the cake, allowing it to drip down the sides and pool slightly on the serving plate.

Serve with a dollop of lightly sweetened, lightly [Whipped Cream](#).

Chocolate Streusel Coffee Cake  
Makes: One small Bundt-style cake and 2 cupcakes; serves 6 to 8  
Baking Time: 40 to 50 minutes (20 to 25 minutes for the cupcakes)

This terrific cake was adapted from pastry chef Claudia Fleming's gift to her customers when she was at 11 Madison Park. At the end of dinner, she presented it for the diner to enjoy for breakfast the next morning. I love how the cocoa streusel becomes chocolaty during baking and forms an attractive undulating layer in the middle of each slice of cake. If desired, you can make a total of twelve cupcakes instead of using the tube pan.



Chocolate Streusel Filling

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
light brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	3 tablespoons, firmly packed	1.5	40
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	2 tablespoons plus 1½ teaspoons (sifted before measuring)	0.5	12
cinnamon	¼ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Chocolate Streusel Filling

In a small bowl, stir together the brown sugar, cocoa, and cinnamon. Use a fork or your finger tips to break up the sugar, if necessary.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
bleached all-purpose flour	1¾ cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	7	200
baking powder	1½ teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	¼ plus 1/8 teaspoon	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	8 tablespoons (1 stick)	4	113
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
1 large egg, at room temperature	3 tablespoons	1.7	50
1 large egg white, at room temperature	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30

pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
sour cream	1 cup	8.5	242

Special Equipment

One 6-cup fluted metal tube pan, coated with baking spray with flour | 2 cupcake liners set in ramekins or custard cups

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C (325°F/160°C if using a dark pan).

Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, cream the butter on medium-high speed for 1 minute. Beat in the sugar slowly, taking about 2 minutes to beat it in, and then beat for another 2 minutes. With the mixer off, pour in the egg, egg white, and vanilla and scrape down the sides of the bowl onto the egg mixture. Beat on medium speed for 1 minute, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed.

With the mixer off between additions, add the flour mixture together with the sour cream in three parts. Beat each addition starting on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened, then raise the speed to medium and beat for 15 seconds. Scrape down the sides of the bowl after each addition.

Spoon the batter into the cupcake liners to fill half full. Sprinkle each with 1 teaspoon of the streusel filling and drop a spoonful of batter on top. Use a small offset spatula or the back of a spoon to smooth the batter. The batter should fill the liner almost to the top.

Using a silicone spatula or spoon, scrape about half of the remaining batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small metal spatula. Sprinkle the remaining streusel filling evenly over the batter, making a ring around the center of the batter to keep most of the streusel away from the outside and inside edges. Drop the remaining batter in large blobs over the filling and spread it evenly.

Bake the Cake and Cupcakes

Bake for 40 to 50 minutes (20 to 25 minutes for the cupcakes), or until the cake just begins to come away from the sides of the pan. In the cupcake liners, the cakes should spring back when pressed lightly in the center.

Cool and Unmold the Cakes

Let the cakes cool on wire racks in their pan and liners for 10 minutes. With a small metal spatula, loosen the top edges of the large cake and invert it onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Cool completely.

Note

The firm and dense crumb is moist but less rich than my [Apple-Cinnamon Crumb Coffee Cake](#) due to double the sour cream, balanced by less butter. This high amount of liquid necessitates the method of creaming the sugar and butter that enables the flour to remain less coated with the butter and to be able to absorb the extra liquid effectively.

Swedish Pear and Almond Cream Cake

Serves: 8 to 10

Baking Time: 50 to 60 minutes

This unusual cake was inspired by one I tasted in Sweden. During baking, a layer of almond cream and pear sinks almost to the bottom and becomes the top when unmolded. The pear adds luscious moisture to the crumb; the almond cream imbues it with lovely flavor. I especially love this cake served shortly after cooling, when the crust is still crunchy and the crumb is at its softest. However, it is still delicious for at least two days after baking.



Almond Cream Filling  
Makes: 14 tablespoons/8 ounces/227 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
almond paste	3 tablespoons plus ½ teaspoon	2	56
superfine sugar	¼ cup plus 1½ teaspoons	2	56
unsalted butter, cut into 3 pieces (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C); see <a href="#">Note</a>	4 tablespoons (½ stick)	2	57
1 large egg, at room temperature, lightly beaten (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	50
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	1½ tablespoons	0.5	14

Make the Almond Cream filling

In a food processor, pulse the almond paste and sugar until the almond paste is in fine particles. Add the butter and pulse until incorporated. Scrape down the sides. Add the egg, vanilla, and flour and pulse just until incorporated. It will be a soft cream. (To make in a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the almond paste and sugar on low speed. Add the butter and continue mixing until incorporated. Add the egg, vanilla, and flour and mix just until incorporated.) The cream can be covered and refrigerated for up to 1 week and frozen for up to 1 month.

Note

To prevent separation while mixing, the butter and eggs must not be cold. Almond cream thins if overmixed and during baking will melt into the batter and prevent the pears from sinking adequately into the cake.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
1 Bartlett pear	.	7.7	200
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	2 teaspoons	.	.
1 large egg, at room temperature	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	50
about 2 large egg yolks, at room temperature	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.3	37
sour cream	2/3 cup, divided	5.6	160

pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2 cups (or 1¾ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	7	200
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking powder	½ teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	¾ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	12 tablespoons (1½ sticks)	6	170

Special Equipment

One 10-cup fluted metal tube pan, coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C (325°F/160°C if using a dark pan).

Prepare the Pear Slices

Just before mixing the batter, peel, core, and slice the pear about 1/8 inch thick (about 1½ cups/7 ounces/200 grams). Sprinkle with the lemon juice.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the egg, yolks, 3 tablespoons of the sour cream, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining sour cream and mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan. With a small metal spatula, smooth the surface evenly and make a continuous shallow depression about ¼ inch deep in a circle around the middle of the batter; this is so the almond cream won't touch the edges of the pan or center tube. Spoon the almond cream into the depression. Top with two overlapping rows of pear slices.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 50 to 60 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted between the tube and the side comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Loosen the cake by jiggling it up and down until it moves slightly. Invert it onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Cool completely. Meanwhile, wash and dry the pan. Place it on top of the cake and invert the cake into the pan. Place a serving plate on top and reinvert the cake onto the plate.

Cradle Cake  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 45 to 55 minutes

Winner of the Pillsbury Bake-Off in 1950, Mrs. Stephen A. Hornoung's intriguing cake is truly magical. The egg yolks are used to make the batter and the egg whites to make a dacquoise (da-KWAHZ)—a meringue with a touch of bitter chocolate and nuts that cradles the cake batter as it bakes. When unmolded and inverted, the soft, tender cake is encased in its own crisp cloak.

I have substituted my best buttermilk cake for the original, but the dacquoise is unchanged. If desired, the addition of light whipped mocha ganache is a perfect adornment, adding another element of creaminess.

I like to bake this cake in a silicone pan because the sides come away very cleanly and easily.





Dacquoise

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
superfine sugar	½ cup, divided	3.5	100
pecan halves	½ cup	1.7	50
fine-quality unsweetened or 99% cacao chocolate, chopped .		0.5	14
2 large eggs, separated, at room temperature:			
yolks	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.3	37
whites	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	60

Special Equipment

One 9 by 5-inch loaf pan, preferably silicone, coated with baking spray with flour. If using a metal pan, line the bottom with a rectangle of parchment.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F/160°C.

Divide the Sugar

Place 1 tablespoon of the sugar in one bowl and the remaining sugar in another bowl.

Toast the Pecans

Spread the pecans evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes to enhance their flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely.

Grind the Pecans with the Chocolate and Sugar

Place the chocolate in the refrigerator for about 20 minutes.

In a food processor, process, with long pulses, the pecans, chilled chocolate, and the 1 tablespoon of sugar until finely ground.

Make the Dacquoise

Have the ingredients for the cake batter ready so that the dacquoise does not have to sit for too long before baking.

In a medium bowl, place the yolks and coat lightly with nonstick cooking spray to prevent a crust from forming. Set aside for the cake batter.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, pour in the egg whites. Beat the egg whites on medium-low speed until soft peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. Raise the speed to medium-high and gradually add the remaining sugar, beating until very glossy and stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. Fold in the pecan mixture until evenly incorporated. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the egg white mixture into the prepared pan. Spread it evenly in the bottom and three-quarters of the way up the sides, creating a long rectangular hollow in the center to



contain the batter. Set aside briefly while mixing the batter.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
2 egg yolks from above	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.3	37
low-fat buttermilk	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces), divided	2.7	81
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1 cup (or ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons), sifted into the cup and leveled off	3.5	100
superfine sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
baking powder	1½ teaspoons	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	4 tablespoons (½ stick)	2	57

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In the bowl with the reserved yolks, whisk in 1 tablespoon of the buttermilk and the vanilla just until lightly combined. Cover and set aside.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining buttermilk. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. The mixture will lighten in color and texture. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Spoon the batter into the dacquoise-lined pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small metal spatula. The batter will come just to the top of the dacquoise.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 45 to 55 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The dacquoise and cake batter will both rise, but toward the end of baking, the cake will dome a little above the dacquoise and split in the center.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack until the bottom is no longer warm to the touch. (In the metal pan, the cake can be unmolded after 20 minutes of cooling.) Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the sides of the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a serving plate. Cool completely. Uncovered, the unfrosted cake will keep for 2 days at room temperature. If desired, decorate the cradle cake with pecan halves and diagonal stripes of [Chocolate Drizzle Glaze](#).

Variation  
Ganache-Enrobed Cradle Cake

Frost the cradle cake with 1½ cups/9 ounces/225 grams of [Mocha Whipped Ganache](#). Make a three-quarter recipe using 3 ounces/85 grams chocolate and ¾ cup/6 ounces/174 grams cream. Leave out the coffee, if desired. When the cake is completely cool, up to 1 hour before serving, apply the ganache, if using. Slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Then, frost the top and sides with the ganache, making little swirls with a spatula. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake before serving.

Sicilian Pistachio Cake  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 35 to 45 minutes

Although I wanted to create this cake for The Cake Bible, twenty years ago, blanched bright-green, flavorful pistachio nuts, at least the high-quality ones, were all but unattainable for the home baker. Today, there are some sources for top-quality Iranian, Sicilian, and Californian pistachios that I can recommend (see [Pistachios](#)).

On a trip to Sicily, made especially memorable by the eruption of Mount Etna, I actually encountered the very cake I had dreamed of. I created the silky buttercream with golden syrup to add an especially lovely and elusive flavor component to the cake.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
sour cream	2/3 cup, divided	5.6	160
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.
pure almond extract	½ teaspoon	.	.
blanched pistachios	1/3 cup	2	56
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2 cups (or 1¾ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	7	200
baking powder	½ teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	12 tablespoons (1½ sticks)	6	170

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, 3 tablespoons of the sour cream, the vanilla, and almond extract, just until lightly combined.

Grind the Pistachios

In a food processor, process the pistachios with the sugar until finely ground but not to a powder.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, the pistachio mixture, the baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining sour cream. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cake so that the top side is up. Cool completely.

Golden Neoclassic Buttercream  
Makes: 2 cups/15.7 ounces/448 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
about 3 large egg yolks	3½ tablespoons (1.7 fluid ounces)	2	56
superfine sugar	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons	2.6	75
golden syrup or light corn syrup	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	3	85
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	1 teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
pistachio essence (optional)	3 drops	.	.
blanched pistachio nuts, slivered or coarsely chopped	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon	3	85

Beat the Egg Yolks

Have ready a 1-cup heatproof glass measure, lightly coated with nonstick cooking spray.

In a medium bowl, with a handheld mixer, beat the yolks until light in color. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, preferably nonstick, combine the sugar, golden syrup, and lemon juice. Using a silicone spatula, stir until all the sugar is moistened. Heat over medium-high, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the syrup begins to boil around the edges. Stop stirring and continue cooking for a few minutes, until the syrup comes to a rolling boil. (The entire surface will be covered with large bubbles.) Immediately transfer the syrup to the glass measure to stop the cooking.

Complete the Buttercream

If using a handheld mixer, beat the syrup into the yolks in a steady stream. Don't allow the syrup to fall on the beaters or the beaters will spin it onto the sides of the bowl. If using a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, with the mixer turned off, pour a small amount of syrup over the yolks. Immediately beat on high speed for 5 seconds. Stop the mixer and add a larger amount of syrup. Beat on high speed for 5 seconds. Continue with the remaining syrup. For the last addition, use a silicone spatula to remove the syrup clinging to the glass measure and scrape it off against the beater. Continue beating for 5 minutes. Then allow it to cool completely. To speed cooling, place the bowl in an ice water bath (see [Water Baths](#)) or in the refrigerator, stirring occasionally.

When cool, beat in the butter 1 tablespoon at a time on medium speed. The buttercream will not thicken until almost all of the butter has been added. Add the vanilla and pistachio essence, if using, and beat on low speed until incorporated.

Place the buttercream in an airtight bowl. Use it at once (it will have a slight crunch until it stands for several hours) or up to 4 hours later. If you are keeping it longer, refrigerate it and bring it to room temperature before using. To restore its texture, rebeat it, but not until it has reached room temperature, in order to avoid curdling.

Highlights for Success

The sugar syrup must be boiling all over the surface before pouring it into the eggs in order to thicken properly.

Using a handheld beater makes it easier to keep the syrup from spinning onto the sides of the bowl. The egg and syrup mixture must be completely cool to the touch before you add the butter.

For the finest crystal structure, be sure to use superfine sugar.

If the flavor of your pistachio nuts is on the mild side, 3 drops of pistachio essence (see La Cuisine in [Ingredients Sources](#)) added to the buttercream or even to the cake will do much to intensify the flavor.

Compose the Cake

When the cake is completely cool, spread a little buttercream on a 9-inch cardboard round or serving plate and set the cake on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Frost the top and sides with swirls of buttercream. Coat the top and sides with the slivered or chopped pistachios. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

Gâteau Breton  
Serves: 10 to 12  
Baking Time: 35 to 45 minutes

Gâteau Breton is crisp like a pastry around the outside edge, but has a soft, dense, and moist interior. In Brittany, this gâteau (ga-TOH), a cross between shortbread and pound cake, is made with equal parts butter, sugar, and flour, but with about one-third eggs. (If it were to have an equal part of eggs, it would be the ubiquitous quatre-quarts, or "pound cake.") This recipe is most similar to my favorite of all pastries, Gâteau Basque in The Pie and Pastry Bible. The Gâteau Basque is less rich because it has a little less sugar, only half the butter, and half the eggs, making it more like a pastry than a cake. Interesting that the two regions in France are so separated geographically yet came up with such similar gâteaux.

For my interpretation of Gâteau Breton, I have decreased the sugar to 60 percent of the flour and added ground almonds for extra flavor and subtle texture. Since the success of this recipe depends on the best-quality high-fat butter, I use Organic Valley European-Style Cultured Butter with 84 percent butterfat or Vermont cultured butter with 86 percent butterfat, which are similar to the butters of Normandy and Brittany. Plugra, which has 80 percent butterfat and is not "cultured," is also an excellent choice. When beating in the egg yolks, the higher-fat butter emulsifies the yolks smoothly and quickly. But with lower butterfat butter the finished texture is just as good.

Gâteau Breton is most cakelike on day one, but it progressively approaches the shortbread spectrum and is still excellent even after a week at room temperature. Another of this cake's virtues is that it is exceptionally quick and easy to prepare.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
blanched sliced almonds	½ cup	1.5	42
superfine sugar	¾ cup, divided	5.3	150
salt (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	¼ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter, preferably high fat (or high-quality lightly salted butter), 65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	2 sticks plus 2 tablespoons (or 2½ sticks)	9 (or 10)	255 (or 284)
about 4 large egg yolks, at room temperature	¼ cup plus ½ tablespoon (2.6 fluid ounces)	2.6	74

kirsch, dark rum, or water	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.5	15
pure vanilla extract	1¼ teaspoons	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	2 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus 3 tablespoons	8.7	250
1 whole egg, lightly beaten	about 1 tablespoon	.	.

### Special Equipment

One 9½ by 1 3/8-inch (or 1-inch) fluted tart pan with removable bottom, preferably nonstick (see [Notes](#)), set on a rimmed baking pan, or one 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, coated with baking spray with flour

### Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F/160°C.

### Toast and Grind the Almonds

Spread the almonds evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes, or until pale gold. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely. In a food processor, process the almonds with about ¼ cup of the sugar and the salt until fairly fine but not powder fine.

### Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix together the remaining sugar and the butter on medium speed for about 1 minute until smooth and creamy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Beat in the yolks, 1 at a time, beating for about 20 seconds between each addition. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Add the almond mixture, kirsch, and vanilla and mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for about 20 seconds until evenly incorporated. Add the flour in four parts, beating on the lowest speed for about 15 seconds and turning off the mixer between additions. Detach the beater and, with a silicone spatula, finish mixing in any flour that may remain, reaching to the bottom of the bowl. Using the silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula. If you are using a 1-inch-high tart pan, the batter will be about ¼ inch from the top of the pan and will rise to about ¼ inch above the top during baking. In a 1 3/8-inch-high pan, the batter will be about 1 inch from the top and rise to about 3/8 inch from the top. (If using a cake pan, the gâteau will rise higher and dip slightly in the middle.)

### Glaze the Top of the Cake

With the beaten egg, brush the top of the cake well, using a little less than 1 tablespoon. Use the tines of a fork to make a crosshatch of three to five long lines in two directions. (If the batter has softened, refrigerate or freeze it briefly to make it more firm.) The fork lines will help prevent the batter from puffing up unevenly and after baking will leave a bare tracing.

### Bake the Cake

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, or until deep golden brown and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. It should just begin to come away from the sides of the pan. An instant-read thermometer will register about 205°F/96°C.

### Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. If using a pan with a removable bottom, remove the sides of the pan. Invert the cake onto a cookie sheet and remove the pan bottom. Reinvert it onto a serving plate. Cool completely.

### Notes

My favorite fluted tart pan is nonstick and 9½ by 1 3/8 inches. It is manufactured by Gobel (see JB Prince in [Equipment Sources](#) or La Cuisine in [Ingredients Sources](#))

If using Vermont salted butter, which is lightly salted, use only 1/8 teaspoon salt. Butter that is 80 percent fat contains about 2 tablespoons more water than the 86 percent, which will result in a slightly moister crumb. If you prefer a moister crumb and you want to use the higher 86 percent butter, you can add 2 tablespoons water to the batter when adding the almonds. (If using 84 percent butter, you can add 4 teaspoons water.)

Golden Baker's sugar from India Tree (See [Ingredients Sources](#)) imparts an especially lovely flavor to this cake.

### Sticky Toffee "Pudding"

Serves: 12

Baking Time: 25 to 30 minutes

Jenn Giblin, pastry chef of Blue Smoke, came up with this stellar version of this popular dessert. She uses stout beer, giving it the most compelling flavor of any I have tasted. The cake, which in England is referred to as a pudding, dissolves in your mouth.

The toffee sauce is the ideal accompaniment; it absorbs deliciously about an eighth inch into the top of the cake. An additional and unusual accompaniment, served by pastry chef Letty Flatt, is vanilla ice cream flavored with root beer extract.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
stout beer, preferably Guinness extra stout (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8	227
baking soda	1 teaspoon	.	.
large dates, pitted (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	about 6	6	170
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	6 tablespoons (¾ stick)	3	85
sugar	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons	8	225
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
bleached all-purpose flour	2 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	8	228
baking powder	1 teaspoon	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
cinnamon	1 teaspoon	.	.
nutmeg	½ teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

One 9 by 13-inch baking pan, bottom coated with solid shortening, lined with parchment (no need to coat the parchment or sides) | Baking sheet, lined with plastic wrap and coated with nonstick cooking spray | Baking sheet or cutting board

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C. (If using a Pyrex or dark pan, bake at 300°F/150°C).

Prepare the Dates

In a small saucepan, bring the beer to the boiling point. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the baking soda. It will fizz up a lot. Pour the beer



mixture over the pitted dates. Set aside to cool to room temperature.

Remove the dates to a food processor and add a little of the beer mixture. Process until a paste is formed. Gradually add the rest of the liquid through the feed tube. The mixture will be very smooth, dark, and glossy. Scrape it into a bowl and keep it covered until ready to use.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the butter, sugar, and vanilla on medium speed until light and fluffy. In a small bowl, lightly whisk the eggs. With the mixer on medium speed, gradually add the eggs in three additions, scraping down the sides of the bowl after each addition. (The mixture may appear curdled, but after adding the flour, it will be smooth.)

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Add one-third of the flour mixture to the batter and mix on low speed for 10 to 15 seconds just until incorporated. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add half the date mixture and mix just until incorporated, about 15 seconds. Repeat with another third of the flour mixture, then the remaining date mixture, and finally the remaining flour mixture. Mix just until the batter is uniform in color and no streaks remain. Scrape the sides of the bowl as needed. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with an offset spatula. The pan will be about one-third full.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 15 minutes, rotate the pan halfway, and continue baking for another 10 to 15 minutes, or until a wire cake tester comes out clean when inserted in the center and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. While the cake is baking, make the toffee sauce.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the pan cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto the prepared baking sheet. Reinvert it onto the second sheet or cutting board. Serve at once or reheat for 5 minutes in a 350°F/175°C oven. The cake will be about 1¼ inches at the sides and 1½ inches in the center.

Notes

If measuring rather than weighing, pour the beer carefully against the side of the measuring cup to prevent foaming. If there is some foam, allow it to settle so you can get an accurate measure.

If you desire more texture, reserve two of the dates and pulse them in, after you have processed the date mixture, until only small pieces remain.

Butterscotch Toffee Sauce  
Makes: 2¼ cups/18 fluid ounces/20 ounces/572 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	1 cup, firmly packed	8.5	239
1 vanilla bean	.	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227
heavy cream	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4	116
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	31
salt	1/8 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Butterscotch Toffee Sauce

In a small saucepan, place the brown sugar. With a small sharp knife, split the vanilla bean lengthwise in half. Scrape the vanilla bean seeds into the sugar. Rub the seeds in with your fingers. Remove and reserve the pod. With a silicone spatula, stir in the butter.

Bring the mixture to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the heavy cream, lemon juice, salt, and the reserved vanilla pod. The mixture will be slightly grainy but will become totally smooth on standing. Reheat, if necessary, and remove the vanilla pod before serving.

Pecan and Crème Fraîche Topping

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
pecan halves	1¼ cups	4.5	125
crème fraîche, lightly whipped	¾ cup	6	174

Toast the Pecans

Spread the pecans evenly on a baking sheet and bake in a preheated 350°F/175°C oven for about 7 minutes to enhance their flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely. Break or chop them coarsely and set aside.

Complete the Sticky Toffee "Pudding"

Cut the pudding into thirds the long way and fourths the short way. Set each portion on a serving plate. Pour 3 tablespoons of the toffee sauce on top of each serving, allowing it to cascade over the sides and pool onto the plate. Sprinkle the lightly toasted pecan pieces over billowy dollops of crème fraîche.

Variation  
Individual Sticky Toffee "Puddings"

Bake as individual puddings in small ramekins or brioche molds filled about half full. (Using ¾-cup ramekins will yield 12 puddings; the standard ½-cup brioche mold will yield 18 puddings.)

English Gingerbread Cake  
Serves: 12 to 16  
Baking Time: 50 to 60 minutes

Kyle Cathie, editor for the British version of The Cake Bible (and now a publisher), informed me in no uncertain terms that a book could not be called a cake "bible" in England if it did not contain the beloved gingerbread cake. When I went to England to retest all the cakes using British flour and ingredients, I developed this gingerbread recipe. Now that I have tasted it, I quite agree with Kyle. It is a moist spicy cake with an intriguing blend of buttery, lemony, wheaty, and treacly flavors. Cut into squares and decorated with pumpkin faces, it makes a delightful "treat" for Halloween.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	8 tablespoons (1 stick)	4	113
golden syrup or light corn syrup	1¼ cups (10 fluid ounces)	15	425
dark brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	¼ cup, firmly packed	2	60
orange marmalade	1 heaping tablespoon	1.5	40
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
milk	2/3 cup (5.3 fluid ounces)	5.6	160
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (or 1 cup), sifted into the cup and leveled off	4	115
whole wheat flour	1 cup minus 1 tablespoon (lightly spooned into the cup)	4	115



baking powder	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cinnamon	1 teaspoon	.	.
ground ginger	1 teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	pinch	.	.

Special Equipment

One 8 by 2-inch square cake pan or 9 by 2-inch round pan (see [Note](#)), wrapped with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment square (or round), then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F/160°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a small heavy saucepan, stir together the butter, golden syrup, sugar, and marmalade over medium-low heat until melted and uniform in color. Set aside uncovered until just barely warm, about 10 minutes. Whisk in the eggs and milk.

Make the Batter

In a large bowl, whisk together the cake flour, whole wheat flour, baking powder, cinnamon, ginger, baking soda, and salt. Add the butter mixture, stirring with a large silicone spatula or spoon just until smooth and the consistency of thick soup. Using the silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 50 to 60 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. While the cake is cooling, make the syrup.

Lemon Butter Syrup

Makes: 1/3 cup/2.6 fluid ounces/3 ounces/85 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sugar	3 tablespoons	1.3	38
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	2 tablespoons	1	31
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	2 tablespoons	1	28

Make the Lemon Butter Syrup

In a small pan, stir together the sugar, lemon juice, and butter. Heat over medium-low heat, stirring, until the butter is melted and the sugar is dissolved.

Apply the Syrup and Unmold the Cake

Brush half the syrup over the top of the cake. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Brush the bottom with the remaining syrup. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cake onto a serving plate so that the top is up. For extra moistness, cover the cake with plastic wrap while still hot and allow it to cool. Wrap airtight for 24 hours before serving.

Variation  
Halloween Gingerbread Squares

For a pumpkin motif, cut the cake into 2-inch squares. Make a pumpkin template of your own design using parchment. Lay it on top of one of the pieces of cake and sprinkle it with powdered sugar. Lift off the template and repeat with the remaining cake pieces.

Note

Some metal pans slope inward and are less than 8 inches at the bottom. In this case, it is better to use a 9-inch square cake pan or fill the sloped pan half full and bake the excess batter as cupcakes. The capacity of the pan should be 8 cups.

Fruitcake Wreath  
Serves: 14 to 16  
Baking Time: 60 to 70 minutes

This version of fruitcake was inspired by one that was given to me for Christmas a few years ago by the French Culinary Institute. It changed my thinking about glacéed fruit. I discovered that high-quality glacéed fruit, particularly orange and lemon peel (see ChefShop in [Ingredients Sources](#)), when soaked in dark rum is absolutely delicious, providing the ideal vehicle for absorbing a large quantity of the rum.

In addition to the glacéed fruit, what makes this fruitcake especially delicious is that it is studded with an enormous quantity of walnuts and pecans. The cake is delicious to eat the day after baking, but with periodic sprinkling with rum after baking, it can hold for months and months at room temperature, mellowing and deepening in complexity of flavor. For a party presentation, decorate with marzipan candles, using sliced almonds as flames (see [Marzipan Candles](#)).

Plan Ahead

Soak the fruit at least 1 week ahead. Bake the cake at least 12 hours ahead.



Glacéed Fruit Filling  
Makes: about 4 cups/23.7 ounces/670 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
glacéed mixed fruit, preferably lemon and orange peel	1½ cups	7.5	210
golden raisins	1½ cups	7	200
glacéed red cherries	1 cup	5.3	150
dark rum	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4	110

Special Equipment

Quart-size canning jar | One 10-cup wreath mold, coated with baking spray with flour (see [Note](#)) | Cheesecloth, if planning to store the cake for several weeks or longer

Make the Glacéed fruit Filling

In a quart-size canning jar, combine the glacéed mixed fruit, raisins, glacéed cherries, and rum. Screw the cap on tightly and lay down the jar on one of its sides. Allow it to sit for a week, turning it one-quarter turn every day or so. By the end of the week, almost all the rum will have been absorbed into the fruit. The fruit keeps indefinitely.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
pecan halves	4 cups	14	400

walnut halves	2 cups	7	200
unsalted butter	2½ sticks	10	284
dark brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	1 cup, firmly packed	8.5	239
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
unbleached all-purpose flour	2 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	8	228
baking powder	1 teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	1/8 teaspoon	.	.
salt	¾ teaspoon	.	.
Glacéed Fruit Filling	about 4 cups	23.5	666
dark rum (optional)	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4	110

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C (325°F/160°C if using a dark pan).

Toast the Pecans and Walnuts

Spread the nuts evenly on a large sheet pan and bake for about 7 minutes to enhance their flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, beat the batter until smooth and creamy. Add the brown sugar and beat on medium speed for about 2 minutes, or until well combined. With the mixer on, add the eggs, 1 at a time, beating for 15 seconds after each addition.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Add the flour mixture to the batter and beat on low speed until evenly combined. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the macerated fruit, along with any liquid remaining in the jar, and mix on low speed for about 1 minute. Add the pecans and walnuts and mix for 5 to 10 seconds, or until thoroughly combined. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the mixture into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula. The batter will come almost to the top of the pan.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 60 to 70 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should just barely begin to shrink from the sides of the pan. An instant-read thermometer will register about 190°F/88°C.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. While it is cooling, brush the top evenly with half the rum, if using. Set a serving plate on top of the cake and invert the cake onto the plate. Brush the top and sides of the cake with the remaining rum. Cool completely. Allow it to sit for a minimum of 12 hours so that it is firm enough to cut. It cuts best and crumbles least when well chilled.

Note

You can also use two 9 by 5-inch loaf pans or two 10-cup fluted tube pans, filling each with half the batter. Baking time will be between 65 and 75 minutes in the loaf pans and between 45 and 55 minutes in the fluted tube pans. (Don't be tempted to pour all the batter into one 10-cup fluted tube pan as it is much deeper than the 10-cup wreath pan, and this dense batter will not bake evenly. You can, however, use two 6-cup fluted tube pans. The batter will rise a little past the tops of the pans.) Rotate the loaf pans and tent loosely with foil after the first 45 minutes of baking.

Special Unmolding Instructions for Long Storage

If you are planning to store the cake for several weeks, months, or even years, you will need to drape it in rum-soaked cheesecloth, wrap it in plastic wrap, and then in heavy-duty aluminum foil. It will require a total of 1 cup/8 fluid ounces/8 ounces/220 grams rum. You will also need a 12-inch cardboard round as a base to support it.

Brush the baked cake with ¼ cup rum and allow it to cool completely in the pan. Cut a double layer of cheesecloth large enough to wrap the entire cake, two 36-inch-long strips of plastic wrap, and one 36 by 18-inch sheet of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Before unmolding the cake, soak the cheesecloth with 1/3 to ½ cup rum and drape it over the cake. Then crisscross the plastic wrap over the cheesecloth, allowing it to extend over the sides. Place the cardboard round on top, invert the cake on it, and set the cake on the aluminum foil. Brush the top and sides with the remaining rum. Bring up the sides of the cheesecloth and drape it over the top of the cake. Bring up the strips of plastic wrap to encase the entire cake.

Finally, bring up the sides of the aluminum foil, wrapping the cake tightly. Every 3 months, open the aluminum foil and plastic wrap and sprinkle another ¼ cup rum over the cheesecloth before resealing it.

Rose Red Velvet Cake  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 25 to 35 minutes

I long resisted the charms of this cake, believing it to be merely a layer cake tinted red with a bottle of food coloring. But when several people on my blog sang its praises, I decided to investigate it more thoroughly. It turns out that there is more to this cake than its shocking color. This beloved southern cake is traditionally prepared with oil, a mere suspicion of cocoa, and a teaspoon of white vinegar, which raises the acidity of the batter and intensifies its color. The liquid component is usually buttermilk, which is thought to raise the acidity as well, although the baking soda normally used neutralizes most of the acidity and makes the crumb more coarse and the color darker.

So, when I created my version of this classic, I used only baking powder to employ the full acidity of the buttermilk, making vinegar unnecessary. I also used half oil and half butter for the flavor-enhancing qualities of butter and the moist, softening quality of the oil. The resulting cake is as flavorful and tender as you can hope for and stays soft enough to eat even straight from the fridge. A heart-shape pan is perfect for Valentine's Day. And the contrast of the white chocolate cream cheese buttercream against the red cake is alluring.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
3 large egg whites, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.2	90
red food color (1 bottle); see <a href="#">Notes</a>	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2 cups (or 1¾ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	7	200
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking powder	3 teaspoons	.	.
unsweetened cocoa powder (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	1 teaspoon	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	58
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	4 tablespoons (½ stick)	2	57
low-fat buttermilk	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	121

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch heart-shape or round cake pan (8 to 8 2/3 cups), encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with parchment cut to shape, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the egg whites, red food color, and vanilla just until lightly combined. (Caution: Be careful with the red food color: it stains effectively, but also unmercifully.)

Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, cocoa, and salt.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the oil and butter on medium speed for 1 minute. It will not be completely smooth. (Before measuring or weighing the buttermilk, shake the container to mix it thoroughly.) Add the flour mixture and buttermilk. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture to the batter in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until the wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cake so that the top side is up. Cool completely.

Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting  
Makes: almost 1 cup/7.6 ounces/216 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
white chocolate containing cocoa butter, chopped .	3	85	
cream cheese, softened but still cool .	4	113	
unsalted butter, softened but still cool (65°F/19°C) 2 tablespoons 1		28	
crème fraîche or sour cream	½ tablespoon	0.2	7
almond extract	1/8 teaspoon .	.	

Melt the White Chocolate

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the white chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Allow it to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid.

Make the Frosting

In a food processor, process the cream cheese, butter, and crème fraîche for a few seconds until smooth and creamy. Scrape down the sides. Add the cooled melted white chocolate and pulse it in a few times until it is smoothly incorporated. Add the almond extract and pulse it in.

Highlights for Success

Use white chocolate containing cocoa butter, such as Green & Black's with vanilla seeds or Valrhona.

The frosting becomes more firm in the refrigerator.

For a whiter frosting without the subtle flavor of the white chocolate, you can replace the white chocolate with 1 cup (lightly spooned into the cup)/4 ounces/115 grams powdered sugar and ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract.

Compose the Cake

When the cake is completely cool, set it on a serving plate. Frost the top with swirls of buttercream.

Notes

Some people have a problem with the idea of using red food color and use beet juice in its place. In recipes using baking soda, the beet juice would turn brown, but with this highly acidic batter, the crumb will stay red, though not as pretty a red as offered by the food color. The best way to harvest beet juice is to roast the well-washed beets in their skins, leaving an inch of root and stems, in an aluminum foil package at 350°/175°C for about 45 minutes for medium beets, up to about 1 hour and 15 minutes for large ones. Remove the beets and use the foil to pour the beet juice into a small container.

For a distinct chocolate flavor, you can use up to ¼ cup cocoa/0.7 ounce/21 grams, sifted before measuring, but decrease the flour by the same amount. The color will be a much darker red.

Chocolate Tomato Cake with Mystery Ganache  
Serves: 16 to 20  
Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

I created this cake for the Campbell's Kids fiftieth birthday and brought it in to the New York Stock Exchange for the company celebration and honor of ringing the opening bell for the stock market. (Getting through security was harder than making the cake.) I decorated the cake with a pastillage model of "the Kids" and made a ring of Pirouette Rolled Wafer Cookies around the cake to serve as candles. The flames were piped with buttercream tinted red.

This cake is great for a party. No one will ever guess the mystery ingredient. Tomato adds both a deeper color and intriguing zing to the chocolate. Don't worry about the absence of salt in the ingredients—it's in the soup.

Plan Ahead

Make the ganache several hours before using.



Batter	Volume		Ounce Gram	
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	3	85	
condensed tomato soup, preferably Campbell's (1 can)	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	10.7	305	
4 large eggs, at room temperature	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	7	200	
pure vanilla extract	1 tablespoon	.	.	
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	3 cups plus 2 tablespoons (or 2¾ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	11	312	

superfine sugar	2 cups	14	400
baking powder	1½ teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	3½ sticks	14	400

Special Equipment

Two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, encircled with cake strips, bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the cocoa, tomato soup, eggs, and vanilla until smooth.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and baking soda on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and half the cocoa mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, with the mixer off between additions, add the remaining cocoa mixture in two parts. Beat on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pans, being sure to press the thick and fluffy batter against the sides of the pans, and smooth the surfaces evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean and the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers. The cakes should start to shrink from the sides of the pans only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cakes

Let the cakes cool in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and invert the cakes onto wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cakes so that the top sides are up. Cool completely. The cakes will be slightly smaller at the tops (more so if you haven't pressed the batter up against the sides of the pans).

Mystery Ganache  
Makes: 3 cups/26.6 ounces/754 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped	.	12	340
heavy cream	almost 1½ cups (12 fluid ounces)	12	340
condensed tomato soup, preferably Campbell's	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2.6	75
4-inch Pirouette Rolled Wafer Cookies, preferably Pepperidge Farm brand (2 cans; optional)	about 59	27	765
red-tinted buttercream and red or clear piping gel (it's fine to use the Wilton tubed variety; see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1 tube	4.2	120
	1 tube	1.3	38

Special Equipment

(Optional) Pastry bag fitted with a small star decorating tip (number 21 or 22) | (Optional) Small clean artist's paintbrush

Make the Mystery Ganache

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.



In a 4-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a medium saucepan, stirring often), whisk together the cream and tomato soup and scald it (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream mixture through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Scrape the ganache into a glass bowl and allow it to sit for 1 hour. Cover it with plastic wrap and allow it to cool at room temperature for several hours, or until the mixture reaches frosting consistency. The ganache keeps for 3 days at room temperature, for 3 weeks refrigerated, and for 6 months frozen.

Compose the Cake

When the cakes are completely cool, spread a little ganache on a serving plate and set the first layer on top. Slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean.

Spread about 1 cup of the ganache over the layer. Place the second layer on top and use the remainder to frost the top and sides. With the tip of a 1¼-inch-wide metal spatula, make wavy lines through the ganache on top of the cake. Slowly slide the paper strips from under the cake. If storing the cake under a cake dome, allow the ganache to set for a minimum of 3 hours or overnight before applying the Pirouettes or the moisture from the ganache will soften them.

To surround the cake with the Pirouettes, you may first have to trim them to about 4 inches, using a small serrated knife. Repair any broken ones using ganache and press them gently against the sides of the cake. The ganache will hold them in place. If the ganache becomes too firm, heat it by applying a spatula run under hot tap water and dried.

If desired, pipe little flames of red buttercream on top of each Pirouette. If not using a coupler or tip that screws on to the tube of buttercream, hold the small star decorating tip in place with your hand. Hold the tube of buttercream in a vertical position over the Pirouette and squeeze with your free hand to pipe the flame onto the top of the cookie. Allow it to dry until set, about 30 minutes. As a further option, you can enhance the look of the "flames" by painting them lightly with piping gel, brushing them very gently with the artist's paintbrush from the bottom of the flame to the tip.

Note

Wilton decorating buttercreams and gels come in a variety of colors and are available at cake decorating supply stores and from Wilton ([See Equipment Sources](#)).

Chocolate-Covered Strawberry Cake  
Serves: 16 to 20  
Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes (25 to 30 minutes for the cupcakes)

This cake is a study in contrasts: a soft white cake filled with creamy pale-pink strawberry mousseline buttercream and encased in Miss Irene Thompson's dark, slightly sticky chocolate frosting.

This unique frosting was inspired by Ariane Batterberry, co-publisher of Food Arts magazine. The recipe was given to her by Miss Thompson on her deathbed with the promise that if it ever was published, it would bear her name. The original recipe contained a huge amount of powdered sugar, but I have adapted it to a more contemporary bittersweet version, replacing the sugar with extra corn syrup, which enhances its sticky quality. Though its consistency is more firm and fudgy than any other chocolate frosting, it holds well to the cake because of its delectable stickiness, but it is very tricky to apply, requiring the patience of a craftsperson. It is well worth the effort, however. Once it sets up, you can touch it or even mold it with your fingers.

I love to hear the surprised gasps and ummms of immense delight when I cut the cake and the beautiful layers are revealed. When I made it as a surprise for Michael Batterberry's birthday, what pleased him most was the unusual intensity of the strawberry buttercream.



white chocolate containing cocoa butter, chopped (see <a href="#">Note</a> ) .		8	227
6 large egg whites, at room temperature	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.3	180
milk	1 1/3 cups (10.6 fluid ounces), divided	11.3	322
pure vanilla extract	1 tablespoon	.	.
sifted cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	4 cups (or 3½ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	14	400
superfine sugar	1½ cups	10.6	300
baking powder	5½ teaspoons	.	.
salt	1 teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	12 tablespoons (1½ sticks)	6	170

Special Equipment

Two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, encircled with cake strips, bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour | 2 cupcake liners set in ramekins or custard cups

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Melt the White Chocolate

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the white chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Allow it to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the egg whites, 1/3 cup of the milk, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining milk. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture to the batter in three parts, beating on medium speed for 20 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the melted white chocolate and beat to incorporate it, about 10 seconds. Spoon the batter into the cupcake liners, filling them two-thirds full. Using a silicone spatula, divide the remaining batter between the prepared pans and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula. Each pan will be about half full (26 ounces/735 grams).

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes (25 to 30 minutes for the cupcakes), or until golden brown, a wire cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean, and the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers. The cakes should start to shrink from the sides of the pans only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cakes

Let the cakes cool in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and invert the cakes onto wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cakes so that the top sides are up. Cool completely. Cool the cupcakes in their liners. Freeze the cupcakes for future enjoyment or top them with a little of the strawberry mousseline.

Note

Be sure to use white chocolate that contains cocoa butter (not palm kernel oil or any other fat) for the cake batter because that is the secret to its luxurious texture.

Strawberry Mousseline

Makes: about 3½ cups/23.5 ounces/666 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsalted butter, preferably high fat, slightly softened but cool (65°F/19°C); see <a href="#">Notes</a>	2½ sticks	10	284
3 large egg whites, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.2	90
sugar	2/3 cup, divided	4.6	132
water	3 tablespoons	1.5	44
cream of tartar	¼ plus 1/8 teaspoon	.	.
tart strawberry butter (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	2/3 cup plus ½ cup, divided	6.7 plus 5	190 plus 142
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.
3 drops red food color (optional)	.	.	.

Beat the Butter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, beat the butter on medium-high speed until creamy, about 1 minute. Set aside in a cool place (no higher than 70°F/21°C).

Prepare the Egg Whites

Pour the egg whites into the bowl of a stand mixer, if you have a second mixer bowl, or into a medium bowl and have ready a handheld mixer.

Heat the Sugar Syrup

Have ready a 1-cup or larger heatproof glass measure.

In a small heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, stir together all but 3 tablespoons of the sugar and the water until all of the sugar is moistened. Heat on medium, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the mixture is bubbling. Stop stirring and reduce the heat to low. (If using an electric range, remove the pan from the heat.)

Beat the Egg Whites

If using the stand mixer for the egg whites, attach the whisk beater. Beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining 3 tablespoons of the sugar until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Bring the Sugar Syrup Up to the Proper Temperature

Increase the heat under the sugar syrup and continue to boil the syrup for a few minutes until an instant-read thermometer registers 248° to 250°F/120°C (the firm-ball stage). Immediately transfer the syrup to the glass measure to stop the cooking.

Add the Sugar Syrup to the Egg Whites

If using a stand mixer, with the mixer off to keep it from spinning onto the sides of the bowl, add the syrup to the egg whites. Begin by pouring in a small amount of syrup. Immediately beat on high speed for 5 seconds. Add the remaining syrup the same way in three parts. For the last addition, use a silicone scraper to remove the syrup clinging to the glass measure and scrape it off against the whisk beater. If the syrup has hardened before most of it has been poured, soften it to pouring consistency for a few seconds in the microwave.

If using a handheld mixer, beat the syrup into the egg whites in a steady stream. Don't allow the syrup to fall on the beaters or they will spin it onto the sides of the bowl. Lower the speed to medium and continue beating for up to 2 minutes. Refrigerate the meringue for 5 to 10 minutes, or until the temperature registers 70°F/21°C. Whisk after the first 5 minutes to test and equalize the temperature.

Beat the Meringue into the Butter

Set the mixer bowl containing the butter in the stand mixer and attach the whisk beater (no need to wash it). Beat on medium-high speed for about 3 minutes, or until the butter lightens in color and is no warmer than 70°F/21°C.

Scrape the meringue into the butter and beat on medium speed until smooth and creamy. Beat for about 2 minutes, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary. At first the mixture will look slightly curdled. If it starts watering out, check the temperature. The mixture should feel cool and be no lower than 65°F/19°C, no higher than 70°F/21°C. If it is too warm, set the bowl in a larger bowl of ice water and stir gently to chill it down

before continuing to whisk. If it is too cool, suspend the bowl over a pan of simmering water (don't let the bottom of the bowl touch the water) and heat very briefly, stirring vigorously when the mixture just starts to melt slightly at the edges. To stop the warming, dip the bottom of the bowl in a larger bowl of ice water for a few seconds to cool it. Remove the bowl from the ice water and beat the mousseline by hand until smooth. Beat in the 2/3 cup of strawberry butter, vanilla, and red food color, if using, until uniformly mixed. The mousseline becomes spongy and fluffy on standing. If you don't use it right away, whisk it lightly by hand to maintain a silky texture before applying it to the cake. However, do not rebeat chilled mousseline until it has reached 70°F/21°C; this will prevent it from breaking down.

Notes

High-fat (low-water) butter helps to ensure smooth emulsification. Temperature, however, is the key to the success of this buttercream, so you will need an instant-read thermometer. If the temperature of the meringue and butter is between 65° and 70°F/19° and 21°C, it works easily and magnificently. In hot or humid weather, use [Golden Neoclassic Buttercream](#) instead.

American Spoon Foods (see [Ingredients Sources](#)) makes a terrifically flavorful and tart strawberry butter. No red food color is necessary if using this variety. You can use strawberry preserves if you strain it and add a little lemon juice, if too sweet.

Compose the Cake

With a long serrated knife, split each layer in half and cut off the rounded tops so that the layers are level (see [Leveling a Cake](#)). Reserve one layer that has a bottom crust to use for the top of the cake, which will prevent any crumbs from getting in the glaze. Spread a small dab of mousseline on a 9-inch cardboard round or serving plate. Set the first bottom cake layer bottom side up on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean.

Sandwich each layer with about 1 cup of strawberry mousseline. Use the remaining ½ cup of the strawberry butter to spread evenly over each layer of mousseline. Use the extra mousseline for the cupcakes.

Cover the cake with plastic wrap or a cake dome while preparing the frosting.

Miss Irene Thompson's Dark Chocolate Frosting  
Makes: almost 2 cups/19.5 ounces/555 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
fine-quality unsweetened or 99% cacao chocolate, chopped .		3.5	100
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		3	85
unsalted butter preferably high fat (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C) 3½ tablespoons		1.7	50
light corn syrup	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	11.6	328
pure vanilla extract	2 teaspoons	.	.

Make Miss Irene's Dark Chocolate Frosting

In the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, heat the chocolates and butter. (Don't let the bottom of the container touch the water.) Stir often with a silicone spatula until almost completely melted.

Remove the chocolate mixture from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until completely melted. Stir in the syrup until fully incorporated. Stir in the vanilla. The frosting keeps for 3 days at room temperature, for 3 weeks refrigerated, and for 6 months frozen.

Complete the Cake

The first coat of frosting is easiest to apply when very fluid. Begin by pouring the frosting evenly over the top of the cake, allowing it to cascade over the sides. Immediately, before it starts to set, run a long metal spatula or straightedged knife smoothly over the top so that the frosting isn't thicker in the middle. It will be very glossy and beautiful, so if it is slightly uneven, avoid smoothing it further. If you mar the surface, don't worry. You can do a second coat of swirls instead of the smooth topping.

Immediately use a small metal spatula to smooth the frosting that has dripped onto the sides. Now you can relax and work as slowly as you need to. Apply more frosting, a little at a time, to seal the sides completely with a thin coat. Start at the top sides of the cake because the frosting will drift down. If it starts to stiffen, remove about ½ cup and give it a 5-second burst in the microwave to soften it. If necessary, dip the spatula into hot water, dry it, and smooth the frosting against the sides of the cake. Don't be concerned if crumbs get in the coating as it will be covered by a second, thicker one.

Allow the remaining frosting to cool covered at room temperature for 30 minutes or until thick enough to spread easily and hold its shape in swirls of frosting. If desired, soften a little of the remaining frosting with few-second bursts in the microwave; using a teaspoon, drizzle the frosting decoratively over the top. Alternatively, a sprinkling of edible gold dust (see [Ingredients Sources](#)) magically creates the illusion of a starry night. Slowly slide paper strips out from under the cake.

Variation  
Miss Thompson's Yellow Cake

The original cake, made by Miss Thompson for many years and served at the Woman's Exchange in New York City, was a yellow cake, filled and

frosted with the dark chocolate frosting. To make her version, bake [Woody's Lemon Luxury Layer Cake](#) and double the chocolate frosting recipe here. Apply the frosting to each layer in the same way as for the top layer.

Chocolate Banana Stud Cake

Serves: 8 to 10

Baking Time: 35 to 45 minutes

Although this is a fun and easy cake to make and decorate, I'd be lying if I said it was quick: Studding the frosting with chocolate chips takes a bit of time. It's a great project for kids to help with, provided they don't eat most of the chocolate chips as they are putting them on the cake! To save time, another attractive option is to use fewer chocolate chips and leave more space between them.

Plan Ahead

Make the ganache several hours before using.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (sifted before measuring)	1.5	42
boiling water	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3	88
1 large ripe banana, peeled and lightly mashed	½ cup	4	112
sour cream	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons	3.2	90
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
pure vanilla extract	¾ teaspoon	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1½ cups plus 1 tablespoon (or 1 1/3 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	5.5	156
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking soda	1 teaspoon	.	.
baking powder	¾ teaspoon	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	10 tablespoons (1 stick plus 2 tablespoons)	5	142

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour

Mix the Cocoa and Water

In a medium bowl, whisk the cocoa and boiling water until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. To speed cooling, place it in the refrigerator. Bring it to room temperature before proceeding.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F/175°C

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a food processor, process the banana and sour cream until smooth. Pulse in the cocoa mixture, eggs, and vanilla and process briefly just to blend.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and half the banana-cocoa mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the remaining banana-cocoa mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. The batter will be light but creamy. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cake so that the top side is up. Cool completely.

Ganache Studded with Chocolate Chips  
Makes: 1¾ cups/16.5 ounces/466 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped	.	8	227
heavy cream	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232
pure vanilla extract	2 teaspoons	.	.
liqueur of your choice or extra cream (optional)	2 tablespoons	1	28
chocolate chips, preferably Guittard bittersweet	2 cups	11.5	325

Make the Ganache

In a food processor, process the dark chocolate until very fine. In a 2-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), scald the cream (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Pulse in the vanilla and liqueur or cream, if using. Scrape the ganache into a glass bowl and let it sit for 1 hour. Cover it with plastic wrap and allow it to cool at room temperature for several hours, until the mixture reaches frosting consistency. The ganache keeps for 3 days at room temperature, for 3 weeks refrigerated, and for 6 months frozen.

Compose the Cake

When the cake is completely cool, spread a little ganache onto a 9-inch cardboard round or serving plate and set it on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Frost the top and sides of the cake with the ganache.

Stud the cake all over with chocolate chips, pointed ends in. It will take about 45 minutes to place the chips close together. Fewer chips more

widely spaced also are very attractive. Or, if desired, form a design with a combination of dark and milk chocolate or peanut butter chips. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake before serving.

Devil's Food Cake with Midnight Ganache  
Serves: 16 to 20  
Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

One day I became tired of chocolate cake, but my encounter with this one at Flour Bakery marked my return to chocolate cake appreciation. Chef-owner Joanna Chang got this recipe from her baking teacher, who had adapted the devil's food cake and my innovative mixing technique from The Cake Bible.

This cake deserves a devilishly delicious frosting, so I created the ultimate ganache for the chocolate lover who always longs for deeper and darker flavor and the ultimate in voluptuous texture. The secrets are caramelizing the sugar to a deep brown and adding cocoa, bringing the cacao solids to a little more than double that of [Caramel Ganache](#). Also, adding boiling water to the cocoa releases its full flavor. Using water instead of the usual amount of heavy cream keeps the ganache very dark.

Plan Ahead

Make the ganache at least 6 hours before using. Make the cherries at least 8 hours ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
fine-quality unsweetened or 99% cacao chocolate, chopped .		1	30
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¾ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	2.2	63
boiling water	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.3	236
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
about 2 large egg yolks, at room temperature	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.3	37
crème fraîche (or sour cream)	¼ cup	2	58 (60)
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2¼ cups (or 2 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	8	225
light brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	1½ cups, firmly packed	11.5	326
baking soda	1 teaspoon	.	.



salt	½ teaspoon		
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227

Special Equipment

Two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, encircled with cake strips, bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Chocolates and Water

In a medium bowl, whisk the chocolate, cocoa, and boiling water until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool to room temperature, about 1 hour. To speed cooling, place it in the refrigerator. Bring it to room temperature before proceeding.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In another bowl, whisk the eggs, yolks, crème fraîche, half the cooled chocolate mixture and vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining chocolate mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 30 seconds. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, with the mixer off between additions, add the egg mixture in two parts. Beat on medium speed for 45 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. The batter will be slightly fluffy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pans and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula. Each will be almost half full (23 ounces/650 grams).

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean and the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers. The cakes should start to shrink from the sides of the pans only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cakes

Let the cakes cool in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and invert the cakes onto wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert so that the tops are up. Cool completely.

Variation

For a more mellow, less intense flavor, replace the 1 ounce unsweetened chocolate with 2 ounces dark 60 to 62 percent cacao chocolate. You can also replace the brown sugar with 1½ cups/10.5 ounces/300 grams granulated sugar.

Cognac Cherries

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
dried sour cherries	¾ cup	5	144
Cognac	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4	112
golden syrup or light corn syrup	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	4.5	128

Make the Cognac Cherries

In a 1-cup or larger glass jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the cherries and Cognac and allow them to sit for a minimum of 8 hours for the cherries to absorb the Cognac and soften. Drain the cherries, reserving the Cognac to stir into the ganache, if desired. Stir the syrup into the cherries to coat them well.

Midnight Ganache

Makes: 3 cups/30 ounces/860 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	1½ cups minus 1 tablespoon (sifted before measuring)	3.7	108



boiling water	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.3	236
pure vanilla extract	1¼ teaspoons	.	.
Cognac reserved from cherries (optional)	1 tablespoon	0.5	14
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		7	200
sugar	1 cup plus 3 tablespoons	8.5	240
water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59
heavy cream, at room temperature	½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (4.5 fluid ounces)	5	145
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	2½ tablespoons	1.2	34

Mix the Cocoa and Water

In a small bowl, whisk the cocoa and boiling water until smooth. Whisk in the vanilla and Cognac, if using. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. To speed cooling, place it in the refrigerator. Bring it to room temperature before proceeding.

Grate the Chocolate

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

Make the Caramel

Use a medium heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, with a pouring lip. Alternatively, have ready a 2-cup heatproof glass measure, lightly coated with nonstick cooking spray.

In the saucepan, stir together the sugar and water until all the sugar is moistened. Heat on medium-high, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the syrup is bubbling. Stop stirring completely and allow the syrup to boil undisturbed until it turns a deep amber. An instant-read thermometer will register 370°F/188°C or a few degrees lower because its temperature will continue to rise. Remove it from the heat and, as soon as it reaches temperature, slowly and carefully pour the cream into the caramel. It will bubble up furiously.

Return the pan to very low heat, stirring with a silicone spatula or wooden spoon, until the mixture is uniform in color and the caramel fully dissolved. Remove it from the heat and gently stir in the butter until incorporated. If the saucepan doesn't have a pouring lip, pour the mixture into the glass measure.

Add the Caramel to the Chocolate

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the hot caramel sauce onto the grated chocolate. (The caramel will be between 160° and 200°F/71° to 93°C when added to the chocolate. If the caramel in the glass measure should harden, simply put it in the microwave for a few seconds to soften it.) By the time all of it is added, the chocolate will have melted and the mixture will be smooth and shiny. Add the cocoa mixture and process until evenly combined. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the ganache into a bowl, allow it to stand uncovered for 1 hour, then cover it with plastic wrap and allow it to sit at room temperature for a minimum of 5 hours, or until firm enough to use as frosting and filling. It should be the creamy consistency of softened butter.

Compose the Cake

When the cakes are completely cool, spread a little ganache on a 9-inch cardboard round or serving plate and set one layer on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Sandwich the layers with about 1 cup of Midnight Ganache and, if desired, 1 cup of Cognac Cherries. Use the remainder of the ganache to frost the top and sides. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

Chocolate Layer Cake with Caramel Ganache  
Serves: 8  
Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

This cake has a soft light texture that magically transforms to full-flavored chocolate fudge in the mouth. The small addition of oil results in a higher cake layer with a finer, moister crumb. Dark chocolate and caramel are two of my favorite flavors, so I created this ganache using bitter (unsweetened) chocolate to temper the sweetness of the caramel. It is less dark and less dense than [Midnight Ganache](#) with a slightly more mellow flavor. I am thrilled with the results.

Plan Ahead

Make the ganache several hours before using.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (sifted before measuring)	1.5	42
boiling water	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	118
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
water	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.5	44
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1½ cups plus 1 tablespoon (or 1 1/3 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	5.5	156
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking powder	2 teaspoons	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	8 tablespoons (1 stick)	4	113
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	2 tablespoons	1	28

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Cocoa and Water

In a medium bowl, whisk the cocoa and boiling water until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. To speed cooling, place it in the refrigerator. Bring it to room temperature before proceeding.

Mix the Remaining Liquid Ingredients

In another bowl, whisk the eggs, the 3 tablespoons of water, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter, oil, and cocoa mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cake so that the top side is up. Cool completely.

Caramel Ganache  
Makes: about 2 cups/20 ounces/567 grams

fine-quality unsweetened or 99% cacao chocolate, chopped (see <a href="#">Note</a> ) .		5	142
sugar	¾ cup	5.3	150
water	3 tablespoons	1.5	44
heavy cream, heated	1½ cups (12 fluid ounces)	12.3	348
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	1½ tablespoons	0.7	20
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.

Grate the Chocolate

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

Make the Caramel

Use a medium heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, with a pouring lip. Alternatively, have ready a 2-cup heatproof glass measure, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

In the saucepan, stir together the sugar and water until all the sugar is moistened. Heat on medium-high, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the syrup is bubbling. Stop stirring completely and allow the syrup to boil undisturbed until it turns deep amber. An instant-read thermometer will register 370°F/188°C or a few degrees lower because its temperature will continue to rise. Remove it from the heat and, as soon as it reaches temperature, slowly and carefully pour the hot cream into the caramel. It will bubble up furiously.

Use a silicone spatula or wooden spoon to stir the mixture gently, scraping the thicker part that settles on the bottom. Return the pan to very low heat, continuing to stir gently for 1 minute, or until the mixture is uniform in color and the caramel is fully dissolved. Remove it from the heat and gently stir in the butter until incorporated. If the saucepan doesn't have a pouring lip, pour the mixture into the glass measure.

Add the Caramel to the Chocolate

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the hot caramel sauce onto the grated chocolate. (The caramel will be between 160° and 200°F/71° and 93°C when added to the chocolate. If the caramel should harden in the glass measure, simply put it in the microwave for a few seconds to soften it.) By the time all of it is added, the chocolate will have melted and the mixture will be smooth and shiny. Add the vanilla and pulse it a few times until evenly combined.

Using a silicone spatula, scrape the ganache into a bowl, allow it to stand uncovered for 1 hour, then cover it with plastic wrap and allow it to sit at room temperature for about 2 hours, or until firm enough to spread as filling and frosting. It should be the creamy consistency of softened butter.

Note

You can use 82 percent cacao chocolate: Use 6 ounces/170 grams and decrease the sugar to ½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons/4.2 ounces/120 grams.

Compose the Cake

When the cake is completely cool, using a long serrated knife, split the layer in half horizontally. Spread a little ganache on a 9-inch cardboard round or a serving plate and set the first layer bottom side up on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Sandwich the layers with about 1 cup of ganache, and use the remainder to frost the top and sides. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

Bernachon Palet D'or Gâteau

Serves: 8 to 10

Baking Time: 35 to 45 minutes

When I went to Lyon to translate and revise the renowned chocolatier Bernachon's book *La Passion de Chocolat*, my favorite treat in the entire shop were the palets d'or. They consisted of ganache centers made slightly tangy with crème fraîche instead of the usual heavy cream, and mellowed with a little butter. Each little palet, or "coin," was enrobed in a hair-thin shell of dark chocolate that was coated with flecks of real gold leaf. I could never pass the cart where they were stacked on sheet pans without popping one in my mouth. Reborn as a cake, this is my chocolate-rich, melt-in-your-mouth butter cake with Bernachon's crème fraîche ganache center and a brilliant lacquer glaze, lovely flecks of gold, and fresh red currants, if desired.

Plan Ahead

Make the ganache several hours before using. Apply the glaze, if using, at least 4 hours ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (sifted before measuring)	1.5	42
sour cream	2/3 cup	5.6	160
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1½ cups plus 1 tablespoon (or 1 1/3 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	5.5	156
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking powder	¾ teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	¼ teaspoon	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	14 tablespoons (1¾ sticks)	7	200

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the cocoa, sour cream, eggs, and vanilla just until the consistency of slightly lumpy muffin batter.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and half the cocoa mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

With the mixer off between additions, add the remaining cocoa mixture in two parts, starting on medium-low speed and gradually raising the speed to medium. Beat on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan, being sure to press the thick and fluffy batter against the sides of the pan, and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cake so that the top side is up. Cool completely. The cake will be slightly smaller at the top (more so if you haven't pressed the batter up against the sides of the pan).

Crème Fraîche Ganache  
Makes: 1 1/3 cups/11.6 ounces/330 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped	.	6	170
crème fraîche (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	2/3 cup (5.3 fluid ounces)	5.5	155
heavy cream	4 teaspoons	0.7	20
unsalted butter, preferably high fat (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	2 tablespoons	1	28
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
crème de cassis (optional); see <a href="#">Note</a>	1 tablespoon	.	.

Make the Crème Fraîche Ganache

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

In a 2-cup microwavable cup with a spout (or in a medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), whisk together the crème fraîche and heavy cream and scald it (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream mixture through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Pulse in the butter and vanilla. Scrape the ganache into a glass bowl and allow it to sit for 1 hour. Cover with plastic wrap and allow it to cool for several hours, or until the mixture is firm enough to use as frosting. It should be the creamy consistency of softened butter. The ganache keeps for 3 days at room temperature, for 3 weeks refrigerated, and for 6 months frozen.

Note

You can replace the crème fraîche, heavy cream, and butter with ¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon/7 ounces/200 grams sour cream. Because sour cream curdles when heated, however, it needs to be at room temperature. Melt the chocolate in a microwave, stirring every 15 seconds, or in the top of a double boiler over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often. Remove it from the heat and whisk the sour cream into the melted chocolate. If desired, you can also whisk crème de cassis into the ganache, which adds extra tartness and complements the fresh currants, if using.

Compose the Cake

Spread a little ganache on a 9-inch cardboard round, or serving plate if not glazing the cake, and invert the cake layer on it top side down.

If you are planning to apply the lacquer glaze, the ganache undercoat needs to be as smooth and even as possible because the glaze will reveal every imperfection beneath it. If the crumb on the sides of the cake is not sealed, when you are applying the ganache, first do a crumb coating or layer on the sides that doesn't go quite to the edge of the cardboard round. Then apply a thin coat to the top, starting at the edges and working toward the center. Use the ganache when it's had time to set up to a thickened but spreadable consistency or reheat it very briefly (a few-seconds burst in the microwave) so that it goes on easily without compressing the top of the cake. Refrigerate the cake for about an hour and then apply the final coat.

Start by frosting the sides, filling in the space between the sides of the cake and the edge of the cardboard round. Use the remainder of the ganache to frost the top.

Use a heated straightedged knife to create a flat top and smooth sides, with a slight bevel for the edge. To heat the knife, run it under hot water and shake off the excess droplets.

If you are planning to apply the lacquer glaze, after frosting the cake with the ganache undercoat, refrigerate until very firm, a minimum of 2 hours or overnight. Be sure that the refrigerator is odor free because chocolate absorbs aromas very readily. If not applying the lacquer glaze, you can

make an attractive design on the top of the cake using a metal spatula and making swirls or a concentric circle.

Lacquer Glaze

Makes: 1 1/3 cups/10.6 fluid ounces/13.5 ounces/380 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
cold water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59
powdered gelatin	2 teaspoons	.	.
sugar	2/3 cup	4.7	133
water	1/3 cup (2.7 fluid ounces)	2.7	79
corn syrup	1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon	1	28
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	2.3	66
heavy cream	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces)	2.7	77

Make the Lacquer Glaze

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium metal bowl.

In a small bowl, pour in the ¼ cup cold water and sprinkle the gelatin over the top. Stir to moisten and soften the gelatin and allow it to sit for a minimum of 5 minutes. Cover tightly with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and set aside.

In a small heavy saucepan, whisk together the sugar and 1/3 cup water over medium heat. Stir constantly to dissolve the sugar. Remove the pan from the heat and, with the whisk, gently stir in the corn syrup and then the cocoa until smooth, making sure to reach into the corners of the pan. The mixture will be glossy. Using a silicone spatula, stir in the heavy cream.

Return the pan to medium heat and, stirring constantly, bring the mixture to the boiling point (190°F/88°C). Bubbles will just start to form around the edges. Remove the pan from the heat and strain the mixture into the metal bowl. Cool slightly, for about 10 minutes. An instant-read thermometer should register 122° to 140°F/50° to 60°C. With the silicone spatula, stir in the softened gelatin until it is dissolved completely and no longer streaky.

Strain the glaze into a 2-cup glass measure or bowl. (Metal will impart an undesirable flavor if the glaze is stored in it.) Cool for a few minutes, stirring very gently so as not to incorporate any air. For this cake, the glaze coats best when just made (80°F/26°C). If the glaze is made ahead and reheated, it will be thicker and should be used at 82° to 85°F/27° to 29°C.

Once cool (after about 1 hour), the glaze can be covered and refrigerated for up to 1 week or in the freezer for several months. Reheat it in a double boiler over hot, not simmering, water, or very carefully in a microwave with 3-second bursts, stirring gently to ensure that it doesn't overheat or incorporate air.

There is enough glaze to cover the cake in "one shot" without having to touch up the sides. Should you happen to miss a spot, you can use a small metal spatula to add a small dab of glaze. This glaze is a lot more forgiving than the [Ganache Glaze](#) and will not show the "touch up." You will have about ¾ cup glaze left over. It can be frozen for many months, thawed, reheated, and poured perfectly.

Glaze the Cake

Lay a long double layer of wide heavy-duty aluminum foil on the work surface to catch the glaze. Turn up the edges about 1 inch all around to keep the glaze contained. Set a wire rack or a slightly smaller cake pan on top of the aluminum foil. Set the frosted cake on the wire rack. Make sure the cake is level and, if necessary, put a wedge or spatula underneath one of the legs to level it.

Pour the glaze in an even circular motion on top, allowing it to cascade over the sides to coat them completely. Start pouring in the middle and, as the glaze starts going down the sides, pour the glaze about 1 inch from the edge to help cover the sides evenly. Should they appear, any tiny bubbles can be pierced with a sharp needle. If any spots on the side don't get coated, it's easy to touch them up using the glaze on the aluminum foil and a small metal spatula. Allow the cake to sit for about 30 minutes until the glaze stops dripping, then move the cake to a serving plate.

Use the aluminum foil as a funnel to pour the excess glaze back into the glass measure or bowl. You may need to strain it through a fine-mesh strainer to remove any bits of cake or ganache that may have fallen through while glazing.

Allow the glaze to set for about 4 hours, or until just barely tacky when touched lightly with a fingertip. The glazed cake can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature; refrigerated, it will lose a little of the glossy shine. It is at its most shiny within 6 hours of pouring the glaze. To revive the shine, brush lightly with a soft brush (see [Brushes](#)), or you can briefly wave a hair dryer set on low heat over the cake. Decorate with a few flecks of gold leaf and a few fresh red currants, if desired.

If refrigerating the finished cake, store it in an airtight container. It will keep for up to 5 days, but it should be brought to room temperature for the softest texture and fullest flavor, which will take 2 to 2½ hours.

Double Chocolate Valentine  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

This cake is really the final word in chocolate cake, and it is based on my purest chocolate fantasy. It features a cocoa layer cake that uses the best cocoa, all egg yolks to give it its fullest flavor, and, to finish, a sweet injection of melted chocolate and cream. Astonishingly easy to make, it is at once fudgy moist and soft within, and becomes encased in a thin glaze of chocolate that forms by itself after brushing in the ganache. For Valentine's Day, I like to bake the cake in a heart-shape pan, then I top it with fresh red raspberries gilded with currant jelly and pipe whipped cream around the base.



Batter		Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (sifted before measuring)		1.5	42
boiling water	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)		4.2	118
about 4 large egg yolks, at room temperature	¼ cup plus ½ tablespoon (2.2 fluid ounces)		2.6	74
water	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)		1.5	44
pure vanilla extract	¾ teaspoon		.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1½ cups plus 1 tablespoon (or 1 1/3 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off		5.5	156
superfine sugar	1 cup		7	200
baking powder	2½ teaspoons		.	.
salt	½ teaspoon		.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	9 tablespoons (1 stick plus 1 tablespoon)		4.5	128

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch heart-shape or round cake pan (8 to 8 2/3 cups), encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with parchment cut to shape, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.



Mix the Cocoa and Water

In a medium bowl, whisk the cocoa and boiling water until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. To speed cooling, place it in the refrigerator. Bring it to room temperature before proceeding.

Mix the Remaining Liquid Ingredients

In another bowl, whisk the yolks, the 3 tablespoons water, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the cocoa mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

While the cake is baking, prepare the glaze.

Ganache Glaze

Makes: 1 cup/8 fluid ounces/8.6 ounces/244 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		3	85
heavy cream	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6	174

Make the Ganache Glaze

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

In a 1-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), scald the cream (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Scrape the ganache into a small bowl and set it in a warm spot.

Apply the Glaze and Cool and Unmold the Cake

As soon as the cake comes out of the oven, place the pan on a wire rack, poke holes all over the top with a wooden skewer, and use a brush to dabble half of the ganache glaze onto the cake. It will take about 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula around the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a flat surface, such as a cardboard round or plate that has been covered with plastic wrap. Peel off and discard the parchment and poke holes all over. Dabble with the remaining glaze, brushing a little onto the sides of the cake as well. Cool completely, for 1 or more hours, or until the chocolate is firm to the touch. Invert the cake onto a 10-inch cardboard round or 10-inch perfectly flat plate covered with plastic wrap. It is now top side up with plastic wrap sticking to it. Peel off the plastic wrap, then reinvert the cake onto a serving plate so that it is bottom side up; remove the remaining plastic wrap.

Raspberry Topping

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
fresh raspberries	2 pints	1 pound	454
red currant jelly	¼ cup	2.6	77

Make the Raspberry Topping

Starting at the outside border and working in toward the center, place the raspberries closely together to cover the surface of the cake.

In a microwave, or small heavy saucepan over low heat, melt the currant jelly. Use a small clean brush to paint the currant glaze onto the raspberries.

If making the cake without the raspberry topping, for a more attractive appearance use a pastry brush to stipple the chocolate glaze after is almost set. You may also dust the top lightly with cocoa or powdered sugar by placing the powder in a strainer held over the cake and tapping the edge of the strainer with a spoon.



Whipped Cream  
Makes: 2 cups/8.6 ounces/244 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
heavy cream, cold	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232
superfine sugar	1 tablespoon	0.5	12
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Whipped Cream

In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine the cream, sugar, and vanilla and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's whisk beater alongside the bowl.)

Whip the mixture, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, just until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised.

If desired, use a pastry bag fitted with a large open star pastry tube (3/8 inch) to pipe a shell border around the base of the cake. Alternatively, serve with a dollop of whipped cream on the side.

Chocolate Velvet Fudge Cake  
Serves: 12 to 14  
Baking Time: 50 to 65 minutes

This cake is wondrously soft, light, and deeply chocolaty. When baked in a silicone fluted tube pan, it is extraordinarily moist and fine textured with a shiny crust; it's portable as well. I brought it to a restaurant in its pan (the pan was part of the present) for my dear friend Jens Schmidt's birthday. I unmolded it at the table, and the kitchen sliced the chocolate marzipan candle paper thin and draped a piece over each serving—a stunning presentation. Jens, who adores chocolate and marzipan perhaps in equal measure, enjoyed the cake there with his dear wife, Ruth, and took the rest of it on their travels the following day, sharing slices with their family.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon (sifted before measuring)	2.2	63
boiling water	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	118
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
water	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	118

pure vanilla extract	2¼ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons (or 2 cups plus 1 tablespoon), sifted into the cup and leveled	8.3	235
superfine sugar	1½ cups	10.5	300
baking powder	3 teaspoons	.	.
salt	¾ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227

Special Equipment

One 10-cup fluted tube pan, preferably silicone, coated with baking spray with flour and set on a wire rack on a baking sheet

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C (325°F/160°C if using a dark metal pan).

Mix the Cocoa and Water

In a medium bowl, whisk the cocoa and boiling water until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. To speed cooling, place it in the refrigerator. Bring it to room temperature before proceeding.

Mix the Remaining Liquid Ingredients

In another bowl, whisk the eggs, the ½ cup water, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the cocoa mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a silicone spatula or spoon, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small metal spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 50 to 65 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted between the tube and the side comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven. If using a metal pan, the cake will take the shorter baking time.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

If using the silicone pan, remove it still on the baking sheet and set the sheet on a wire rack. (Avoid disturbing the cake until it is no longer hot in order to prevent the sides from collapsing.) Cool the cake in the pan for 1 hour, or until completely cool. Cool for 15 minutes if using the metal pan. Unmold the cake onto a serving plate.

Décor

For a simple presentation, dust the cake with cocoa or powdered sugar, if desired. Or, for something more dramatic, decorate the cake with a marzipan candle inserted in the center (see [Marzipan Candles](#)). When serving, slice the candle lengthwise into very thin slices and drape a slice over each piece of cake.

Black Chocolate Party Cake

Serves: 12 to 14

Baking Time: 50 to 60 minutes

Dense, tender, and very chocolaty, this fabulous cake melts in your mouth. It was inspired by my love of the [Golden Lemon Almond Cake](#). Instead of almonds and lemon syrup, it contains walnuts and cocoa syrup. This cake is delicious eaten out of hand, in a large bowl with a scoop of espresso ice cream, or plated with zigzag squiggles of [Caramel Ganache](#).



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
walnut halves	2/3 cup	2.3	66
sour cream	1 cup	8.5	242
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¾ cup (sifted before measuring)	2	56
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
pure vanilla extract	2 teaspoons	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	2 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	8	228
turbinado sugar	1¼ cups	8.7	250
baking powder	1¼ teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	¾ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227

Special Equipment

One 10-cup metal fluted tube pan, coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C (325°F/160°C if using a dark pan).

Toast and Grind the Walnuts

Spread the walnuts evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes to enhance the flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Turn the walnuts out onto a clean dish towel and roll and rub them around to loosen the skins. Discard the skins and cool completely. In a food processor, pulse them until they are medium fine. If they start to become a little pasty, add ½ cup of the flour. (If you don't like the texture of nuts in cake, if chopped fine you'll have the enhanced chocolate flavor and no perception of nuts.)

Mix the Cocoa and Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, stir, then whisk the sour cream, cocoa, eggs, and vanilla until the consistency of slightly lumpy muffin batter.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the ground walnuts, flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for about 30 seconds. Add the butter and half the cocoa mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. With the mixer off between additions, add the remaining cocoa mixture in two parts, starting on medium-low speed and gradually raising the speed to medium. Beat on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a silicone spatula or spoon, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small metal spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 50 to 60 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted between the tube and the side comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. An instant-read thermometer inserted in the center should read 205° to 210°F/95° to 100°C.

Make the cocoa syrup shortly before the cake is finished baking.

Cocoa Syrup

Makes: 2/3 cup/5.3 fluid ounces/6 ounces/170 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¼ cup (sifted before measuring)	0.7	19
sugar	1/3 cup	2.3	66
boiling water	1/3 cup (2.2 fluid ounces)	2.7	79
pure vanilla extract	¾ teaspoon	.	.
walnut liqueur or Kahlúa (optional)	4 teaspoons	0.7	21

Make the Cocoa Syrup

In a small saucepan, whisk together the cocoa and sugar. Add a small amount of the boiling water and whisk until all of the mixture is moistened. Whisk in the remaining boiling water.

Bring the mixture to a full rolling boil over low heat, stirring often. Remove it from the heat and allow it to cool slightly. Whisk in the vanilla and liqueur, if using, and use while still hot (or reheat) to brush on the cake. If necessary, add water to equal 2/3 cup of syrup.

Apply the Syrup and Cool and Unmold the Cake

As soon as the cake comes out of the oven, place the pan on a wire rack, poke the cake all over with a wooden skewer, and brush it with about one-third of the syrup. Let the cake cool in the pan for 10 minutes. Drape plastic wrap over the cake in the pan, overhanging the pan by a few inches. Place a 9-inch cardboard round or plate on top of the plastic wrap and invert the cake. Remove the pan and flatten the plastic wrap overhang onto the work surface. Brush the top and sides of the cake with the remaining syrup. Bring up the sides of the plastic wrap to apply any little puddles of syrup to the cake. Cool completely. When ready to serve, invert the cake onto another cardboard round or plate lined with plastic wrap. Gently remove the plastic wrap sticking to the cake, being careful not to tear or break off any of the fragile edges of the cake, and reinvert the cake onto a serving plate.

Classic Carrot Cake with Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting

Serves: 16 to 20

Baking Time: 45 to 55 minutes

This is one of my all-time favorite cakes, and I worked long and hard to strike the right balance of sugar and spice. The cake was inspired by my dear friend David Shamah after I ate it every time I visited his former restaurant Back to Nature in Brooklyn. It's delicious either cold or at room temperature.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unbleached all-purpose flour	2 2/3 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	10.5	300
baking powder	1½ teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	1 teaspoon	.	.
salt	1 teaspoon	.	.
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	1 tablespoon	.	.
cinnamon	2 teaspoons	.	.
granulated sugar	1½ cups	10.5	300
light brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	½ cup minus 2 teaspoons, firmly packed	3.5	100
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	1¼ cups (10 fluid ounces)	9.5	269
4 large eggs, at room temperature	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	7	200
pure vanilla extract	2 teaspoons	.	.
coarsely shredded carrots	3 cups, firmly packed	1 pound	454
raisins, tossed with 2 teaspoons flour (optional)	1 cup	5	142

Special Equipment

Two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, encircled with cake strips, bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cocoa, and cinnamon. Sift the flour mixture onto a large piece of parchment.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, beat the granulated sugar, brown sugar, oil, eggs, and vanilla on medium speed for 1 minute, or until well blended. Add the flour mixture and beat on low speed for about 20 seconds, just until incorporated. Add the carrots and half the raisins, if using, and beat for another 12 seconds. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pans and smooth the surfaces evenly with a small offset spatula. Each will be just under half full (28 ounces/800 grams). If using them, scatter the remaining raisins evenly on top of the batter in each pan. Use the back of a fork to push them gently into the batter.

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 45 to 55 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean and the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers. The cakes should just start to shrink from the sides of the pans.

Cool and Unmold the Cakes

Let the cakes cool in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and invert the cakes onto wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cakes so that the tops are up. Cool completely.

Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting  
Makes: 2¾ cups/23.6 ounces/670 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
white chocolate containing cocoa butter, chopped	.	9	255
cream cheese, softened but still cool (about 65°F/19°C)	.	12	339
unsalted butter, softened but still cool (65°F/19°C)	6 tablespoons (¾ stick)	3	85
crème fraîche or sour cream	1½ tablespoons	0.7	21

Melt the White Chocolate

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the white chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Allow it to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid.

Make the Frosting

In a food processor, process the cream cheese, butter, and crème fraîche for a few seconds until smooth and creamy. Scrape down the sides. Add the cooled melted white chocolate and pulse it in a few times until it is smoothly incorporated.

Highlights for Success

Use white chocolate containing cocoa butter, such as Green & Black's with vanilla seeds or Valrhona.

The frosting becomes more firm in the refrigerator.

For a whiter frosting without the subtle flavor of the white chocolate, you can replace the white chocolate with 1 cup (lightly spooned into the cup)/4 ounces/115 grams powdered sugar and ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract.

Compose the Cake

Spread a little frosting on a 9-inch cardboard round or a serving plate. Set one cake layer on top. If using the plate, slip a few strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Spread the top of the layer with about ¾ cup of the frosting, stopping almost to the edges. The weight of the upper layer will push the frosting out a little. Set the second layer on top. Frost the top and sides with the remaining frosting. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

Décor

With a silicone spatula, make swirls on the top or, if desired, garnish the top with 1 cup/3.5 ounces/100 grams toasted walnut halves (see [Pumpkin Cake with Burnt Orange Silk Meringue Buttercream](#)), coarsely broken.

Pumpkin Cake with Burnt Orange Silk Meringue Buttercream  
Serves: 14 to 16  
Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes (35 to 45 minutes in a fluted tube pan)

Anyone who has tasted this cake has pronounced it the best nonchocolate cake ever. Beyond being delicious, it is also adorable to look at. But

don't let not having the perfect two-cavity pumpkin-shape pan stand in your way of experiencing the cake. A ten-cup fluted tube pan works just as well. And if desired, to achieve the true pumpkin shape, you can even use a serrated knife to sculpt the bottom curve. To complete the illusion of a real pumpkin, you can decorate the cake with real or green-tinted marzipan pumpkin leaves and tendrils.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
walnut halves	½ cup	1.7	50
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2 cups (or 1¾ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	7	200
baking powder	4 teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	1 teaspoon	.	.
salt	3/8 teaspoon	.	.
cinnamon	1½ teaspoons	.	.
nutmeg	¼ teaspoon	.	.
light brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (firmly packed)	8.5	244
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (4.5 fluid ounces)	4.2	120
walnut oil, at room temperature	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.5	42
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
fresh or canned unsweetened pumpkin puree	1½ cups	12.6	357

Special Equipment

One Nordic Ware 2-piece 3D Pumpkin Pan (each half 5 cups) or one 10-cup fluted metal tube pan, coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven



Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Toast the Walnuts

Spread the walnuts evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes to enhance the flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Turn the walnuts out onto a clean dish towel and roll and rub them around to loosen the skins. Coarsely break the walnuts into a bowl, scraping off and discarding as much of the skin as possible.

Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Sift the flour mixture onto a large piece of parchment. Add the toasted walnuts.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the brown sugar, eggs, canola oil, and walnut oil on medium-high speed for 2 to 3 minutes, or until very smooth and lighter in color. Beat in the vanilla and then the pumpkin just until smooth. Add the flour mixture and beat until completely moistened. Using a silicone spatula or spoon, scrape the batter into the prepared pans and smooth the surface evenly with a small metal spatula. In the two molds, the batter will be almost 1 inch from the top.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes (35 to 45 minutes in the fluted tube pan), or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cakes cool in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Invert the cakes onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Cool completely. Each cake will be about 2½ inches high (3¼ inches high in the fluted tube pan).

Burnt Orange Silk Meringue Buttercream  
Makes: about 2 cups/14.7 ounces/419 grams  
Crème Anglaise

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
about 3 large egg yolks, at room temperature	3½ tablespoons (1.7 fluid ounces)	2	56
milk	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	121
sugar	¼ cup	1.7	50
water	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	.	.
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Crème Anglaise

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium bowl.

In another medium bowl, lightly whisk the yolks and set them aside, leaving the whisk in the bowl. (If not continuing with the recipe immediately, coat the yolks lightly with nonstick cooking spray.)

In a small saucepan, scald the milk (bring it to the boiling point; little bubbles will form around the periphery). Cover the saucepan to keep it hot.

In a medium heavy saucepan, stir together the sugar and the 1 tablespoon water until the sugar is dissolved. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Cook without stirring until deep amber. An instant-read thermometer will register 370°F/188°C or a few degrees lower because its temperature will continue to rise. Remove it from the heat and, as soon as it reaches temperature, slowly and carefully pour the hot milk into the caramel. It will bubble up furiously.

Return the pan to very low heat, stirring with a silicone spatula or wooden spoon, until the mixture is uniform in color and the caramel fully dissolved. Very gradually at first, whisk the caramel mixture into the yolks, whisking constantly.

Return this mixture to the saucepan and cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula, until just below the boiling point. The mixture will start to steam slightly, and an instant-read thermometer will register 170°F/78°C. Strain immediately, scraping up any clinging to the bottom of the pan and pushing it through with the back of a spoon or silicone spatula. Cool, stirring occasionally, until warm. (To speed cooling, put the bowl in a larger bowl partially filled with ice water.)

Stir in the vanilla and set a piece of plastic wrap that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray directly on the surface of the crème to keep a skin from forming. Refrigerate for up to 5 days or until ready to complete the buttercream.

Italian Meringue



	Volume	Ounce Gram	
superfine sugar	3 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons, divided	1.6	46
water	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.5	15
1 large egg white, at room temperature	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30
cream of tartar	1/8 teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

A handheld mixer works best when using only 1 egg white.

Make the Italian Meringue

Have ready a 1-cup or larger heatproof glass measure.

In a small heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, stir together the 3 tablespoons sugar and the water until all the sugar is moistened. Heat on medium-high, stirring, until the sugar dissolves and the mixture is bubbling. Stop stirring and reduce the heat to low. (On an electric range, remove the pan from the heat.)

In a medium mixing bowl, with a handheld mixer on medium speed, beat the egg white until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Raise the speed to high and gradually beat in the remaining 2 teaspoons of sugar until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Increase the heat under the syrup to medium-high and boil for a few minutes until an instant-read thermometer registers 248° to 250°F/120°C (the firm-ball stage). Immediately transfer the syrup to the glass measure to stop the cooking.

With the mixer on high speed, beat the syrup into the egg white in a steady stream, avoiding the beaters. Lower the speed to medium-high and continue beating for 2 minutes. Refrigerate the meringue for 5 to 10 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer registers 70°F/21°C. Whisk it after the first 5 minutes to test and equalize the temperature.

Completed Burnt Orange Silk Meringue Buttercream

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227
Crème Anglaise	.	.	.
Italian Meringue	.	.	.
orange concentrate, thawed (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1½ teaspoons	.	.
orange zest, finely grated	1½ teaspoons, loosely packed	.	.
tiny dab of orange paste or liquid food color (optional)	.	.	.

Complete the Buttercream

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the butter on medium speed for 30 seconds, or until creamy. Gradually beat in the crème anglaise until smooth. Add the Italian meringue and beat until just incorporated. If the mixture looks curdled instead of smooth, it is too cold. Allow it to sit at room temperature to warm to 70°F/21°C before continuing to beat, or suspend the bowl over a pan of simmering water (don't let the bottom of the bowl touch the water), and heat very briefly, stirring vigorously when the mixture just starts to melt slightly at the edges.

To stop the warming, dip the bottom of the bowl into a larger bowl filled with ice water (see [Water Baths](#)) for a few seconds to cool. Remove the bowl from the ice water and beat the buttercream by hand until smooth. Beat in the orange concentrate, orange zest, and orange paste, if using.

Remove 2 tablespoons of the buttercream to a small bowl and add enough orange paste to tint the buttercream a more intense shade of orange. If not using the buttercream immediately, transfer it to an airtight bowl.

Compose the Cake

When the cakes are completely cool, with a long serrated knife, carefully slice off the mounded top of each cake half. Spread a little buttercream on a serving plate and set one half of the pumpkin cake on top. Slide a few strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Spread a thin layer of buttercream on top of the cake and set the second half on top. With a small metal spatula, coat the cake evenly

with buttercream. Finish by applying the more deeply tinted buttercream in long strokes from bottom to top to create the striped effect of a pumpkin. Slowly slide the paper strips out from under the cake.

Décor

If desired, make a stem out of marzipan and attach it with a long wooden skewer. Tint it a deeper brown by kneading unsweetened cocoa powder or brown food coloring, preferably powdered, into the marzipan. To make vine tendrils and leaves, tint some of the marzipan green. For an autumn leaf effect, you can combine pieces of marzipan tinted orange, red, brown, and green using food coloring. For the tendrils, roll pieces of marzipan into long thin logs and curl them around a well-oiled wooden dowel. For the leaves, make a cardboard template and cut out leaves from the marzipan.

Note

You can make your own orange juice concentrate by reducing ½ cup freshly squeezed orange juice to 1 tablespoon. (Use a 1-cup heatproof measure coated with nonstick cooking spray in a microwave, and watch closely to prevent burning.)

Many-Splendored Quick Bread

Serves: 8 to 10

Baking Time: 50 to 60 minutes

Everyone adores this easy-to-make, dairy-free cake because of the satisfying combination of walnuts, oatmeal, brown sugar, and vanilla. The banana, carrots, and zucchini build its moist texture. Canola oil helps it hold its texture even when refrigerated. For the most flavor, the banana should be covered with black spots.

Baby bananas are an exceptionally delicious alternative. You'll need about two 5-inch ripe bananas.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
walnuts	¾ cup	2.6	75
bleached all-purpose flour	2 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus 2 tablespoons	8.5	242
baking powder	2 teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	¾ teaspoon	.	.
instant unflavored oatmeal	1/3 cup	1	27
1 large very ripe banana, peeled and lightly mashed ½ cup		4	113
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	3.7	108

light brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	1/3 cup, firmly packed	2.5	72
granulated sugar	1/3 cup	2.3	66
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
water	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces)	2.7	79
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
green zucchini, finely shredded	2/3 cup, loosely packed	2.6	74
carrots, shredded medium fine	1/3 cup, loosely packed	1	33

Special Equipment

One 8½ by 4½-inch loaf pan (about 6 cups), coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Toast and Break the Walnuts

Spread the walnuts evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes to enhance the flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Turn the walnuts out onto a clean dish towel and roll and rub them around to loosen the skins. Coarsely break the walnuts into a bowl, scraping off and discarding as much of the skin as possible.

Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt, and then sift them into another bowl. Stir in the oatmeal.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, mix together the banana, oil, brown sugar, granulated sugar, and eggs on medium-low speed. Reduce the speed to low and gradually add the water. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat for 3 minutes or until well mixed and the color lightens slightly. Reduce the speed to low once more and beat in the vanilla and then the zucchini and carrots for about 10 seconds, or just until incorporated. The batter will be foamy.

Add the flour mixture and beat until the flour is moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for about 20 seconds until fully incorporated. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the walnuts and beat for about 10 seconds until evenly incorporated. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Quick Bread

For an attractive split down the middle of the crust, bake for 15 minutes, or until the natural split is about to develop and then, with a lightly greased sharp knife or single-edged razor blade, make a shallow slit 6 inches long down the middle of the cake. (Do this quickly so the door does not remain open long enough for the oven to lose heat.) Continue baking for 35 to 45 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. An instant-read thermometer will register 190°F/88°C. The quick bread should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Quick Bread

Let the quick bread cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the quick bread, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the quick bread onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Reinvert the quick bread so that the top side is up. Cool completely.

Banana Refrigerator Cake with Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting

Serves: 8 to 10

Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

My favorite banana cake is made with oil instead of butter. Though I adore the flavor and softness of the butter version, the crumb becomes hard and dense when refrigerated. Oil keeps the cake extra moist and tender, even when served cold, a delicious way to eat it, especially, with its luxuriously creamy, absolutely delicious white chocolate frosting, which requires refrigeration. If you use crème fraîche instead of sour cream in the batter, the flavor will be more mellow and the texture even more moist.

The flavor of the white chocolate frosting is reminiscent of cheesecake. No sugar is added because the sugar contained in the white chocolate is just enough to sweeten it. It has a lovely ivory color and wonderful consistency for piping.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
2 large very ripe bananas, peeled and lightly mashed	1 cup	8	226
crème fraîche (or sour cream)	½ cup	4 ounces (or 4.3 ounces)	116 grams (or 121 grams)
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
lemon zest, finely grated	2 teaspoons, loosely packed	.	.
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
turbinado sugar	¾ cup plus 1½ tablespoons	6	170
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	3.7	108
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour plus cornstarch); see <a href="#">Note</a>	2 cups (or 1½ cups plus ¼ cup), sifted into the cup and leveled off	7	200
baking soda	1 teaspoon	.	.
baking powder	¾ teaspoon	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Bananas and Liquid Ingredients

In a food processor, process the bananas and crème fraîche until smooth, stopping the processor and scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Add the eggs, lemon zest, and vanilla and process until combined, about 10 seconds.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the banana mixture and sugar on medium speed for about 1 minute. Gradually add the oil, beating until it is thoroughly incorporated.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Sift the flour mixture into the egg mixture and beat on low speed for about 2 minutes, scraping the sides of the bowl as necessary, until the dry ingredients are completely moistened. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should just start to shrink away from the sides of the pan. During baking it will rise to the top of the sides of the pan and a little higher in the middle.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert the cake so that the top side is up. Cool completely.

Note

Cake flour is ideal for this cake. A combination of all-purpose flour and cornstarch is the best alternative, but there will be a small pasty spot in the center of the cake. To substitute, use 1½ cups/6 ounces/170 grams bleached all-purpose flour (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus ¼ cup/1 ounce/30 grams cornstarch (sifted into the cup and leveled off).

Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting  
Makes: almost 1 cup/7.6 ounces/216 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
white chocolate containing cocoa butter, chopped	.	3	85
cream cheese, softened but still cool (about 65°F/19°C)	.	4	113
unsalted butter, softened but still cool (65°F/19°C)	2 tablespoons	1	28
crème fraîche or sour cream	½ tablespoon	0.2	7
almond extract	1/8 teaspoon	.	.

Melt the White Chocolate

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the white chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Allow it to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid.

Make the Frosting

In a food processor, process the cream cheese, butter, and crème fraîche for a few seconds until smooth and creamy. Scrape down the sides. Add the cooled melted white chocolate and pulse it in a few times until it is smoothly incorporated. Add the almond extract and pulse it in.

Compose the Cake

Spread a little frosting on a 9-inch cardboard round or a serving plate and set the cake on top. Spread the frosting on top, leaving the sides plain.

Highlights for Success

Baby bananas offer an exceptionally delicious flavor. You'll need about four 5-inch-long bananas.

The frosting becomes more firm in the refrigerator.

Use white chocolate containing cocoa butter, such as Green & Black's with vanilla seeds or Valrhona.

For a whiter frosting without the subtle flavor of the white chocolate, you can replace the white chocolate with 1 cup (lightly spooned into the cup)/4 ounces/115 grams powdered sugar and ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract.

German Chocolate Cake  
Serves: 14 to 16  
Baking Time: 25 to 35 minutes

I used to think German Chocolate Cake was too sweet. Then one day after skiing in Utah at Deer Valley, I visited baker Stephanie Kirzus and the Windy Ridge Bakery in Park City and I discovered how absolutely addictive this cake could be. For my version, I started with the classic filling, but then I needed the perfect chocolate cake. I began a quest for a cake that would use oil instead of butter so that it would maintain a good texture when refrigerated but would still be delicious. I based it on a chiffon cake but with less liquid, to give it enough structure so you can bake it without using a tube pan.

This cake showcases a breakthrough technique of adding unbeaten egg whites to the batter, which gives the cake the ideal structure (the cake doesn't collapse). Another virtue is that the cake stays soft even when chilled. You can use this batter to make cupcakes (see [Designer Chocolate Baby Grands](#)) or even a wedding cake (see [Deep Chocolate Passion Wedding Cake](#)).

Plan Ahead

Make the filling at least 3 hours before using.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	2.3	66
boiling water	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	118
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	3.7	108
about 4 large eggs, separated, plus 2 whites, at room temperature:			
yolks	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2.6	74
whites	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.3	180
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
cake flour (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	¾ cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	2.6	75
bleached all-purpose flour	2/3 cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	2.6	75
superfine sugar	1½ cups	10.6	300
baking powder	2 teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	1 teaspoon	.	.

salt

¼ teaspoon

.

.

Special Equipment

Two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, encircled with cake strips, bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour (see [Note](#)).

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Cocoa and Liquid Ingredients

In the bowl of a stand mixer, by hand, whisk the cocoa and boiling water until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. To speed cooling, place it in the refrigerator. Bring it to room temperature before proceeding.

Add the oil and yolks to the mixer bowl. Attach the whisk beater. Starting on low speed, gradually raise the speed to medium and beat for about 1 minute, or until smooth and shiny, and resembling a buttercream. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Beat in the vanilla for a few seconds.

Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the cake flour, all-purpose flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Sift the flour mixture onto a large piece of parchment. Add half of the flour mixture to the chocolate mixture and beat on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Repeat with the remaining flour mixture. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat for 1 minute. Scrape down the sides and the bottom of the bowl. The mixture will be very thick. On low speed, add the egg whites. Gradually raise the speed to medium-high and beat for 2 minutes. The batter will now be like a thick soup. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pans. Each will be about one-quarter full (17.5 ounces/495 grams).

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the centers comes out clean and the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers. During baking, the batter will rise almost to the top of the pans and a little higher in the middle. They will start to lower just before the end of baking. To prevent the collapse of the delicate foam structure, while still hot, the cakes must be unmolded as soon as they have baked. Have ready a small metal spatula and three wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Leave the oven on to toast the pecans.

Unmold and Cool the Cakes

Immediately run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and invert the cakes onto the prepared wire racks. Remove the parchment and immediately reinvert them onto the racks so that the firm upper crusts keep them from sinking. Cool completely.

Note

This cake has essentially the same ratio of ingredients as a layer cake but about double the egg and less baking powder. Cake flour results in more tenderness, and the all-purpose flour offers more moist fudginess, so I like to use a combination of the two. Alternatively, use 1 cup/4 ounces/114 grams bleached all-purpose flour and ½ cup/2.5 ounces/72 grams cornstarch. Use 1/8 teaspoon more baking powder.

Dissolving cocoa in boiling water unlocks all the flavor of the cocoa and produces a moist, light, almost fudgy, and powerfully chocolate cake.

The cake batter is exceptionally thin, and it fills the pans only about one-quarter full but bakes up to the top of the pan.

Classic German Chocolate Cake Filling  
Makes: almost 3 cups/27 ounces/760 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
pecan pieces, broken medium coarse	1 cup	4	114
sweetened condensed milk (1 can); see <a href="#">Note</a>	1 cup plus 3 tablespoons (9.5 fluid ounces)	14	400
about 3 large egg yolks	3½ tablespoons (1.7 fluid ounces)	2	56
unsalted butter, cut into about 4 pieces (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	8 tablespoons (1 stick)	4	113
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
Baker's Angel Flake coconut or Mounds	1¾ cups	4.6	130

Toast the Pecans



Spread the pecans evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes to enhance the flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Set aside.

### Make the Filling

In a medium heavy saucepan, whisk together the condensed milk and yolks. Add the butter and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula, reaching well to the edges and bottom. As soon as the mixture starts to simmer, lower the heat or occasionally remove the pan from the heat to keep it from cooking too fast or burning. Simmer for about 5 minutes, or until thickened enough to pool slightly on the surface before disappearing (about 175°F/79°C). It still will be pourable.

Stir in the vanilla, coconut, and pecans and continue cooking on medium heat for 1 minute. Scrape the mixture into a large bowl. (The mixture will become tan and slightly translucent.) Cover it with a towel and allow it to cool to room temperature, or just barely warm, stirring occasionally to prevent a skin from forming. (It will take about 3 hours at room temperature, but it will reach spreading consistency faster if refrigerated or if stirred over ice water for 5 minutes.) The filling thickens as it cools. If it is refrigerated for more than 2 hours, it will need to be softened over hot water or heated for a few seconds in the microwave.

### Note

If you have only evaporated milk, use one 12-fluid-ounce can/13.2 ounces/372 grams and add ¾ cup/5.3 ounces/150 grams sugar. It will take about 25 minutes to reach the proper consistency. This will result in slightly more caramelization.

### Compose the Cake

Spread a little filling on a 9-inch cardboard round or serving plate and set the first layer on top. If making the ganache variation below and using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Frost with half the filling (it will be about ¼ inch thick). Place the second layer on top and press gently down on it, allowing a little of the filling to ooze out the sides. Frost the top layer with the remaining filling, spreading it right up to the edge so that a little oozes luxuriously over the side, but leave the rest of the sides bare. Cover the cake with a cake dome to keep the sides from drying.

### Variation

#### Ganache-Covered German Chocolate Cake

To keep the sides of the cake moist, frost them with [Dark Ganache](#) before putting the filling on top. For an extra glossy and smooth appearance, refrigerate the cake to set the ganache and then run a metal spatula, first rinsed with hot water, around the sides. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

### Note

If frosting the sides of the cake with ganache, when preparing the cake pans it is fine to leave the sides uncoated to prevent the tops of the cakes from shrinking inward slightly. Nonstick pans are ideal when not coating their sides as they result in the smoothest crust.

### Chocolate Ice Cream Cake or Sandwich

Serves: 8 to 10

Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes for the cake, 20 to 30 minutes for the sandwich

The new chocolate cake used for the German Chocolate Cake is also ideal for an ice cream cake or sandwich: it is intensely chocolaty, velvety, and dense, yet light and tender. The best part, though, is that because it contains oil rather than butter, it stays soft when frozen.

The ice cream cake, as pictured, is meant to be eaten with a fork, but the slimmer ice cream sandwich is ideal to enjoy eating with your fingers.

For the ice cream sandwich wedges, my friend Letty Platt, executive pastry chef at Deer Valley Resorts in Utah, offers a fabulous dipping sauce. The recipe she shared is not only delicious, it has the perfect thick, sticky texture to adhere luxuriously to the ice cream. You can also use it to drizzle on top of the cake.

### Plan Ahead

Compose the cake at least 8 hours ahead.

### Special Equipment

For baking the cake: One 10 by 2-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour. (For the sandwich version leave the sides of the pan uncoated.) | For molding the cake or sandwich: One 9½- or 9-inch springform pan or expandable flan ring. If using an expandable flan ring, cut a cardboard round the exact diameter of the baked cake | For lifting the layers: the loose bottom of a tart pan, a cardboard round, or an open-sided baking sheet

### Make the Cake

Make the German Chocolate Cake [Batter](#), but replace the cake flour portion with additional bleached all-purpose flour. Make three-quarters of the batter for the ice cream cake or half the batter for the sandwich.

### Bake and Cool the Cake

Bake and cool as for the German Chocolate Cake. When completely cool to the touch, cut the cake into two layers. For the ice cream cake version, make the bottom layer about half the thickness of the top layer (as in the photograph). For the ice cream sandwich, cut the cake into two even layers.





Ice Cream Filling and Toppings

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
ice cream of your choice (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	1 to 2 quarts	.	.
Chocolate Snowball Hot Fudge Sauce	.	.	.

Soften the Ice Cream

Remove the ice cream from the freezer to the refrigerator to soften until it is a spreadable consistency (1 to 1½ hours depending on the temperature of the freezer and refrigerator). Alternatively, use a microwave, with 4-second bursts, to speed softening, then empty the softened ice cream into a larger chilled metal bowl and stir it to equalize the consistency.

Compose the Cake or Sandwich

Set the bottom layer into the prepared pan. If it is slightly larger than the pan, it will compress to fit or you can trim it, if necessary. If you are working in a warm room, set the pan into a slightly larger silicone pan or wrap the bottom of the pan with aluminum foil and set it in a large pan surrounded by ice cubes to keep the ice cream from melting.

Spread the ice cream in an even layer on top of the cake layer, using a small offset spatula. Set the other cake layer on top of the ice cream. Coat a piece of plastic wrap lightly with nonstick cooking spray and place it directly on top of the cake. Press firmly down on it. Cover the pan tightly with another piece of plastic wrap and immediately set it in the freezer for a minimum of 8 hours, or until frozen through. It keeps for 3 months.

Unmold the Cake

Wipe the sides of the pan with a hot, damp towel and remove the sides. Dust with cocoa, if desired. If you are serving the entire cake, allow it to soften for a minimum of 10 minutes before cutting. If you want to serve only a few pieces, cut them right away with a chef's knife. Dip the knife in very hot water between cutting each slice. (Return the rest of the cake to the freezer: Wrap it well in plastic wrap and set it in a freezer-weight resealable plastic bag.) Allow the slices to soften for an additional 10 to 15 minutes before serving.

Chocolate Snowball Hot Fudge Sauce  
Makes: 1 cup/12 ounces/340 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
fine-quality unsweetened or 99% cacao chocolate	.	2	56
unsalted butter	3 tablespoons	1.5	42
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	2 tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	0.3	10
sugar	2/3 cup	4.6	132
heavy cream	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4	116

pure vanilla extract ½ teaspoon . .

Make the Chocolate Snowball Hot Fudge Sauce

In the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, heat the chocolate and butter. (Don't let the bottom of the container touch the water.) Stir often with a silicone spatula until completely melted. Whisk in the cocoa and set aside.

In a small heavy saucepan, heat the sugar and cream over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Bring the mixture to the boiling point and then whisk it into the chocolate mixture. Add the vanilla and whisk until smooth. Cover and keep it warm for up to an hour or refrigerate it for up to 2 weeks. Reheat just before pouring it onto the cake or serving as a dipping sauce for the sandwich wedges.

Notes

Most commercial ice cream has what is called overrun. This refers to the amount of air that gets incorporated during the freezing process. When the ice cream is softened to make it possible to spread it into the cake-lined mold, it loses that air and the volume can decrease by as much as two-thirds.

For the ice cream cake version, you will need about 1½ quarts homemade ice cream or 2 quarts commercial ice cream to create a 1¼-inch layer. For the sandwich version, you will need about 1 quart homemade ice cream or 1½ quarts commercial ice cream to create a ½-inch layer.

Some of my favorite ice creams for this cake are coffee, vanilla with vanilla bean, cherry vanilla, strawberry, and dulce de leche.

Miette's Tomboy  
Serves: 6  
Baking Time: 55 to 65 minutes (25 to 35 minutes in two pans)

This is the signature cake of the Miette Patisserie, a beloved organic bakery in San Francisco. I first met my adorable and talented friends Caitlin and Meg, the owners, when I was interviewing bakers for an article. They turned my impression of organic baking as being heavy and featuring whole wheat flour on its ear. I was utterly charmed by the delicacy, purity, refinement, and uniqueness of everything they created. What gave a real kick-start to our relationship was when I asked them a required interview question, "What was your training?" and they answered, "We started with The Cake Bible."



Batter	Volume		Ounce Gram	
boiling water	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	118	
dark chocolate, 70% cacao, chopped (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )		1	28	
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.	
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200	
bleached all-purpose flour	¾ cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus 2 tablespoons	3.5	100	

unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¾ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	2.2	63
baking powder	1¼ teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	¾ teaspoon	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
1 large egg, at room temperature	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	50
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	54
buttermilk, preferably not low fat	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	121

### Special Equipment

One 6 by 3-inch round cake pan, encircled with a cake strip, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour. (If you don't have a 6 by 3-inch pan, you can use two 6 by 2-inch round cake pans. The cake will be slightly less dense and fudgy.)

### Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

### Melt the Chocolate

In a medium bowl, pour the boiling water over the chocolate. Stir occasionally until the chocolate is melted and smooth. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool until it is no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid. Stir in the vanilla.

### Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a medium bowl, sift together the sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg on high speed until thickened and light in color, about 3 minutes. Lower the speed to medium and slowly add the oil to emulsify the egg. Beat in the buttermilk and melted chocolate mixture until well combined.

Add the flour mixture and beat on low speed for a few seconds until the dry ingredients are moistened. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat for 2 minutes. The batter will be thick and shiny. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan or divide it evenly between the two pans, and smooth the surfaces with a small offset spatula. In two pans, each will be almost half full (12.6 ounces/358 grams).

### Bake the Cake

Bake for 55 to 65 minutes (25 to 35 minutes if using two pans), or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. An instant-read thermometer inserted in the center will register about 200°F/93°C.

### Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the cake and the pan, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Remove the parchment and immediately reinvert the cake so that the top side is up. Cover the top with a piece of plastic wrap to keep the upper crust soft. Cool completely.

Vanilla Mousseline  
Makes: about 2 cups/12 ounces/337 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsalted butter, preferably high fat, slightly softened but cool (65°F/19°C); see <a href="#">Notes</a>	13 tablespoons (1½ sticks plus 1 tablespoon)	6.5	185
2½ large egg whites, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon (2.5 fluid ounces)	2.6	75
sugar	½ cup, divided	3.5	100
water	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30
cream of tartar	¼ plus 1/16 teaspoon	.	.

pure vanilla extract

½ teaspoon

### Beat the Butter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, beat the butter on medium-high speed until creamy, about 1 minute. Set aside in a cool place (no higher than 70°F/21°C).

### Prepare the Egg Whites

Pour the egg whites into the bowl of a stand mixer, if you have a second bowl, or into a medium bowl and have ready a handheld mixer.

### Heat the Sugar Syrup

Have ready a 1-cup or larger heatproof glass measure.

In a small heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, stir together ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons of the sugar and the water until all of the sugar is moistened. Heat on medium, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the mixture is bubbling. Stop stirring and reduce the heat to low. (If using an electric range, remove the pan from the heat.)

### Beat the Egg Whites

If using the stand mixer for the egg whites, attach the whisk beater. Beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

### Bring the Sugar Syrup up to the Proper Temperature

Increase the heat under the sugar syrup and continue to boil the syrup for a few minutes until an instant-read thermometer registers 248° to 250°F/120°C (the firm-ball stage). Immediately transfer the syrup to the glass measure to stop the cooking.

### Add the Sugar Syrup to the Egg Whites

If using a stand mixer, with the mixer off to keep it from spinning onto the sides of the bowl, add the syrup to the egg whites. Begin by pouring in a small amount of the syrup. Immediately beat on high speed for 5 seconds. Add the remaining syrup the same way in three parts. For the last addition, use a silicone scraper to remove the syrup clinging to the glass measure and scrape it off against the whisk beater. If the syrup has hardened before most of it has been poured, soften it to pouring consistency for a few seconds in the microwave.

If using a handheld mixer, beat the syrup into the egg whites in a steady stream. Don't allow the syrup to fall on the beaters or they will spin it onto the sides of the bowl.

Lower the speed to medium and continue beating for up to 2 minutes. Refrigerate the meringue for 5 to 10 minutes, or until the temperature registers 70°F/21°C. Whisk after the first 5 minutes to test and equalize the temperature.

### Beat the Meringue into the Butter

Set the mixer bowl containing the butter in the stand mixer and attach the whisk beater (no need to wash it). Beat on medium-high speed for about 3 minutes, or until the butter lightens in color and is no warmer than 70°F/21°C.

With a silicone spatula, scrape the meringue into the butter and beat on medium speed until smooth and creamy. Beat for about 2 minutes, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary. At first the mixture will look slightly curdled. If it starts watering out, check the temperature. The mixture should feel cool and be no lower than 65°F/19°C, no higher than 70°F/21°C. If it is too warm, set the bowl in a larger bowl of ice water and stir gently to chill it down before continuing to whisk. If it is too cool, suspend the bowl over a pan of simmering water (don't let the bottom of the bowl touch the water) and heat very briefly, stirring vigorously when the mixture just starts to melt slightly at the edges. To stop the warming, dip the bottom of the bowl in a larger bowl of ice water for a few seconds to cool it. Remove the bowl from the ice water and beat the mousseline by hand until smooth. Beat in the vanilla.

The mousseline becomes spongy and fluffy on standing, which is lovely to eat but needs to be smooth when frosting the cake. If you don't use it right away, whisk it lightly by hand to maintain a silky texture before applying it to the cake. However, do not rebeat chilled mousseline until it has reached 70°F/21°C; this will prevent it from breaking down.

### Variation Raspberry Mousseline

Beat 1/3 cup/3.7 ounces/106 grams seedless raspberry preserves into the completed mousseline.

### Notes

High-fat (low-water) butter helps to ensure smooth emulsification. Temperature, however, is the key to the success of this buttercream, so you will need an instant-read thermometer. If the temperature of the meringue and butter is between 65° and 70°F/19° and 21°C, it works easily and magnificently. In hot or humid weather, use [Golden Neoclassic Buttercream](#).

The top of the cake has a very slight dip. If you use 60 percent cacao chocolate, the dip will be a little deeper. Either way, it's not a problem because there's more than enough height to cut the layers.

### Compose the Cake

With a long serrated knife, carefully slice off the mounded top or tops of the cake (about ¼ inch). Then slice the cake into three even layers, each about ¾ inch thick. If the cake was baked in two pans, simply leave it as two layers.

Spread a little mousseline on a 6-inch cardboard round or a serving plate. Set the bottom layer crust side up on top and spread it with about one-third of the mousseline. Set the middle layer on top and spread it with half the remaining mousseline. Set the top layer on top and spread it with the remaining mousseline. (If the cake is only two layers, use half the mousseline for the filling and half for the top.)

### Décor

For the attractive decoration in the photograph, use a partially closed star tip (number 26) to pipe a ring of mousseline starting about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch in from the outer edge. You can continue spiraling the mousseline to fill in the center of the top layer and then smooth it except for the outer edge, or fill in the center using a small offset spatula. Make this top layer as smooth as possible. Set the traditional pink Miette rose and leaves in the center, if desired (see the photograph). They are available from Lucks Food Decorating Company (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

## Chapter 2: Sponge Cakes

Light, moist, and tender, there are no cakes more elegant or alluring than these. To achieve these qualities, most sponge cakes rely on a proportionately larger amount of well-beaten eggs or stiffly beaten egg whites to flour rather than on the chemical leavenings used in butter or oil layer cakes. (If baking powder, baking soda, or both are used, it is only in very small quantities.) The stiffly beaten eggs or egg whites provide the structure usually contributed by the higher amount of flour. The success of these cakes, therefore, depends on proper beating technique, which makes them a little more challenging but at the same time very rewarding.

Whipped cream makes an ideal frosting for sponge cakes because when refrigerated, the texture of a sponge cake does not get as firm as that of a butter cake. Any slight watering out that might occur gets absorbed into the cake, making the cake moister and more tender; a butter or oil cake just becomes soggy.

Of special interest in this chapter is the optional use of Wondra flour (see [Flour](#)) in many of the cakes. This unique flour produces sponge cakes that are lighter, more tender, and more delicious than those using any other flour.

### Preparing the Pan

If using a layer cake pan, coat the interior of the pan with baking spray with flour. Then set a parchment round in the bottom. (The round will stick to the cake and help when removing the bottom crust so that the cake can absorb syrup. Leave the parchment on the cake until ready to apply syrup.) Wipe off the rim of the pan. There is no need to use a cake strip as sponge cakes don't tend to dome and also any dryness at the edges will be corrected when the cake is brushed with syrup after baking.

A straight-sided tube pan should be left uncoated so that the sponge cake can rise to its fullest height.

### Cooling and Unmolding a Sponge Cake

When hot, sponge cakes are so light and fragile that they seem almost to defy gravity. If they are left in the pan, the moisture from within will cause them to deflate like a soufflé. It is therefore necessary to have ready two unmolding racks that have been lightly coated with nonstick cooking spray, and to unmold the cakes as soon as they are baked.

Except when baking the cake in a fluted tube pan, always run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing it against the pan, to ensure complete release of the cake's sides with crumb intact.

Invert the cake onto one prepared rack and immediately reinvert it onto the second rack. The firm upper crust helps maintain the maximum height of the cake layer. The main exception to this rule is a cake that is baked in an angel food tube pan; it is always cooled completely upside down. The cake will cling to the bottom of the pan and stretch downward to its full height. Once cool, the structure is firm enough to prevent the collapse of the delicate foam structure and the cake can be unmolded. (A large chiffon cake baked in a pan without a center tube also needs to be cooled upside down.) To unmold, loosen the sides and bottom with a metal spatula and run a wire cake tester or wooden skewer around the center tube.

Some angel food pans have legs designed to support the pan when inverted to cool, but they don't function very well. The cooling cake needs to be suspended a minimum of four inches above a work surface to allow for effective evaporation of steam. A slim-necked glass soda or wine bottle will work well, but the opening of some pans is not large enough. If this is the case, you will need to use a wire rack or large inverted metal funnel that is raised off the work surface. Whatever you use, have this ready before the cake comes out of the oven.

Allow cakes to cool until they are no longer warm to the touch before adding syrup, storing, or frosting. Any residual heat will make the cakes soggy and melt the frosting.

### Highlights For Successful Sponge Cakes

It is best to make sponge cakes on a relatively dry day as humidity will result in slightly less height in the finished cake.

Weigh or measure ingredients carefully: To measure cake or all-purpose flour, use a solid cup measure (one with an unbroken rim) and sift the flour directly into it until the flour mounds above the rim. Use a long metal spatula or knife blade to run across the rim of the cup, getting rid of the excess flour. Measure Wondra flour by spooning it lightly into the measuring cup and leveling it off in the same way. Be sure to weigh or measure all eggs, egg yolks, and egg whites. Because eggs vary in size and because sponge cakes depend on them for leavening, any fluctuation will affect the outcome significantly.

Use the specified pan size.

Check for accurate oven temperature.

Use superfine sugar for the finest texture. (You can make it by processing fine granulated sugar in the food processor for a few minutes.)

Use Wondra flour when specified, cake flour without leavening, or bleached all-purpose flour. Wondra produces a slightly stiffer batter so use a small offset spatula to spread and level the batter in the pan.

When handling or beating egg whites, everything that comes in contact with them, including the mixer bowl and beater, must be free of grease (this includes even the tiniest trace of egg yolk) or the egg whites will not beat adequately.

Use the recommended amount of cream of tartar (1/8 teaspoon per egg white) and beat until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised. (There is no risk of breaking down the egg whites or drying them if the correct amount of cream of tartar is used.)

Once the egg whites are beaten, immediately fold them gently but thoroughly into the rest of the mixture to prevent them from breaking down and to maximize their volume.

Before scraping the batter into the pan(s), reach to the bottom of the mixer bowl with a silicone spatula to make sure all the flour is integrated.

Bake immediately after mixing the batter.

Use correct baking times; do not underbake.

Avoid opening the oven door before the minimum baking time has elapsed, because these fragile cakes could fall. Test toward the end of baking by opening the oven door a crack, and if the cake doesn't appear done, continue baking for another five minutes.

Sponge cakes that have syrup are enjoyed most if allowed to ripen overnight.

Wrap cake layers well or add syrup and frost them only when completely cool.

Angel Food Cake Base Recipe

This cake has no fat and is made entirely with egg whites, which means that it is lacking in tenderizing ingredients. Lemon juice is, therefore, an important addition because it makes the crumb slightly ivory in color and meltingly tender, especially when combined with the Wondra flour and the right proportion of cream of tartar.

Although an angel food cake can be baked in a layer cake pan, it is much better to use the traditional pan with a center tube because it produces a more uniform shape and lighter consistency. Because these pans vary so much in size and capacity, I offer an angel food cake formula based on one egg white for a one-cup-capacity pan. All you need to do is multiply the weight or volume of each ingredient by the number of cups of your pan. (Measure the volume of the pan by placing a plastic bag inside to keep the water from leaking out and then measure out cups of water until you reach the top of the pan.) If you are using volume rather than weight, keep in mind that three teaspoons equal one tablespoon and sixteen tablespoons equal one cup. See [Chocolate Tweed Angel Food Cake](#) for a full-size version.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
superfine sugar	1½ tablespoons, divided	0.66	18.7
Wondra flour (or cake flour)	¾ tablespoon, lightly spooned and leveled off (or 1 tablespoon, sifted into the spoon and leveled off)	0.22	6.2
salt	pinch (¼ teaspoon for 16 egg whites)	.	.
1 large egg white, at room temperature	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.06	30
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	1/8 plus 1/16 teaspoon	.	.
cream of tartar	1/8 teaspoon	.	.
pure vanilla extract	¼ teaspoon	.	.
fine-quality unsweetened or 99% cacao chocolate, grated (optional); see <a href="#">Notes</a>	.	0.12	3.5

Special Equipment

Six 1¼-cup mini angel food pans up to one 10-inch (16 cups) two-piece metal tube pan, depending on the amount of batter you want to make | Wire rack raised off the counter, long-necked glass soda or wine bottle, or a large inverted metal funnel that will fit into the opening at the top of the pan, depending on the size of the pan. (Have this ready before baking and weight it by filling it with sugar or marbles to keep it from tipping.)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Prepare the Sugar, Flour, and Salt

In a small bowl, whisk together half the sugar, the flour, and salt until evenly combined. Sift the remaining sugar onto a piece of wax paper.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the lemon juice (omit if using chocolate) and cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the sifted sugar and continue beating on medium-high speed until very stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. Beat in the vanilla until combined.

Make the Batter

Dust the flour mixture over the beaten whites, one-sixth of the mixture at a time (if using cake flour, sift it over the whites). With a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or large silicone spatula, fold in the flour mixture quickly but gently. It is not necessary to incorporate every speck until the



last addition. Fold in the grated chocolate, if using, until evenly incorporated. Using a long narrow spatula or silicone spatula, spread a thin layer of batter onto the sides of the prepared pan to ensure smooth sides. Empty the rest of the batter into the pan. In a 16-cup pan, it will be ½ inch from the top of the rim. Run a small metal spatula or knife through the batter to prevent air pockets and smooth the surface evenly.

### Bake the Cake

Bake for 15 to 40 minutes, depending on the size of the pan, or until golden brown, a wire cake tester inserted between the tube and the side comes out clean, and the cake springs back when lightly pressed in the center. (A wooden toothpick will still have a few moist crumbs clinging to it.) During baking, the center will rise about 2 inches above the pan, but it will sink to almost level with the pan when done. The surface will have deep cracks, like a soufflé.

### Cool and Unmold the Cake

Invert the pan immediately onto the raised wire rack or place the tube opening over the neck of the bottle to suspend it well above the countertop. Cool completely in the pan, about 1½ hours.

Loosen the sides of the pan with a long narrow spatula and remove the center core of the pan. Dislodge the cake from the bottom and center core with a small metal spatula or thin sharp knife. (A wire cake tester or wooden skewer works well around the core. To keep the sides attractive, press the spatula firmly against the sides of the pan, moving the spatula up and down as you go around it.) Invert the cake onto a flat plate covered with plastic wrap that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray and reinvert it onto a serving plate. Allow the cake to sit for 1 hour, or until the top is no longer tacky. Then cover it with a cake dome or wrap it airtight. It keeps for 3 days at room temperature, and for 10 days refrigerated. Freezing toughens the texture.

### Notes

Grated chocolate is difficult to measure as it tends to fly around and melt immediately upon touch. Therefore I find it easiest to determine the amount by weight. Before grating, store the chocolate in a cool place, tightly wrapped. Refrigerate briefly before grating. Grate the chocolate onto a sheet of parchment, shake it into a bowl, and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Using a large spoon, transfer the chilled grated chocolate to the mixing bowl.

If using the optional chocolate, omit the lemon juice.

### Highlights for Successful Génoise

Compared with the basic butter layer cake, a génoise (zhay-NWAHZ) has all the liquid and about one-third the sugar in the form of syrup, added after baking, which makes it lighter and moister as well. Including the syrup, for the same-size butter cake, génoise has four times the egg, double the liquid, less fat, and 1.6 times the sugar.

Heat the eggs to the temperature indicated because any fluctuation makes a considerable difference in the volume of the batter.

It is imperative to beat on high speed for a minimum of 5 minutes. The batter should at least quadruple in volume and be very thick.

For maximum volume, use a balloon whisk or slotted skimmer to fold the flour into the batter. A large silicone spatula works but deflates the batter more. If using the whisk, periodically shake out the batter that collects inside. Work quickly once the eggs are beaten so that they do not deflate. Use a large silicone spatula at the end of folding in order to reach to the bottom of the bowl and to scrape the batter into the pan.

Especially for chocolate génoise, use your fingers to reach to the bottom of the bowl and pinch out any little pebbles of encapsulated flour that have not blended into the rest of the batter.

Make the génoise and add syrup a day ahead of serving to give the syrup a chance to distribute more evenly and to develop its flavors.



### Folding in flour with a balloon whisk

### Highlights for Successful Biscuit

A biscuit (bees-KWEE) is a cake similar to a génoise, but it has a little more egg and no added fat, making its structure lighter and stronger. Therefore, it can absorb more syrup and become moister and a little sweeter (see [Lemon Meringue Cake](#)).

Weigh or measure the yolks and egg whites.

Beat the egg mixture and egg whites very stiffly.

For maximum volume, use a balloon whisk or slotted skimmer to fold the flour into the batter. A large silicone spatula works but deflates the batter



more.

If using the whisk, periodically shake out the batter that collects inside. Work quickly once the eggs are beaten so that they do not deflate. Use a large silicone spatula at the end of folding in order to reach to the bottom of the bowl and to scrape the batter into the pan.

Use a small offset spatula to level the batter as the batter will not flow during baking.



Heavenly Vanilla Bean Angel Food Cake  
Chocolate Tweed Angel Food Cake  
Serves: 14 to 16  
Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

Many of us adore the gossamer texture of angel food cake but find its taste too sweet. The perfect solution to tempering the sweetness is to spangle the batter with grated bitter (unsweetened) chocolate. Chocolate-Spangled Whipped Cream has the perfect harmony of color, texture, and flavor to fill and frost this cake. You can also fill the cake layers and leave the sides bare. For the fluffiest texture, serve using two forks back to back to cut through the cake without deflating it. Alternatively, use a serrated knife, but hold the cake gently without compressing it as you cut. Do not serve this cake with sauce as it would fall apart.

If you prefer a pure white cake, simply omit the chocolate and try the vanilla bean variation. The very lightest and most tender texture comes from using Wondra flour; it blends easily into the batter without deflating it significantly.

My recipe uses one egg white per cup capacity of the pan. (To get the volume of your pan, line it with a clean plastic bag and pour in water up to the top, counting the cups as you go.) If your pan is smaller, simply decrease the recipe or bake any extra batter as cupcakes. Be sure to cool the cupcakes upside down on a wire rack to ensure maximum volume. Sixteen beaten whites will rise to the very top of a 5-quart mixer.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
superfine sugar	1½ cups, divided	10.6	300

Wondra flour (or cake flour)	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup, lightly spooned and leveled off (or 1 cup, sifted into the cup and leveled off)	3.5	100
salt	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon	.	.
16 large egg whites, at room temperature	2 cups (16 fluid ounces)	17	480
cream of tartar	2 teaspoons	.	.
pure vanilla extract	4 teaspoons	.	.
fine-quality unsweetened or 99% cacao chocolate, chilled, finely grated, refrigerated		2	56

Special Equipment

One ungreased 10-inch (16 cups) two-piece metal tube pan | Long-necked glass wine or soda bottle, or a large inverted metal funnel that will fit into the opening at the top of the pan. (Have this ready before baking and weight it by filling it with sugar or marbles to keep it from tipping.)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Prepare the Sugar, Flour, and Salt

In a small bowl, whisk together half the sugar, the flour, and salt until evenly combined. Sift the remaining sugar onto a piece of wax paper.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the sifted sugar and continue beating on medium-high speed until very stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. Beat in the vanilla until combined.

Make the Batter

Dust (lightly sprinkle) the flour mixture over the beaten whites,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup at a time (if using cake flour, sift it over the whites). With a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or large silicone spatula, fold in the flour mixture quickly but gently. It is not necessary to incorporate every speck until the last addition. Fold in the grated chocolate until evenly incorporated. Using a long narrow spatula or silicone spatula, spread a thin layer of batter onto the sides of the prepared pan to ensure smooth sides. Empty the rest of the batter into the pan. In a 16-cup pan, it will be  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the top of the rim. Run a small metal spatula or knife through the batter to prevent air pockets and smooth the surface evenly.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until golden brown, a wire cake tester inserted between the tube and the side comes out clean, and the cake springs back when lightly pressed in the center. (A wooden toothpick will still have a few moist crumbs clinging to it.) During baking, the center will rise about 2 inches above the pan, but it will sink to almost level with the pan when done. The surface will have deep cracks, like a soufflé.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Invert the pan immediately, placing the tube opening over the neck of the bottle to suspend it well above the countertop. Cool completely in the pan, about 1½ hours.

Loosen the sides of the pan with a long narrow spatula and remove the center core of the pan. Dislodge the cake from the bottom and center core with a metal spatula or thin sharp knife. (A wire cake tester or wooden skewer works well around the core. To keep the sides attractive, press the spatula firmly against the sides of the pan, moving the spatula up and down as you go around it.) Invert the cake onto a flat plate covered with plastic wrap that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray and reinvert it onto a serving plate. Allow the cake to sit for 1 hour, or until the top is no longer tacky. Then cover it with a cake dome or wrap it airtight. It keeps for 3 days at room temperature and for 10 days refrigerated. Freezing toughens the texture. The cake is also lovely decorated simply with a light sprinkling of cocoa or lacy drizzles of melted chocolate.

Spangled Whipped Cream  
Makes: 5¾ cups/24 ounces/680 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
heavy cream, cold	2 cups (16 fluid ounces)	16.5	464
superfine sugar	2 tablespoons	1	25

pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chilled, finely grated, refrigerated	1 cup	5	142
finely ground almonds (preferably lightly toasted before grinding)	½ cup	2	54
optional garnish: Valrhona Les Perles or semisweet mini chocolate chips	½ cup	3	85

Make the Chocolate-Spangled Whipped Cream

In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine the heavy cream and sugar and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes (chill the whisk beater alongside the bowl).

Whip the cream and sugar, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, just until traces of beater marks begin to show distinctly. Add the vanilla and whip just until the cream mounds softly when dropped from a spoon. Add the chocolate and almonds. With a large silicone spatula, fold them into the whipped cream until evenly incorporated. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to fill and frost the cake. The whipped cream keeps for 3 days in the refrigerator.

Highlights for Success

The cream must be cold when beaten.

Do not overwhip the cream because the whipped cream will stiffen more after the chocolate and nuts have been folded in.

If the grated chocolate is not cold when folded into the cake batter or whipped cream, it will turn the cake or whipped cream a light brown instead of maintaining its white color.

To grate chocolate, make sure that it is cold or it will melt rather than form fine particles. You can use a hand grater, Mouli, or food processor. If using a food processor, break the chocolate into small pieces before processing.

Compose the Cake

Using a long serrated knife, divide the cake into three even layers. Spread a little of the whipped cream on a 9-inch cardboard round or serving plate and set one layer on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Spread the whipped cream about 3/8 inch thick between each layer and frost the top and sides with the remaining whipped cream. Sprinkle the top evenly with Les Perles, if using. To get them to stick to the sides, pelt them against the sides, and they will hold in place. Kids love helping with this! If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

Variations  
Chocolate Cherubs

To make chocolate baby cakes, which I call cherubs, use the 6 egg white formula: 9 tablespoons/4 ounces/112.5 grams superfine sugar; ¼ cup plus 1½ teaspoons/1.3 ounces/37.5 grams Wondra flour (or 6 tablespoons cake flour); pinch of salt; 6 egg whites: 6.3 ounces/180 grams; ¾ teaspoon cream of tartar; ¾ ounce/21 grams grated fine-quality unsweetened or 99% cacao chocolate; and 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract. Proceed as for the chocolate angel food cake but divide the batter among four 4½ by almost 2-inch (1¾ cups) mini angel food tube pans or six 1¼-cup mini angel food tube pans. Bake for about 15 minutes and let cool for about 20 minutes.

Heavenly Vanilla Bean Angel Food Cake

This is the most angelically tender of all possible angel food cakes. Instead of the grated chocolate, split and scrape the seeds from 1 Tahitian vanilla bean or 2 Madagascar vanilla beans into half the sugar. Process until the seeds are evenly mixed into the sugar. Add the flour and salt and process to blend well. Add 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice when adding the cream of tartar. Proceed as for the chocolate angel food cake.

Chocolate Apricot Roll with Lacquer Glaze  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 7 to 8 minutes

I've always loved dried apricots dipped in dark chocolate, so I created this cake to emulate the same compelling flavor profile. My homemade version of lekvar (apricot filling), adapted from the beloved baking teacher John Clancy, uses dried apricots, the intensity of which is close to the original lekvar from Hungary. If you are making the sponge cake roll, or biscuit roulade (bees-KWEE roo-LAHD) and filling it a day ahead, there's no need for the apricot syrup, as the chocolate ganache filling moistens it perfectly. If you prefer, you can double the ganache and use it to frost the cake instead of glazing it with lacquer glaze. There are several steps to this elegant showstopper, but many of them can be completed ahead of time. The end result makes it well worth the effort.

Plan Ahead

Make the ganache filling several hours ahead. Pour the apricot glaze at least 2 hours ahead.

Biscuit Roulade

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1/3 cup (or ¼ cup plus 2 teaspoons), sifted into the cup and leveled off	1.2	33

cornstarch	2½ tablespoons	0.7	24
4 large eggs, at room temperature	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	7	200
about 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.6	18
superfine sugar	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon, divided	4	113
pure vanilla extract	¾ teaspoon	.	.
cream of tartar	¼ teaspoon	.	.
powdered sugar for dusting	.	.	.

Special Equipment

One 17¼ by 12¼ by 1-inch half-sheet pan, coated with shortening or nonstick cooking spray, bottom lined with a nonstick liner or parchment and then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 450°F/230°C.

Mix the Flour and Cornstarch

In a small bowl, whisk the flour and cornstarch to combine well.

Prepare the Eggs

Separate 2 of the eggs, placing the yolks in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater and the egg whites in another bowl. To the yolks, add the 2 remaining whole eggs, the additional yolk, and ½ cup of the sugar. Beat on high speed until thick, fluffy, and tripled in volume, about 5 minutes. Lower the speed to medium and beat in the vanilla. (If you have only one mixer bowl, scrape the mixture into another large bowl and wash and dry the mixer bowl and whisk beater very thoroughly.)

Make the Batter

Sift half the flour mixture over the egg mixture and, using a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or silicone spatula, fold it in gently but rapidly until almost all the flour has disappeared. Repeat with the remaining flour mixture until all traces of flour have disappeared.

Make the Meringue

In the bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Beat in the remaining 1 tablespoon of the sugar and continue beating until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. Fold the meringue into the batter. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 7 to 8 minutes, or until golden brown and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center.

Unmold and Cool the Cake

If necessary, loosen the sides of the cake with the tip of a sharp knife. Unmold the cake at once. Grasp the long edge of the liner and gently slide the cake from the pan onto a flat work surface. Dust the surface of the cake lightly with powdered sugar. While it is still hot, roll up the cake from the short end. Be sure to include the nonstick liner. (If using parchment, first flip the cake onto a clean dish towel and carefully remove the parchment. Then roll up the cake tightly, towel and all.)

Set the roll on a wire rack to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch, about 40 minutes.

Lekvar  
Makes: 2¾ cups/22 fluid ounces/29.6 ounces/840 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
dried apricots (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	2 2/3 cups	1	454
water	2 cups (16 fluid ounces)	16.7	473

sugar 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons 8 225

lemon zest, finely grated 2 teaspoons, loosely packed . .

apricot or peach brandy 1 teaspoon . .

Make the Lekvar

In a medium saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, combine the dried apricots and water and allow them to sit for 2 hours to soften.

Bring the water to a boil, cover the pan tightly, and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes on the lowest possible heat until very soft when pierced with a skewer. If the water evaporates, add a little extra.

In a food processor, process the apricots and any remaining liquid, the sugar, lemon zest, and brandy until smooth.

Scrape the apricot mixture back into the saucepan and simmer, stirring constantly to prevent scorching, for 10 to 15 minutes, or until deep orange in color and very thick. A tablespoon of the mixture when lifted will take about 3 seconds to fall from the spoon.

Transfer the lekvar to a bowl and allow it to cool completely.

Note

Making the lekvar is optional. You will need only ½ cup/5.2 ounces/150 grams, but it's great to have on hand, and it keeps just about indefinitely in the refrigerator. You can also use a good-quality apricot filling or preserves. If using preserves, you will need to strain and concentrate them slightly. In a small heavy saucepan, bring the contents of one 12-ounce/340-gram jar to a boil. Remove from the heat and strain it into a 2-cup or larger microwavable glass measure. You will have almost 1 cup. Microwave on high for about 3 minutes, or until reduced to about ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons/7 fluid ounces. On cooling, it will settle down to about 13 tablespoons/6.5 fluid ounces.

Apricot Syrup  
Makes: 1/3 cup/2.6 fluid ounces/3.5 ounces/100 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sugar	2 tablespoons plus ¾ teaspoon	1	28
water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59
apricot or peach brandy	1 tablespoon	0.5	14

Make the Apricot Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, bring the sugar and water to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Cover immediately, remove the pan from the heat, and cool completely. Transfer the syrup to a glass measure and stir in the apricot brandy. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add enough water to equal 1/3 cup. Cover it and set aside.

Apricot Ganache Filling  
Makes: 1¼ cups/11.2 ounces/321 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		5	142
heavy cream	½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (5 fluid ounces)	5	145
apricot or peach brandy or extra cream	1 tablespoon	0.5	14
pure vanilla extract	¼ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Apricot Ganache Filling

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

In a 1-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), scald the cream (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Pulse in the apricot brandy and vanilla. Scrape the ganache into a glass bowl and allow it to sit for 1 hour. Cover it with plastic wrap and allow it to

cool for several hours, or until the mixture reaches frosting consistency.

Lacquer Glaze  
Makes: 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon/8.5 fluid ounces/10.5 ounces/300 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
cold water	2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons (just under 1.5 fluid ounces)	1.5	39
powdered gelatin	1½ teaspoons	.	.
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59
corn syrup	1 tablespoon	0.7	21
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	2/3 cup (sifted before measuring)	1.7	50
heavy cream	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	58

Make the Lacquer Glaze

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium metal bowl.

In a small bowl, pour in the 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons cold water and sprinkle the gelatin over the top. Stir to moisten and soften the gelatin and allow it to sit for a minimum of 5 minutes. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and set aside.

In a small heavy saucepan, whisk together the sugar and ¼ cup water over medium heat. Stir constantly with the whisk to dissolve the sugar.

Remove the pan from the heat and, with the whisk, gently stir in the corn syrup and then cocoa until smooth, making sure to reach into the corners of the pan. The mixture will be glossy. Using a silicone spatula, stir in the cream. Return the pan to medium heat and, stirring constantly, bring the mixture to the boiling point (190°F/88°C). Bubbles will just start to form around the edges.

Remove the pan from the heat and strain the mixture into the metal bowl. Allow it to cool slightly, for about 10 minutes. An instant-read thermometer should register 122° to 140°F/50° to 60°C. With the silicone spatula, stir in the softened gelatin until it is dissolved completely and no longer streaky.

Strain the glaze into a 2-cup glass measure or bowl. (Metal will impart an undesirable flavor if the glaze is stored in it.) Allow it to cool for a few minutes, stirring very gently so as not to incorporate any air. For this cake, the glaze coats best when just made (90°F/32°C). If the glaze is made ahead and reheated, it will be thicker and should be used at 92° to 95°F/34°C.

Once cool (after about 1 hour), the glaze can be covered and refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for several months. Reheat it in a double boiler over hot, not simmering, water or very carefully in a microwave with 3-second bursts, stirring gently to ensure that it doesn't overheat or incorporate air.

Compose the Cake Roll

If you are glazing the cake, you will need a long cake rack and an aluminum foil—covered cardboard base that is slightly narrower than the cake to support it but that will allow the glaze to fall through the rack; the base should be 3 to 4 inches longer on either end to make moving the cake easier.

Gently unroll the cake. If a liner was used, carefully detach the cake from it and then lay the cake back down on it. If using syrup, brush it evenly over the surface.

Measure out ½ cup/5.3 ounces/150 grams lekvar, if using, into a small bowl or cup and add extra apricot brandy or water if necessary to reach a stiff but spreadable consistency. Using a small offset spatula, spread it evenly and thinly over the top of the cake roll.

Measure out 1 cup/9 ounces/257 grams ganache filling and spread it evenly on top of the lekvar, leaving about ½ inch bare at one short end.

Starting from the other end, use the liner or towel to lift the edge of the cake and roll it forward. Make a fairly tight and even roll by cupping your hands over the cake and pressing gently along the roll after each turn. When the cake is rolled completely, roll it seam side down onto the foil-covered base. The seam needs to be on the underside of the cake, so if necessary, roll it first onto a piece of parchment and use the parchment to flip it over seam side down.

Glaze the Cake

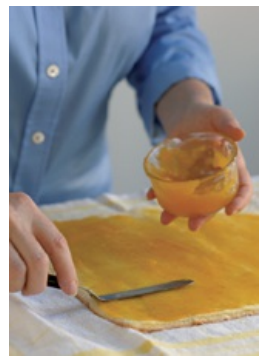
Place the roll on its base onto a wire rack that is set on top of a half-sheet pan to catch excess glaze. With a small offset spatula, use about 3 tablespoons of the remaining ganache to spread the thinnest possible crumb coating onto the cake's surface to ensure an even glaze. Place the cake in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes to set the coating before pouring the glaze on top.

A minimum of 2 hours ahead of serving, pour the lacquer glaze evenly over the cake, coating the top and sides completely. (The ends will be trimmed afterward.) If necessary, using a small metal spatula, touch up any small areas that the glaze may have missed. Any tiny bubbles, should they appear, can be pierced with a sharp needle. (You'll need only about ¾ cup/7.6 ounces/216 grams and, of that, only 4½ tablespoons/3 ounces/86 grams actually coats the cake. You can recoup the remaining glaze from the sheet pan, straining it if necessary, and use it to top cupcakes.)

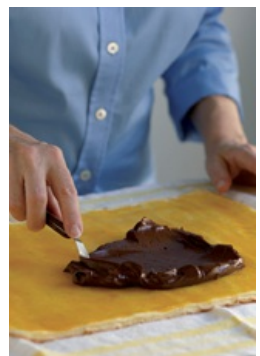
Use two pancake turners to slip well under each end, between the cake and the aluminum foil, to transfer the cake to a serving plate or long board. You can also move the cake after the glaze has set because it will not wrinkle. Allow the cake to sit in a cool area (not a warm kitchen) until serving. It is at its most shiny within 6 hours of pouring the glaze. It can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours if the ends are covered with plastic wrap, but be sure to bring it to room temperature before serving. If it is refrigerated, it will lose a little of its glossy shine. To revive the shine, wave a hair dryer set on low heat briefly over the cake. With a serrated knife, trim the two ends at a slight angle.



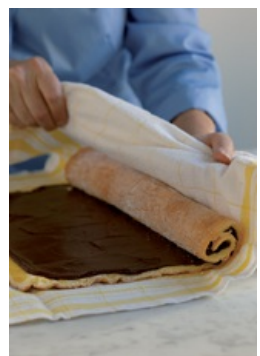
Unrolling the biscuit



Spreading the lekvar



Spreading the ganache



Rolling the cake roll



Pouring the glaze  
Génoise Rose  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 20 to 30 minutes

It was exciting to discover that this moist and gossamer cornerstone of French cake baking can be made in a decorative mold. And the beauty of it is that it demonstrates that the cake is delicious enough to stand alone without the further adornment of frosting.

For this cake, I prefer to use cake flour or all-purpose flour with cornstarch for the highest possible rise.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor, complete the cake 1 day ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
clarified butter, preferably beurre noisette (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	1.7	50
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
5 large eggs	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.7	250
superfine sugar	½ cup plus 2 tablespoons	4.5	125
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2/3 cup (or ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon), sifted into the cup and leveled off	2.3	66
cornstarch	½ cup	2	60

Special Equipment

One 10-cup metal rose (or other shape) tube pan, coated with baking spray with flour



Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C (325°F/160°C if using a dark pan).

Prepare the Butter

In a medium microwavable bowl, or a saucepan, warm the butter until almost hot (110° to 120°F/40° to 50°C). Stir in the vanilla, cover, and keep warm.

Beat the Eggs

In the bowl of a stand mixer, using a long-handled wire whisk, lightly combine the eggs and sugar. Set the bowl over a pan of simmering water and heat just until lukewarm to the touch, stirring constantly with the whisk to prevent curdling.

Attach the whisk beater. Beat the mixture on high speed for a minimum of 5 minutes. The mixture will more than quadruple in volume and be very thick and airy. (A handheld mixer will take at least 10 minutes.)

Mix the Flour and Cornstarch

While the eggs are beating, sift together the flour and cornstarch.

Make the Batter

Remove almost 1 cup of the beaten egg mixture and whisk it thoroughly into the melted butter.

Sift about half the flour mixture over the remaining egg mixture and, with a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or silicone spatula, fold it in gently but rapidly until almost all the flour has disappeared. Repeat with the remaining flour mixture until all traces of flour have disappeared.

Fold in the butter mixture just until incorporated. With a silicone spatula, reach into the bottom of the bowl to be sure to moisten all the flour. Immediately pour the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small metal spatula. If you have beaten it long enough, the pan will be a little more than half full (¾ inch from the top of the pan).

Bake the Cake

Bake for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the cake is golden brown and starts to shrink slightly from the sides of the pan. It will rise in the center to a little above the sides of the pan and then sink slightly when fully baked. Avoid opening the oven door before the minimum baking time as this fragile cake could fall. Test toward the end of baking by opening the oven door a crack, and if the cake doesn't appear done, continue baking for another 5 minutes.

To prevent the collapse of its delicate foam structure, while still hot, the génoise must be unmolded as soon as it is baked. Have ready a small metal spatula and a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Unmold and Cool the Cake

Immediately loosen the top edges of the cake with the small metal spatula and unmold the cake onto the wire rack. Cool completely.

Note

To clarify butter, heat 6 tablespoons/3 ounces/85 grams unsalted butter in a small heavy saucepan on very low heat. Cook uncovered, watching carefully to prevent burning. Move away any foam on the surface to check the progress. For plain clarified butter, when the liquid on top is clear and the white solids are resting on the bottom, remove it from the heat. To make beurre noisette, keep cooking the butter until the milk solids become a deep brown. For either method, immediately pour the butter through a fine-mesh strainer, or a strainer lined with cheesecloth, into a heatproof cup.

Triple Sec Syrup

Makes: 1 cup/8 fluid ounces/9.5 ounces/266 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	1/3 cup	2.3	66
water	2/3 cup (5.3 fluid ounces)	5.6	158
Triple Sec, Grand Marnier, or orange juice	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.6	45

Make the Triple Sec Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, stir together the sugar and water until all the sugar is moistened. Bring the mixture to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Cover at once and remove it from the heat. Cool completely. Transfer the syrup to a measuring cup with a spout and stir in the Triple Sec. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add water to equal 1 cup.

Apply the Syrup

Using a removable tart pan bottom or two large pancake turners, lift the cooled génoise onto a serving plate. Slip a few strips of wax paper or

parchment under the cake. Brush the entire top with the syrup. Remove the strips and cover with plastic wrap that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray or a cake dome.

White Gold Passion Génoise  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 20 to 30 minutes

I first tasted this glorious combination of white chocolate and passion fruit at Paul Massey's marvelous bakery in Oakland, California. Though this recipe is labor intensive, requiring that you track down essential ingredients and make four components, you will not regret the effort. The White Chocolate Deluxe Buttercream here is fluffier and more velvety than the [Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting](#) and more suited to the delicate texture of the génoise. It is also soft enough to enjoy when the cake is refrigerated. The little streaks of golden passion intermingled with the ivory buttercream hint at the strata of passion curd within.

You can use frozen puree, but I recommend that you use fresh passion fruit if you are lucky enough to find it. It is one of nature's miracles of flavor. However, it is not ready to eat until its surface becomes very wrinkled. Tahitian vanilla bean, with its wondrously floral flavor notes, enhances the tropical quality of the passion fruit while rounding out any residual sharp edges.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor, compose the cake 1 day ahead. Make the passion curd at least 3 hours before using.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
clarified butter, preferably beurre noisette (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	3 tablespoons	1.3	37
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
4 large eggs	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	7	200
superfine sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
Wondra flour (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	¾ cup (lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off)	3.5	100

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, coated with baking spray with flour, then topped with a parchment round

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Prepare the Butter

In a medium microwavable bowl, or a saucepan over medium heat, warm the butter until almost hot (110° to 120°F/40° to 50°C). Stir in the vanilla, cover, and keep warm.

Beat the Eggs

In the bowl of a stand mixer, using a long-handled wire whisk, lightly combine the eggs and sugar. Set the bowl over a pan of simmering water and heat just until lukewarm to the touch, stirring constantly with the whisk to prevent curdling.

Attach the whisk beater. Beat the mixture on high speed for a minimum of 5 minutes. The mixture will more than quadruple in volume and be very thick and airy. (A handheld mixer will take at least 10 minutes.)

Make the Batter

Remove almost 1 cup of the beaten egg mixture and whisk it thoroughly into the melted butter.

Dust about half the flour over the remaining egg mixture (sift if using the flour mixture below) and, with a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or silicone spatula, fold it in gently but rapidly until almost all the flour has disappeared. Repeat with the remaining flour until all traces of flour have disappeared.

Fold in the butter mixture just until incorporated. With a silicone spatula, reach into the bottom of the bowl to be sure to moisten all the flour. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula. If you have beaten it long enough, it will be about half full if using Wondra flour (a little more than half full—¾ inch from the top of the pan—if using the flour mixture).

Bake the Cake

Bake for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the cake is golden brown and starts to shrink slightly from the sides of the pan. Avoid opening the oven door before the minimum baking time as this fragile cake could fall. Test toward the end of baking by opening the oven door a crack, and if the cake doesn't appear done, continue baking for another 5 minutes.

To prevent the collapse of its delicate foam structure, while still hot, the génoise must be unmolded as soon as it is baked. Have ready a small metal spatula and two wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Unmold and Cool the Cake

Run the small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto one of the prepared wire racks. Leaving the parchment in place, immediately reinvert the cake onto the second rack so that the firm upper crust keeps it from sinking. Cool completely. It will be about 2 inches high.

Notes

To clarify butter, heat 4 tablespoons/2 ounces/57 grams unsalted butter in a small heavy saucepan on very low heat. Cook uncovered, watching carefully to prevent burning. Move away any foam on the surface to check the progress. For plain clarified butter, when the liquid on top is clear and the white solids are resting on the bottom, remove it from the heat. To make beurre noisette, keep cooking the butter until the milk solids become a deep brown. For either method, immediately pour the butter through a fine-mesh strainer, or a strainer lined with cheesecloth, into a heatproof cup.

Wondra flour is easiest to integrate into the batter and results in the most tender texture. You can substitute a combination of ½ cup/1.7 ounces/50 grams cake flour (or ½ cup minus 1 tablespoon/1.7 ounces/50 grams all-purpose flour), sifted into the cup and leveled off, and ½ cup minus 1 tablespoon/1.7 ounces/50 grams cornstarch, lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off. Sift the flour and cornstarch together before sifting over the egg mixture.

Classic Passion Curd  
Makes: 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons/9 ounces/258 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
about 3 large egg yolks	3½ tablespoons (1.7 fluid ounces)	2	56
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	3 tablespoons	1.5	42
fresh or frozen passion puree (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	½ cup (4 fluid ounces), divided	3.5	100
salt	pinch	.	.

Make the Classic Passion Curd

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium bowl.

In a heavy saucepan, whisk the yolks, sugar, and butter until well blended. Whisk in 5 tablespoons of the passion puree and the salt. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula (be sure to scrape the sides of the pan), until thickened and resembling hollandaise sauce, which thickly coats the spatula but is still liquid enough to pour. The mixture will change from translucent to opaque and begin to have a rich golden color on the spatula. Don't allow the mixture to come to the boil or it will curdle. Whenever steam appears, briefly remove the pan from the heat, stirring constantly to keep the mixture from boiling. When the curd has thickened and will pool thickly when a little is dropped on its surface, pour it at once into the strainer and press it through with the spatula. Gently stir in the remaining 3 tablespoons of passion puree and allow the

curd to cool for 30 minutes. Cover tightly and refrigerate until no longer warm, about 3 hours. The passion curd keeps in an airtight jar or container for 3 weeks, refrigerated. (Longer storage dulls the fresh, vibrant flavor.)

Note

You need about 7 fresh passion fruits (1½ pounds/680 grams) to make the syrup and about 6 fresh passion fruits (18 ounces/510 grams) for the curd (see [Passion Fruit](#)), which is why most pastry chefs use frozen puree or concentrate. If using Perfect Purée concentrate, use only 5 tablespoons in the curd and add it all in the beginning.

Passion Fruit Syrup  
Makes: ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons/7 fluid ounces/10 ounces/280 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
½ Tahitian vanilla bean or 1 Madagascar vanilla bean .		.	.
(or pure vanilla extract)	(½ teaspoon)	.	.
sugar	¾ cup	5.3	150
fresh or frozen passion puree (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (5 fluid ounces), divided	4.7	136

Make the Passion Fruit Syrup

With a small sharp knife, split the vanilla bean lengthwise in half.

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, place the sugar. Scrape the vanilla bean seeds into the sugar and rub them in with your fingers. Add the vanilla pod to the pan. Stir in ½ cup of the passion puree until all the sugar is moistened. (If using "Perfect Purée" concentrate, use only 5 tablespoons and dilute it with 5 tablespoons of water.) Bring the mixture to a rolling boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Cover it at once and remove it from the heat. Cool completely. Transfer it to a measuring cup with a spout and stir in the remaining 2 tablespoons of the passion puree. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add water to equal ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons. Remove the vanilla pod just before applying the syrup. If not using the vanilla bean, stir in the vanilla extract.

White Chocolate Deluxe Buttercream  
Makes: 2½ cups/14.5 ounces/413 grams  
White Chocolate Custard Base  
Makes: 2/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons/7.5 ounces/213 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
white chocolate containing cocoa butter, chopped .		3.5	100
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	3½ tablespoons	1.7	50
1 large egg, at room temperature	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	50
about 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.6	18

Make the White Chocolate Custard Base

In a double boiler over barely simmering water, melt the white chocolate and the butter, stirring often until smooth and creamy. (Don't let the bottom of the container touch the water.) Whisk the egg and yolk lightly to break them up and then whisk them into the melted white chocolate mixture. Continue whisking and heating until an instant-read thermometer registers 140°F/60°C. The mixture will have thickened slightly. Remove it from the heat, transfer it to a bowl, and allow it to cool to room temperature, stirring occasionally. It will take a minimum of 30 minutes. To speed cooling, cover and refrigerate for about 20 minutes until cool to the touch. An instant-read thermometer should register 65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C.

Completed White Chocolate Deluxe Buttercream

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
cream cheese (65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C) .		6	170
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C) 3½ tablespoons		1.7	50
crème fraîche or sour cream	½ tablespoon	0.2	7

White Chocolate Custard Base 2/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons 7.5 213

pure vanilla extract ¼ teaspoon

Complete the Buttercream

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the cream cheese and butter on medium speed until creamy. Beat in the crème fraîche until very smooth. Stop the mixer and scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed.

Gradually beat in the white chocolate custard base and vanilla. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until smooth, light, and creamy.

Compose the Cake

Use a long serrated knife and your fingertips to remove the top crust. Remove the parchment and scrape off any remaining bottom crust. Wash and dry the knife and split the génoise in half horizontally.

Brush the syrup evenly on the tops and bottoms of the cake layers. The génoise is now more tender and fragile and needs to be supported by a removable pan bottom or cardboard round when moved.

Spread a little buttercream on a 9-inch cardboard round or a serving plate and set a layer on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Sandwich the layers with about ¾ cup/6.5 ounces/183 grams of the passion curd. Spread it almost to the edges; the weight of the upper layer will push it out a little. Frost the top and sides of the cake with about 2 cups/10.5 ounces/300 grams of the buttercream. With a small metal spatula, make swirls in the top. Refrigerate for about 1 hour to set the buttercream. Apply small dabs of any remaining passion curd and, with the metal spatula, swirl them into the buttercream. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

True Orange Génoise  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 20 to 30 minutes

I love the uniquely orange flavor of a sour ball candy. I also love the combination of orange and chocolate, despite almost always being disappointed by how the chocolate overwhelms the orange. This is not the case when I use Seville oranges, which provide a unique sweet and sour quality. Their acidic juice is highly desirable for thickening the curd and flavoring the syrup, so I suggest that you seek out Seville oranges during their short winter season of availability. If you prefer to use ordinary juice oranges, you will need to concentrate the juice in order to achieve adequate thickening and full flavor, and the curd and syrup will not have the "zing" from the Seville orange juice.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor, compose the cake 1 day ahead. Make the orange curd at least 3 hours ahead. Make the ganache a few hours ahead.

Make the Cake

Make one recipe for a génoise layer baked in a 9 by 2-inch round cake pan (see [White Gold Passion Génoise](#)).



Orange Syrup  
Makes: ¾ cup/6 fluid ounces/7 ounces/200 grams

Volume Ounce Gram

sugar (use higher amount if using Seville orange juice) ½ cup (or ¼ cup plus 1½ teaspoons) 3.5 (or 2 ) 100 (or 56 )

Seville or juice orange juice, freshly squeezed	6½ tablespoons (3.2 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
Triple Sec	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2.3	66

Make the Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, stir together the sugar and orange juice until all the sugar is moistened. Bring the mixture to a rolling boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Cover it at once and remove it from the heat. Cool completely. Transfer it to a measuring cup with a spout and stir in the Triple Sec. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add water to equal ¾ cup of syrup.

Classic Seville Orange Curd  
Makes: almost 1½ cups/14 ounces/400 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
navel or blood orange zest, finely grated	4 teaspoons, loosely packed	.	8
about 4 large egg yolks	¼ cup plus ½ tablespoon (2.2 fluid ounces)	2.6	74
sugar	¾ cup	5.3	150
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	4 tablespoons (½ stick)	2	57
Seville orange juice, freshly squeezed and strained (about 3 Seville oranges; see <a href="#">Note</a> )	6½ tablespoons (3.2 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
salt	pinch	.	.

Make the Classic Seville Orange Curd

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium bowl containing the orange zest.

In a heavy saucepan, whisk the yolks, sugar, and butter until well blended. Whisk in the orange juice and salt. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula (be sure to scrape the sides of the pan), until thickened and resembling hollandaise sauce, which thickly coats the spatula but is still liquid enough to pour. The mixture will change from translucent to opaque and begin to have an orange color on the spatula. Don't allow the mixture to come to a boil or it will curdle. Whenever steam appears, briefly remove the pan from the heat, stirring constantly to keep the mixture from boiling. When the curd has thickened and will pool thickly when a little is dropped on its surface, pour it at once into the strainer and press it through with the spatula. Gently stir to mix in the zest sitting in the bowl and allow the curd to cool for 30 minutes. Cover tightly and refrigerate until no longer warm, about 3 hours. The curd keeps in an airtight jar or container for 3 weeks refrigerated. (Longer storage dulls the fresh citrus flavor.)

Note

To use juice oranges in place of Seville, coat a 4-cup heatproof glass measure with nonstick cooking spray. Pour in 1 cup freshly squeezed orange juice. Microwave on high, watching carefully, until reduced to 2 tablespoons. Use only ½ cup/3.5 ounces/100 grams sugar.

Dark Ganache  
Makes: almost 1 cup/8.2 ounces/233 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped	.	4	113
heavy cream	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4	116
Triple Sec or extra heavy cream	1 tablespoon	.	.
pure vanilla extract	¼ teaspoon	.	.
dried orange slices (see <a href="#">Note</a> ; optional)	.	.	.

Make the Dark Ganache

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.



In a 1-cup microwavable cup with a spout (or in a medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), scald the cream (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Pulse in the Triple Sec and vanilla. Press the ganache through the fine-mesh strainer suspended over a small glass bowl and allow it to cool for 1 hour. Cover it with plastic wrap and cool for a few hours, or until the mixture reaches a soft frosting consistency.

Compose the Cake

Use a long serrated knife and your fingertips to remove the top crust. Remove the parchment and scrape off any remaining bottom crust. Wash and dry the knife and split the génoise in half horizontally.

Brush the syrup evenly on the tops and bottoms of the cake layers. The génoise is now more tender and fragile and needs to be supported by a removable tart pan bottom or cardboard round when moved.

Spread a little ganache on a 9-inch cardboard round or a serving plate and set a cake layer on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Sandwich the cake layers with a full ¾ cup/7.7 ounces/222 grams of the orange curd.

Apply a very thin coat of the ganache to the top and sides of the cake. Allow the ganache to sit for about 10 minutes to thicken slightly. With a tablespoon or silicone spatula, drizzle fine lines of some of the remaining ganache back and forth over the top of the cake. Allow the remaining ganache to sit for 1 to 1½ hours, stirring gently and occasionally, until thick enough to lift with a small metal spatula. Use the spatula to swirl ganache onto the sides of the cake. Garnish with dried orange slices, if desired. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

Note

To dry orange slices, use a very sharp or serrated knife to slice a navel orange as thin as possible, between 1/16 and 1/8 inch. Set the slices on a wire rack coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Dry them in the oven with a pilot light or oven light. Allow them to sit for 24 hours or up to 3 days. The longer they dry, the more transparent they become. When completely dry, store them in an airtight container. They will keep for several months.

Génoise Très Café  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 20 to 30 minutes

A blogger from Bangkok questioned why Americans call a coffee cake by that name when there's usually no coffee in it. After explaining that it is meant to be eaten with coffee, I came up with this cake for coffee lovers such as myself. It is a symphony of coffee flavors, crowned with a melt-in-your-mouth mocha ganache and garnished, if desired, with chocolate-covered coffee beans or finely grated chocolate.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor, compose the cake 1 day ahead.

Make the Cake

Make one recipe for a génoise layer baked in a 9 by 2-inch round cake pan (see [White Gold Passion Génoise](#)). Add 4 teaspoons coffee extract to the beaten egg mixture or 2 teaspoons instant espresso powder, preferably Medaglia D'Oro, when heating the egg mixture. For the syrup, ½ cup/4 fluid ounces/4.2 ounces/118 grams hot espresso or strong freshly brewed coffee can be used in place of the water and extract or instant espresso powder. Be sure the coffee is hot when you are stirring in the sugar.

Coffee Syrup  
Makes: ¾ cup/6 fluid ounces/7 ounces/200 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	¼ cup plus 1½ teaspoons	2	56
water	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	118
Kahlúa	2 tablespoons	1.2	33.5
coffee extract (or instant espresso powder, preferably Medaglia D'Oro) 4 teaspoons (or 2 teaspoons) .			

Make the Coffee Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, stir together the sugar and water until all the sugar is moistened. Bring the mixture to a rolling boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Cover it at once and remove it from the heat. Cool completely. Transfer it to a measuring cup with a spout and stir in the Kahlúa and espresso powder. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add water to equal ¾ cup of syrup.

Mocha Whipped Ganache  
Makes: 2 cups/12.2 ounces/345 grams



	Volume	Ounce Gram	
dark chocolate, 53% cacao, chopped	.	4	113
coffee extract (or instant espresso powder, preferably Medaglia D'Oro) 2 tablespoons (or 1 tablespoon)	.	.	.
heavy cream	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232
pure vanilla extract	¼ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Mocha Whipped Ganache

In a food processor, process the chocolate with the espresso powder, if using, until very fine.

In a 1-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), scald the cream (heat to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process a few seconds until smooth. If using the coffee extract, pulse it in. Scrape the mixture into the bowl of a stand mixer and refrigerate for 50 to 60 minutes, or until cold to the touch (65° to 68°F/20°C), stirring and scraping down the sides of the bowl three or four times. It will start to thicken as it chills. Alternatively, set the bowl in an ice water bath (see [Water Baths](#)) and stir frequently. Do not allow the mixture to get too cold or it will thicken too much to whip. When cool, stir in the vanilla.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, whip the ganache on medium speed for about 3 minutes, or until it just starts to thicken, lighten in color, and the whisk marks become very distinct. (Be careful to avoid overbeating as the mixture will become grainy. If the mixture gets overbeaten and grainy, it can be restored by remelting, chilling, and rebeating it.) Remove the bowl from the stand and continue whipping using a long-handled whisk just until very soft, floppy peaks form when the whisk is raised. (The ganache will continue to thicken after a few minutes at room temperature.)

Note

To make the ganache without a food processor or for a speedy version, see the variation for [Light Whipped Ganache Filling and Topping](#).

Compose the Cake

Use a long serrated knife and your fingertips to remove the top crust. Remove the parchment and scrape off any remaining bottom crust.

Brush the syrup evenly on the top and bottom of the cake. The génoise is now more tender and fragile and needs to be supported by a removable tart pan bottom or cardboard round when moved.

Spread a small amount of ganache on a 9-inch cardboard round or a serving plate and set the cake on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Frost the top and sides with the ganache. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake.

Chocolate Génoise with Peanut Butter Whipped Ganache  
 Serves: 8 to 10  
 Baking Time: 25 to 35 minutes

Inspired by the beloved American flavor combination of chocolate and peanut butter candy, this cake takes the tastes to a new medium with a French accent. It also boasts a near-instant and easy way to prepare whipped ganache. Although it is a little more dense than other whipped ganaches because of the peanut butter, if you love peanut butter, you won't mind a bit. Its subtlety blends beautifully with the chocolate and black raspberry liqueur.

A dessert welcome any time of year in our home, I love to make this at the beginning of summer to celebrate the short black raspberry season. Fresh black raspberries or finely grated chocolate are lovely garnishes.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor, compose the cake 1 day ahead.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
clarified butter, preferably beurre noisette (see <a href="#">Note</a> ) 3 tablespoons		1.3	37
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	1	28
boiling water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59

pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
5 large eggs	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.7	250
superfine sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	¾ cup (or 2/3 cup), sifted into the cup and leveled off	2.6	75

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, coated with baking spray with flour, then topped with a parchment round

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Prepare the Butter

In a medium microwavable bowl, or a medium saucepan over medium heat, warm the butter until almost hot (110° to 120°F/40° to 50°C). Cover it and keep it warm.

Mix the Cocoa and Water

In a medium bowl, whisk the cocoa and boiling water until the cocoa is completely dissolved. Whisk in the vanilla. Leaving the whisk in the bowl, cover with plastic wrap and cool the mixture to room temperature, about 20 minutes. To speed cooling, place the bowl in the refrigerator. Bring the mixture to room temperature before proceeding.

Beat the Eggs

In the bowl of a stand mixer, using a long-handled wire whisk, lightly combine the eggs and sugar. Set the bowl over a pan of simmering water and heat just until lukewarm to the touch, stirring constantly with the whisk to prevent curdling.

Attach the whisk beater. Beat the mixture on high speed for a minimum of 5 minutes. It will quadruple in volume and be very thick and airy. (A handheld mixer will take at least 10 minutes.)

While the eggs are beating, sift the flour.

Make the Batter

Remove 2 cups of the beaten egg mixture and whisk it thoroughly into the cocoa mixture.

Sift about half the flour over the remaining egg mixture and, with a slotted skimmer or silicone spatula, fold it in gently but rapidly until almost all the flour has disappeared. Repeat with the remaining flour until all traces of flour have disappeared. With your fingers, reach to the bottom of the bowl and press together any little pellets of flour that may have formed.

Rapidly fold the cocoa mixture into the batter until almost evenly incorporated. Using a large balloon whisk or silicone spatula, fold in the melted butter in two batches just until incorporated evenly. Immediately pour the batter into the prepared pan. It will be about three-quarters full (½ inch from the top of the pan).

Bake the Cake

Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until the cake is golden brown and starts to shrink slightly from the sides of the pan. It will rise in the center to a little above the sides of the pan and then sink slightly when baked fully.

To prevent the collapse of its delicate foam structure, while still hot, the génoise must be unmolded as soon as it is baked. Have ready a small metal spatula and two wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Unmold and Cool the Cake

Run the small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto one of the prepared wire racks. Leaving the parchment in place, immediately reinvert the cake onto the second rack so that the firm upper crust keeps it from sinking. Cool completely.

Note

To clarify butter, place 4 tablespoons/2 ounces/57 grams unsalted butter in a small heavy saucepan on very low heat. Cook uncovered, watching carefully to prevent burning. Move away any foam on the surface to check the progress. For plain clarified butter, when the liquid on top is clear and the white solids are resting on the bottom, remove it from the heat. To make beurre noisette, keep cooking the butter until the milk solids become a deep brown. For either method, immediately pour the butter through a fine-mesh strainer, or a strainer lined with cheesecloth, into a heatproof cup.

Black Raspberry Syrup  
Makes: ¾ cup/6 fluid ounces/7 ounces/200 grams

sugar	¼ cup plus 1½ teaspoons	2	56
water	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	118
Chambord black raspberry liqueur	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.2	33

Make the black raspberry Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, stir together the sugar and water until all the sugar is moistened. Bring the mixture to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Cover it at once and remove it from the heat. Cool completely. Transfer it to a glass measure and stir in the Chambord liqueur. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add water to equal ¾ cup of syrup.

Peanut Butter Whipped Ganache  
Makes: 1¾ cups/13.6 ounces/385 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		4	113
creamy peanut butter, preferably Jif	3 tablespoons	1.7	50
heavy cream, cold	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232
pure vanilla extract	¼ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Peanut Butter Whipped Ganache

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Leave the chocolate in the container in which it was melted so that it stays warm, and whisk in the peanut butter. Stirring gently with a whisk, add the cream and vanilla. At first the mixture will be speckled, but keep stirring until smooth. It should feel cool to the touch (around 60°F/15°C). If it is warmer, refrigerate it briefly. It will not aerate if it is too cold. Whisk for a few seconds until soft peaks form when the whisk is raised. (Be careful to avoid overbeating as the mixture will become grainy. If it gets overbeaten and grainy, it can be restored by remelting, chilling, and rebeating it.)

Compose the Cake

Use a long serrated knife and your fingertips to remove the top crust. Remove the parchment and scrape off any remaining bottom crust.

Brush the syrup evenly on the top and bottom of the cake. The génoise is now more tender and fragile and needs to be supported by a removable tart pan bottom or cardboard round when moved.

Spread a small amount of ganache on a 9-inch cardboard round or a serving plate and set the cake on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Frost the top and sides with the ganache. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake. To cut cleanly through the ganache without it cracking or pulling away from the cake, be sure to run the knife blade under hot water between each slice.

Moist Chocolate Raspberry Génoise  
Serves: 14 to 18  
Baking Time: 25 to 35 minutes

Despite its velvety-light texture, this génoise is intensely chocolaty. The special flavor comes from the combination of high-quality chocolate in the cake and cocoa in the syrup. The glorious combination of chocolate, cream, and raspberry in the ganache makes this my favorite of all frostings. The raspberry puree adds a tangy undertone, a lingering taste of raspberry, and beautiful reddish tone to the chocolate; a high-percentage chocolate keeps it from separating. The small amount of white chocolate tames the tartness of the raspberries. (For a silky-smooth texture and fabulous flavor, use your favorite dark chocolate with a minimum of 60 percent cacao, but no more than 63 percent, and high-quality white chocolate that contains cocoa butter.) As with all cakes with syrup, make this cake a day before you plan to serve it. It is best served at room temperature or lightly chilled.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor, compose the cake 1 day ahead. Make the raspberry sauce and ganache several hours ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		8	227
boiling water	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.3	236
8 large eggs	1½ cups plus 1 tablespoon (12.5 fluid ounces)	14	400
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1½ cups (or 1 1/3 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	5.3	150

Special Equipment

Two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, coated with baking spray with flour, then topped with parchment rounds

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Cook the Chocolate

Into a medium heavy saucepan, place the chocolate and pour the boiling water on top. Bring the mixture to a boil over low heat, stirring constantly. Simmer, stirring with a silicone spatula, until the chocolate thickens to a puddinglike consistency, about 5 minutes. It should fall from the spatula and pool thickly when a little is dropped on its surface. If the chocolate separates, whisking will bring it together into a smooth shiny mass. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool to room temperature, about 1 hour. To speed cooling, place the pan in an ice water bath (see [Water Baths](#)) or uncovered in the refrigerator and whisk often. If the mixture becomes cold, bring it to room temperature before proceeding.

Beat the Eggs and Sugar

In the bowl of a stand mixer, using a long-handled wire whisk, lightly combine the eggs and sugar. Set the bowl over a pan of simmering water and heat just until lukewarm to the touch, stirring constantly with the whisk to prevent curdling. If the eggs are at warm room temperature (80°F/26°C), there is no need to heat them for this type of génoise.

Attach the whisk beater. Beat the mixture on high speed for a minimum of 5 minutes. It will quadruple in volume and be very thick and airy. (A handheld mixer will take at least 10 minutes.)

Make the Batter

Sift one-third of the flour over the egg mixture and, with a slotted skimmer or large silicone spatula, fold it in gently but rapidly until some of the flour has been incorporated. Repeat with half the remaining flour, and then with the last of the remaining flour until all traces of the flour have disappeared. With your fingers, reach to the bottom of the bowl and press together any little pellets of flour that may have formed.

Rapidly fold in the chocolate mixture until incorporated, being sure to reach to the bottom of the bowl. Immediately pour the batter into the prepared pans. Each will be about two-thirds to three-quarters full (20 ounces/570 grams).

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the centers enters as easily as it does when inserted closer to the sides. The cakes rise almost to the tops of the pans during baking and will lower slightly when done, pulling slightly away from the sides. Avoid opening the oven door before the minimum baking time or the cakes could fall. Test toward the end of baking by opening the oven door a crack, and if the cake doesn't appear done, continue baking for another 5 minutes.

To prevent the collapse of its delicate foam structure, while still hot, the génoise must be unmolded as soon as it is baked. Have ready a small metal spatula and three wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Unmold and Cool the Cakes

Run the small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and invert the cakes onto the prepared wire racks. Leaving the parchment in place, immediately reinvert them onto the racks so that the firm upper crusts keep them from sinking. Cool completely.

Cocoa Syrup

Makes 1 1/3 cups/10.6 fluid ounces/12.7 ounces/363 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	2/3 cup	4.7	133
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (sifted before measuring)	1.5	42
boiling water	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.3	236
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
Chambord black raspberry liqueur (optional)	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.6	16

Make the Cocoa Syrup

In a small saucepan, whisk together the sugar and cocoa. Add a small amount of the boiling water and whisk until all of the mixture is moistened. Then whisk in the remaining boiling water. Bring the mixture to a full rolling boil on low heat. Remove the pan from the heat and allow the mixture to cool slightly. Whisk in the vanilla and Chambord, if using. Cover it tightly to prevent evaporation.

Raspberry Sauce

Makes: a full ¾ cup/6.5 fluid ounces/7.5 ounces/211 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
frozen raspberries with no sugar added (one 12-ounce bag)	3 cups	12	340
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	1 teaspoon	.	.
sugar	1/3 cup	2.3	66

Make the Raspberry Sauce

In a medium strainer suspended over a deep bowl, thaw the raspberries completely. This will take several hours. (To speed thawing, place the strainer and bowl in an oven with a pilot light or turn on the oven light.) Press the berries to force out all the juice. There should be about ½ cup/4 fluid ounces of juice. Set aside the raspberries.

In a small saucepan (or in a 2-cup heatproof measure, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, in a microwave on high), boil the juice until it is reduced to 2 tablespoons. If using a saucepan, pour the syrup into a heatproof cup, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Puree and strain the raspberries with a food mill fitted with the fine disk. Or use a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a bowl to remove all the seeds. You should have ½ cup/4 fluid ounces of puree. Stir in the reduced raspberry syrup and lemon juice. There should be about 2/3 cup/5 ounces/145 grams raspberry sauce. (If you have less, simply add proportionately less sugar. The correct amount of sugar is half the volume of the puree.)

Stir the sugar into the sauce until it dissolves. You will need only ½ cup/4 fluid ounces/4.7 ounces/135 grams for the ganache recipe. The sauce keeps for 10 days refrigerated and for 1 year frozen. It can be thawed and refrozen at least three times without flavor loss. If desired, use the remaining sauce to drizzle on the plates.

Highlights for Success

Berries must have been frozen in order to release some of their liquid. Be sure to use frozen berries with no sugar added. The juices from berries

in syrup cannot be reduced as much because the sugar starts to caramelize.

Raspberry seeds are tiny and can pass through most food mills. Only the finest strainer will remove all the seeds (see [Equipment Sources](#)).

Raspberry Ganache  
Makes: 3 cups/27.7 ounces/784 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		12	340
white chocolate, containing cocoa butter, chopped .		3	85
heavy cream	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232
Raspberry Sauce	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.7	135
Chambord black raspberry liqueur (optional)	1½ tablespoons	1	24

Make the Ganache

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium glass bowl. In a food processor, process the dark chocolate and white chocolate until very fine.

In a 2-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), scald the cream with the raspberry sauce (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream mixture through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Press the ganache through the strainer and stir in the Chambord, if using. Allow it to cool for 1 hour. Cover it and cool for several hours, until the mixture reaches frosting consistency. The ganache keeps in an airtight container for 1 day at room temperature, for 10 days refrigerated, and for 6 months frozen.

Compose the Cake

With a long serrated knife and your fingertips, remove the top crusts of the cakes and set them aside. The crusts will be quite sticky. Remove the parchment and scrape off any remaining bottom crust, saving all the crumbs. The cakes will be about 1¼ inches high. Slice each layer in half horizontally.

Brush the hot cocoa syrup evenly on the tops and bottoms of the cake layers. The génoise is now more tender and fragile and needs to be supported by a removable tart pan bottom or cardboard round when moved.

Spread a little ganache onto a 9-inch cardboard round or a serving plate and set the first layer on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Spread a very thin layer (about ½ cup) of ganache on top. Set the second layer on top and spread with ganache; continue with the remaining layers. Frost the top and sides of the cake with the remaining ganache. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake. If desired, use the reserved cake crumbs to coat the sides. The top crust is quite sticky, but if allowed to air-dry for a few hours, it can be processed to a fine crumb. You will have about 1 cup/3.5 ounces/100 grams crumbs.

Red Fruit Shortcake  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 15 to 25 minutes

This is a perfect dinner party dessert: refreshingly light yet satisfyingly delicious. I experienced "red fruit" for the first time at Le Bernardin in Paris, where it appeared on the menu as fruits rouges—a combination of sweet strawberries, plush tart raspberries, and bursting-with-juice currants. I was so entranced that I have no recollection of any other part of the dessert, but when I re-created the recipe, I determined that the ideal base is a génoise baked in a tart pan. The special pan referred to as a Mary Ann (like a shortcake or flan pan) creates a recess designed in the cake to hold the berries, but you can also use a 9 or 10 x 2-inch round cake pan and hollow out the cake yourself.

Sprinkling the fruits with a little superfine sugar brings out their flavor and causes them to release some of their juices, which intermingle to form a glorious syrup just perfect for moistening the gossamer-light cake. The strawberries soften slightly, the raspberries just hold their shape, and the currants stay whole, ready to burst in the mouth. If I can find a few redcap or wine berries, I set them on top just before serving to add extra freshness. Little meringue stars add whimsy, crunch, and a pleasingly pink interruption of color.

Plan Ahead

Macerate the berries at least 2 hours ahead.

Special Equipment

One 12-inch (8 cups) or 11 by 2½-inch (10 cups) fluted tart pan with a recess (see [Unusual Specialty Pans](#)), coated with baking spray with flour, or one 9 or 10 by 2-inch round cake pan, coated with baking spray with flour, then bottom lined with parchment

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Make the Cake

If using the 8-cup pan, make the [White Gold Passion Génoise](#) batter, using the same weight all-purpose flour (¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons/3.5 ounces/100 grams). If using the 10-cup pan, make the [Génoise Rose](#) batter.

Bake the cake for 15 to 25 minutes, or until it is deep golden brown and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center.

Unmold and Cool the Cake

Immediately invert the cake onto a wire rack topped with parchment cut to size. Carefully lift off the pan and allow the cake to cool completely decorative side up. If using a 9 by 2-inch round cake pan, invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray and reinvert it immediately onto a second rack, leaving the parchment in place on the bottom. When cool, wrap the cake airtight in plastic wrap coated lightly with baking spray until ready to use. The cake keeps for 5 days at room temperature, for 1 week refrigerated, and for 3 months frozen.



Berries

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
strawberries, hulled	4 cups	1 pound	454
raspberries	2 cups	8	227
red currants	1 cup	5.5	156
superfine sugar	1/3 cup	2.3	66
Chambord black raspberry liqueur (optional)	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	32

Macerate the Berries

In a medium bowl, combine the strawberries, raspberries, and currants and sprinkle them with the 1/3 cup of sugar. Holding on to either side of the bowl, toss them gently together. Allow them to sit for 2 hours. Place the berries in a strainer suspended over a bowl and allow the syrup to drain into the bowl. Toss very gently just a few times, so as not to break up the fruit, and tap the strainer against the bowl to release the juices without disturbing the berries. After about 15 minutes, the berries will release about 2/3 cup juice (more if the berries are riper, less fresh, or if they have been sitting longer).

For the cake baked in the 8-cup pan, add 2 tablespoons/about 1 ounce/25 grams sugar and bring the syrup to a full boil, stirring constantly. Pour it into a 2-cup or larger heatproof glass measure and allow it to cool until no longer hot. Add the Chambord, if using, and then water to equal ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons/7 fluid ounces of syrup.

For the cake baked in the 10-cup pan, add ¼ cup/1.7 ounces/50 grams sugar and repeat as above, but add water to equal 1 cup/8 fluid ounces of syrup.

Cover the syrup tightly with plastic wrap and set aside.



Whipped Crème Fraîche  
Makes: 1 cup/8.6 ounces/244 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
crème fraîche, cold	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232
superfine sugar	1 tablespoon	0.5	12

Make the Whipped Crème Fraîche

In a mixing bowl, combine the crème fraîche and sugar and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes.

Using a whisk or handheld mixer on low speed, whip only until soft peaks form when the whisk is raised. This will happen very quickly. It will not increase in volume. The whipped crème fraîche can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.

Variation  
Whipped Cream  
Makes: 2 cups/8.6 ounces/244 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
heavy cream, cold	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232
superfine sugar	1 tablespoon	0.5	12
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Whipped Cream

In a mixing bowl, combine the heavy cream, sugar, and vanilla and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside the bowl.)

Starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, whip until the mixture mounds softly when dropped from a spoon. The whipped cream can be refrigerated for up to 6 hours; see [Stabilized Whipped Cream](#), for tips on whipping cream.

Compose the Cake

If using a pan with a recess, reinvert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray and peel off the parchment. Use a long serrated knife to remove any of the crust still on the bottom of the cake.

If using a pan without a recess, also remove the parchment and any remaining crust not pulled off by the parchment. Reinvert the cake and use a small sharp knife to cut a ¼- to 3/8-inch-deep circle out of the center of the cake, leaving a ½-inch-wide rim around the outer edge of the cake.

Brush the bottom of the cake with about one-third of the syrup, applying more toward the outside than the center. Slip an open-sided baking sheet, lightly coated with nonstick cooking spray, under the cake and carefully invert it onto a serving plate. Brush on the remaining syrup, applying more toward the outside edges than the center, which will be moistened further by the berries.

Up to 1 hour before serving, spoon the berries into the well. Serve with a bowl of the whipped crème fraîche or whipped cream. No vanilla is used with the crème fraîche as it dulls its flavor.

Just before serving, decorate the cake with little [Crisp Meringue Kisses](#) or dust very lightly with powdered sugar.

Catalán Salt Pinch Cake  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 25 to 35 minutes

If you are from Barcelona or have visited there, you know that this cake is actually known as pinch bread, because originally it was baked in a loaf shape. Now, however, it usually appears as tall cupcakes encased in wings of parchment. The name is derived partially from the recommended way of eating it: pinching out pieces of the fluffy cake between your fingers. This most exquisite of all versions is called Salt because it was created in 1985 by Miquel B. Costabella, baker and pâtissier of Salt Bakery, which was named after the village of Salt, close to Girona, Spain.

What makes the recipe so special is the substitution of almond flour (finely ground almonds) for most of the regular wheat flour, which results in a more spongy, moist texture and an almond-imbued flavor.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sliced almonds, preferably unblanched	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons	4	112
superfine sugar	¾ cup plus 2½ tablespoons, divided	6.3	181
6 large eggs	1 cup plus 3 tablespoons (9.5 fluid ounces)	10.6	300
2 large egg whites, at room temperature	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	60
lemon zest, finely grated	1 teaspoon, loosely packed	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (or ½ cup), sifted into the cup and leveled off	2	56

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2½- to 3-inch springform or cake pan, coated with shortening, bottom and sides lined with parchment. For the sides cut a 33 by 3-inch band of parchment, overlapping an extra piece if necessary to make it long enough. Wrap and press it against the inside wall of the pan. Use some extra shortening to coat the overlapping ends to hold them in place against the first strip of parchment.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F/160°C.

Toast and Grind the Almonds

Spread the almonds evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes, or until pale golden. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely. In a food processor, pulse the almonds and 2½ tablespoons of the sugar until as fine as possible. Stop before the nuts start to become pasty.

Prepare the Eggs

Pour the whole eggs into a 2-cup measure with a spout and whisk them lightly to break them up.

Mix the Meringue

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium-low speed until foamy. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining sugar, stopping the mixer once to scrape down the sides of the bowl. Continue beating until the meringue is very thick and glossy, but it will not be smooth. Detach the whisk from the mixer and use it to stir the almond mixture into the meringue until evenly incorporated.

Make the Batter

Reattach the whisk beater and, with the mixer on medium speed, add the beaten egg to the meringue 2 tablespoons at a time, beating for 2 minutes between each addition. It should take a total of 20 to 25 minutes, but be sure to beat for a minimum of 20 minutes. Beat in the lemon zest.

Remove the bowl and beater from the stand. While the mixture is beating, weigh or measure out the flour.

Sift the flour onto the batter and, using the whisk beater or a large balloon whisk, fold in the flour until fully incorporated. Reach to the bottom of the bowl and be sure that no white specks of flour remain. The best way to accomplish this is with your fingers, pinching any bits of flour to moisten them. Pour the batter into the prepared pan. (If using a 2-inch-high pan, the batter will come almost to the top of the pan.)

Bake the Cake

Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed very lightly in the center. The cake will rise just a little and then sink slightly in the center.

Unmold and Cool the Cake

Set the pan on a wire rack and immediately loosen and remove the sides, leaving the parchment attached to the cake. (If using a solid pan, lift the cake out using the parchment and set it on the wire rack.) Allow the cake to cool until it is warm or room temperature, about 1 hour. Set the cake, still in the parchment, on a serving plate. (Leave the parchment in place until the entire cake is consumed.)

Delicious eaten in the traditional way by pinching out pieces of the fluffy cake, the cake is also lovely for a tea: Serve pinched or sliced with fresh raspberries and lightly sweetened whipped cream. The cake keeps wrapped airtight for 1 week at room temperature, for 10 days refrigerated, and for 6 months frozen.

Highlights for Success

Sliced almonds are easiest to grind powder fine without having the oils start to separate and make the nuts pasty. If only slivered or whole are available, grate them first before processing.

Unblanched almonds (i.e., the brown skin has not been removed) add flavor and color to the cake, but the cake is still delicious if made using blanched almonds.

Almond Shamah Chiffon  
Serves: 12 to 14  
Baking Time: 20 to 30 minutes

I dedicate this cake to my longtime friend David Shamah, who asked me to create a golden chiffon with almonds in a traditional layer cake pan. The solution to this challenge was to add a little more flour and less liquid in the batter for increased structure. A flavorful syrup brushed on after baking makes the cake perfectly moist and tender. Wondra flour makes it lighter than air, but cake or all-purpose flour still produces a light cake. The raspberry whipped cream perfectly complements its ethereal lightness. Raspberry Mousseline buttercream (see [Miette's Tomboy](#)) is also an excellent choice, making for a more formal and structured presentation.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor, compose the cake 1 day ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
blanched sliced almonds	2/3 cup	2.3	66
Wondra flour (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1¼ cups (lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off), divided 6		170

baking powder	1 teaspoon	.	.
about 8 large eggs, separated, at room temperature:			
yolks	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (4.5 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
whites (use only 5)	½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (5 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
superfine sugar	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons, divided	8	225
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon (2.5 fluid ounces)	2.2	64
warm water	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30
pure almond extract	½ teaspoon	.	.
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.
cream of tartar	½ plus 1/8 teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

Two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, coated with baking spray with flour, then topped with parchment rounds

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Toast and Grind the Almonds

Spread the almonds evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes, or until pale golden. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely. In a food processor, process the almonds with a few tablespoons of the flour until very fine. Stop before the almonds start to become pasty. Add the remaining flour and baking powder and process for about 5 seconds until well mixed.

Mix the Yolk Mixture

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the yolks and half the sugar on high speed for 5 minutes, or until very thick and fluffy and, when the beater is raised, the mixture falls in ribbons. Lower the speed to medium and gradually beat in the oil and then the water, almond extract, and vanilla. Raise the speed to high and beat for 10 seconds, or until the mixture thickens again. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. If you don't have a second mixer bowl, scrape the mixture into a large bowl and thoroughly wash, rinse, and dry the mixer bowl and whisk beater to remove any trace of oil.

Dust the flour mixture over the yolk mixture without mixing it in and set it aside.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining sugar until very glossy and stiff peaks with slight curves form when the beater is raised slowly.

Make the Batter

Add one-quarter of the meringue to the yolk mixture and, with a large balloon whisk or silicone spatula, stir and fold it in until incorporated. This is a very thick batter, so if using the whisk, you'll need to shake it out between every few strokes. Gently fold in the remaining meringue in two parts, finishing by reaching to the bottom of the bowl with a silicone spatula. Scrape the batter into the prepared pans and smooth the surfaces evenly with a small offset spatula. They will be about one-third full.

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 20 to 30 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean and the cakes start to come away from the sides of the pans. To prevent the collapse of its delicate foam structure, while still hot, the chiffon must be unmolded as soon as it is baked. Have ready a small metal spatula and three wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Unmold and Cool the Cakes

Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and unmold the cakes at once onto the prepared racks. Leave the parchment in place. Immediately reinvert the cakes onto the racks. Cool completely. The firm upper crust prevents falling and results in a light texture. Wrap airtight with plastic wrap until ready to complete the cake.

Note

Wondra flour results in the most airy and tender cake. You can substitute a combination of either ¾ cup plus 3 tablespoons/3.3 ounces/95 grams cake flour (or ¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon/3.3 ounces/95 grams bleached all-purpose flour), sifted into the cup and leveled off, plus ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons/2.6 ounces/75 grams cornstarch, lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off.

Highlights for Success

It is interesting to compare the almond chiffon to a golden génoise of the same size. This chiffon has a little less flour, and baking powder replaces three of the egg whites, so it has less aeration and less structure. Together with the addition of ground almonds, this results in a more velvety, dense, and tender crumb, requiring only half the liquid in the sugar syrup.

Amaretto Syrup  
Makes: 1 cup/8 fluid ounces/9.2 ounces/264 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon	2.2	62
water	2/3 cup (5.5 fluid ounces)	5.6	158
amaretto di Saronno	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	47

Make the Amaretto Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, bring the sugar and water to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Cover it immediately and remove it from the heat. Cool completely. Transfer the syrup to a measuring cup with a spout and stir in the amaretto. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add enough water to equal 1 cup/8 fluid ounces of syrup. Cover it tightly to prevent evaporation and set aside.

Apply the Syrup

Use a long serrated knife and your fingertips to remove the top crusts. Remove the parchment and scrape off any remaining bottom crust.

Brush the syrup evenly on the tops and bottoms of the cake layers. After syruling, a chiffon layer becomes fragile and more prone to splitting when moved. Use a cardboard round or removable tart pan bottom to support the cake.

Raspberry Jam Whipped Cream  
Makes: 4 cups/20.7 ounces/586 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
heavy cream, cold	1½ cups (12 fluid ounces)	12.3	348
seedless raspberry jam	¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon	9	252

Make the Raspberry Jam Whipped Cream

In the bowl of a stand mixer, pour the cream and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the whisk beater alongside the bowl.)

Starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, whip the cream just until beater marks begin to show distinctly. Add the jam and whip just until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised. Use at once.

Compose the Cake

Spread a little of the whipped cream on a 9-inch cardboard round or a serving plate and set one layer on top. If using the plate, slide a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the cake to keep the rim of the plate clean. Spread the top of the cake layer with about ¾ cup of the whipped cream almost to the edges; the weight of the upper layer will push the cream out a little. Set the second layer on top. Frost the top and sides with the remaining whipped cream. With a small metal spatula, make swirls and peaks in the top. Refrigerate the cake until shortly before serving. If using the paper strips, slowly slide them out from under the cake. The cake keeps for 2 hours at room temperature, for 5 days refrigerated, and for 3 months frozen.

Orange-Glow Chiffon Layer Cake  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

I had given up trying to bake my favorite orange chiffon cake, which depended on the support of a tube pan, as a 9-inch round layer cake until Nushera Tazrin, a lovely and creative blogger from Australia, inspired Woody and me to return to the test kitchen. There, we discovered that using unbleached all-purpose flour and an ungreased, unlined springform pan changed everything. The unbleached flour provides just the right extra support and a properly sized springform pan allows the batter to remain comfortably in the pan and to cling to it while it cools upside down. Nushera's clever idea to use a rose nail in place of a center tube conducts the heat and also helps prevent dipping.

This cake is intensely orange, and so fluffy, moist, and tender that it seems to dissolve in your mouth. Don't worry if it dips slightly at the top; it is wondrously spongy. Serve it au naturel or with an accompanying billow of orange marmalade whipped cream on the side.

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2¾- or 3-inch springform pan, encircled with 2 cake strips overlapped to cover the entire sides | Rose nail (used for cake decorating) 2½ inches long (minimum) | Wire rack elevated about 4 inches or higher above the work surface (3 cans, coffee mugs, or glasses of equal height work well)

Make the Cake

Make the Bostini batter (see [The Bostini](#)), using unbleached all-purpose flour. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula. Insert the nail base side down into the center of the batter so that it sits on the bottom of the pan.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until the cake lowers slightly and a wooden toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Immediately invert the cake onto the prepared wire rack and allow it to cool for about 1 hour, or until the outside of the pan is cool to the touch. (If using a 2¾-inch pan, allow it to sit for a few minutes until the batter is no longer higher than the rim of the pan before inverting it onto the wire rack.)

Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing it against the pan. Remove the sides of the springform and release the bottom of the cake from the bottom of the pan, pressing the spatula against the bottom. Invert the cake and lift off the pan bottom. Remove the rose nail. Serve accompanied by a large dollop of orange marmalade whipped cream on the side.



Inserting rose nail



Just risen with nail showing



Cooling on rack

True Orange Whipped Cream

Makes: about 2½ cups/11.7 ounces/332 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sweet orange marmalade	½ cup	5.5	157

heavy cream 1 cup 8 232

orange zest, finely grated 1 tablespoon . .

Make the True Orange Whipped Cream

In a small saucepan (or in a heatproof glass measure if using a microwave on high power), heat the marmalade until hot to soften it. With the back of a spoon press it through a strainer. You will need 1/3 cup/3.5 ounces/100 grams. Allow it to cool completely. In a mixing bowl, pour the cream and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside the bowl.)

Starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, whip the cream just until beater marks begin to show distinctly. Add the marmalade and zest and whip just until the mixture mounds softly when dropped from a spoon. The marmalade will act as a stabilizer, keeping the cream from watering out for at least 8 hours refrigerated.

Lemon Meringue Cake  
Serves: 12 to 14  
Baking Time: 25 to 30 minutes

Because lemon meringue pie is among my favorite pies, I've been dreaming about a cake like this for many years. Using biscuit de Savoie, which has no butter or oil, as the base, I have created a spectacular cake that is exceptionally light and dry. I can then moisten it with lots of lemon syrup until it is wondrously soft, moist, and tender. This also makes it possible to keep the sweetness level low enough to benefit from a high crown of meringue without it becoming too sweet.

If you would like to make your own lemon curd, and make only what is needed for this recipe, make two-thirds (three-yolk recipe). I like to make the whole recipe and have a little extra to enjoy on toast. However, if you'd prefer to purchase it, Tiptree (available in specialty food stores) produces a lemon curd that is of extraordinary quality; they use lemons from North Africa and make it in small batches. You will need a full ¾ cup/6.5 fluid ounces/7.8 ounces/222 grams for the cake.

Plan Ahead

Make the lemon curd at least 3 hours ahead.



Classic Lemon Curd  
Makes: almost 1¼ cups/11.6 ounces/330 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
lemon zest, finely grated	2 teaspoons, loosely packed	.	.
about 5 large egg yolks	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.3	93
sugar	¾ cup	5.3	150
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	4 tablespoons (½ stick)	2	57
lemon juice, freshly squeezed and strained	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.3	93





structure, while still hot, the biscuit must be unmolded as soon as it is baked. Have ready a small metal spatula and three wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Unmold and Cool the Cakes

Run the small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and unmold at once onto the prepared racks. Leave the parchment in place. Reinvert the cakes onto the racks. Cool completely. The firm upper crust prevents falling and results in a light texture. Wrap airtight with plastic wrap until ready to compose the cake.

Note

Wondra flour results in the most airy and tender cake. You can substitute a combination of ¾ cup/2.6 ounces/75 grams cake flour (or 2/3 cup/2.6 ounces/75 grams bleached all-purpose flour), sifted into the cup and leveled off, plus ½ cup/2 ounces/60 grams cornstarch, lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off. Sift the flour and cornstarch together before sifting over the egg mixture.

Lemon Syrup

Makes: 1¼ cups/10 fluid ounces/12.6 ounces/357 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
water	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.2	177
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.3	93

Make the Lemon Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, bring the sugar and water to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Cover immediately, remove the pan from the heat, and cool completely. Transfer the syrup to a glass measure and stir in the lemon juice. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add enough water to equal 1¼ cups of syrup. Cover tightly with plastic wrap until ready to use.

Compose the Cake

Use a long serrated knife and your fingertips to remove the top crusts. Remove the parchment and scrape off any remaining bottom crust.

Brush the syrup evenly on the tops and bottoms of the biscuit layers. After syruing, a biscuit layer becomes fragile and more prone to splitting when moved. Use a cardboard round or removable tart pan bottom to support it.

Italian Meringue Topping

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
6 large egg whites, at room temperature	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.3	180
superfine sugar	1 cup plus 5 tablespoons, divided	9.2	262
water	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces)	2.7	79
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces), divided	1.7	47
cream of tartar	¾ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Italian Meringue Topping

Have ready a 2-cup or larger heatproof glass measure.

Pour the egg whites into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, if you have a second mixer bowl, or into a medium bowl and have ready a handheld mixer.

In a small heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, stir together 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons of the sugar, the water, and 1 tablespoon of the lemon juice, until the sugar is moistened. Heat on medium, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the mixture is bubbling. Stop stirring and reduce the heat to low. (If using an electric range, remove the pan from the heat.)

Beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining 3 tablespoons of sugar until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Increase the heat under the sugar syrup and continue to boil until an instant-read thermometer registers 248° to 250°F/120°C (the firm-ball stage).

Immediately transfer the syrup to the glass measure to stop the cooking.

If using a stand mixer, with the mixer off to keep it from spinning onto the sides of the bowl, add the syrup to the egg whites. Begin by pouring in a small amount of syrup. Immediately beat on high speed for 5 seconds. Add the remaining syrup the same way in three parts. For the last addition, use a silicone scraper to remove the syrup clinging to the glass measure and scrape it against the beater. If the syrup has hardened before most of it has been poured, soften it to pouring consistency for a few seconds in the microwave.

If using a handheld mixer, beat the syrup into the egg whites in a steady stream. Don't allow the syrup to fall on the beaters or they will spin it onto the sides of the bowl.

Lower the speed to medium and add the remaining 2 tablespoons of lemon juice. Continue beating for 2 minutes.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before browning the meringue, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 500°F/260°C.

Compose the Cake

Spread a little meringue on a 9-inch cardboard round or the removable bottom of a tart pan and place a cake layer on top. Sandwich the cake layers with the lemon curd. Frost the top and sides with the meringue, piling it high on top and creating swirls with a small metal spatula. Set the cake on top of a baking sheet and bake for 3 to 5 minutes, turning and watching to avoid burning, until the meringue is golden brown. Serve at room temperature or lightly chilled.

Torta de las Tres Leches  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 30 to 35 minutes

The first time I tasted Tres Leches was one of those "best things I've ever tasted" moments. After trying many sponge-type cakes, including two of my own, I found that this one, created by Mary Sue Milliken, is the ideal: It holds as much milk mixture as any cake possibly can absorb, making its crumb impossibly light, tender, and moist. Technically this cake should be called quatro leches because I found that adding heavy cream imparted a little more creaminess to this already well-loved dessert. The cake is actually a biscuit de Savoie with two-thirds the egg but is easier to make than the classic biscuit because the egg whites aren't beaten separately.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor and texture, complete the cake 1 day ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
6 large eggs, at room temperature	1 cup plus 3 tablespoons (9.5 fluid ounces)	10.5	300
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	1/8 teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

One 9 by 3-inch round cake pan, coated with baking spray with flour, then topped with a parchment round

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Prepare the Eggs

In the bowl of a stand mixer, using a long-handled wire whisk, lightly combine the eggs, sugar, vanilla, and salt. Set the bowl over a saucepan of simmering water and heat until quite warm to the touch, stirring constantly with the whisk. Immediately transfer the bowl to the stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, and beat the mixture on high speed for 5 minutes, or until it is very thick, light in color, and quadrupled in volume. In a 5-quart mixer bowl, it will come to about three-quarters high.

Make the Batter

While the egg mixture is beating, sift the flour onto a piece of wax paper or parchment. When the beating is complete, sift half the flour onto the beaten eggs. With a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or silicone spatula, fold it in gently but rapidly until almost all the flour has disappeared. Repeat with the remaining flour until the flour has disappeared completely. Scrape the mixture into the prepared pan.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 30 to 35 minutes. The cake will rise to the top of the pan at the sides and dome slightly above the sides, developing a crack. When it is fully baked, the cake will lower a bit in the pan, come away slightly from the sides, and a wire cake tester inserted in the center will come out clean.

To prevent the collapse of its delicate foam structure, while still hot, the biscuit must be unmolded as soon as it is baked. Have ready a small metal spatula and two wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Unmold and Cool the Cake

Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan. Unmold at once onto a prepared rack, leaving the parchment in place. Reinvert the cake to cool completely. The firm upper crust prevents falling and results in a light texture.

Leche Mixture

Makes: 4 2/3 cups/37.3 fluid ounces/42.3 ounces/1200 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
nonfat milk	2½ cups (20 fluid ounces)	21.3	605
whole milk	2½ cups (20 fluid ounces)	21.3	605
sugar	1½ tablespoons	0.7	18.7
sweetened condensed milk (1 container)	1 cup plus 3 tablespoons (9.5 fluid ounces)	14	400
heavy cream	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232

Combine the Milks

In a heavy medium saucepan, boil the nonfat milk, whole milk, and sugar over medium heat until reduced by half (to 2½ cups). Pour the mixture into a medium bowl and stir in the condensed milk and heavy cream. Cover and refrigerate until ready to soak the cake.

Prepare the Cake for Soaking

Wash and dry the cake pan in order to use it as a container for soaking the cake.

With a long serrated knife, remove the upper crust but do not remove any of the cake beneath it—leave it slightly domed. Remove the parchment and a little of the lower crust by scraping it lightly with the serrated blade.

Crisscross two sheets of plastic wrap on the work surface and place the cake top side up in the center of the wrap. Pull the plastic wrap up and wrap the cake. Set it in the cake pan in which it was baked. Open the top of the plastic wrap to expose the cake and slowly pour the milk mixture over the cake. It will absorb completely into the cake. Rewrap the cake and refrigerate it for 8 hours or overnight.

Unmold the Cake

Open the top of the plastic wrap and gently invert the cake onto a flat surface such as the loose bottom of a tart pan. Reinvert it onto a serving plate with a lip or a 10-inch pie plate.

Whipped Cream Topping

Makes: 3 cups/12.3 ounces/350 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
heavy cream, cold	1½ cups (12 fluid ounces)	12.3	348
superfine sugar	1 tablespoon	0.5	12

Make the Whipped Cream Topping

In a mixing bowl, combine the cream and sugar and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer’s beaters alongside the bowl.)

Whip the cream and sugar, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high, until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised.

Use a pastry bag fitted with a large open star pastry tube (3/8 to ½ inch) to pipe sideways shells or stars over the top of the cake. You may also swirl whipped cream with a spatula. Refrigerate the cake until ready to serve. As the cake sits, a little of the milk will exude around the bottom. The cake will keep for up to 3 days refrigerated.

Highlights for Success

If you are planning to hold the cake for more than 1 day, apply the whipped cream on the day of serving, or use a stabilizer such as Cobason (see [Commercial Stabilizers](#)) or Stabilized Whipped Cream (see [Stabilized Whipped Cream](#)) to keep it from dissolving into the cake.

Apple Caramel Charlotte  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 7 minutes

When this European-inspired cake is made with a Bavarian filling, it is one of the most complex and elegant desserts the finest restaurants and confiseries can offer. In this version ethereal slices of layered biscuit encase a caramelized billowy crème anglaise—based filling that blends perfectly with the apples: The peel can give the apples an exquisite pale pink color during poaching. If using Golden Delicious or Granny Smith apples, you can achieve this by adding the peel of a red apple such as McIntosh. (However, don't use McIntosh for poaching because it is not firm enough to hold its shape.) In fall, some of my favorite apples are Macoun, Stayman-Winesap, Cortland, Jonathan, and Baldwin. It is also very beautiful with a pale golden color as in the photo.

Plan Ahead

Make the biscuit and layer it at least 1 day ahead. Poach the apples at least 1 day or up to 3 days ahead. Compose the charlotte at least 8 hours before serving.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour); see <a href="#">Note</a>	1/3 cup (or ¼ cup plus 2 teaspoons), sifted into the cup and leveled off	1.2	33
cornstarch	2½ tablespoons	0.7	23
4 large eggs, divided, at room temperature	.	7	200

1 large egg yolk, at room temperature	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.6	18
superfine sugar	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon, divided	4	113
pure vanilla extract	¾ teaspoon	.	.
cream of tartar	¼ teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

One 17¼ by 12¼ by 1-inch half-sheet pan, bottom coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray or shortening, lined with a nonstick liner or parchment, and then coated with baking spray with flour | One 9-inch springform, loose-bottom pan, or a flan ring at least 2½ inches high

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 450°F/230°C.

Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a small bowl, whisk the flour and cornstarch to combine them well.

Mix the Yolk Mixture

Separate 2 of the eggs, placing the yolks in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater. Place the egg whites in a medium bowl, preferably another mixer bowl. To the yolks, add the 2 remaining whole eggs, the additional yolk, and ½ cup of the sugar. Beat on high speed until thick, fluffy, and tripled in volume, about 5 minutes. Lower the speed and beat in the vanilla. (If you have only one stand mixer bowl, scrape the yolk mixture into a large bowl and whisk very thoroughly. Wash and dry the mixer bowl and whisk beater.)

Make the Batter

Sift half the flour mixture over the egg mixture and, using a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or silicone spatula, fold it in gently but rapidly until the flour has disappeared. Repeat with the remaining flour mixture until all traces of the flour have disappeared.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

Attach the clean whisk beater. Beat the egg whites on medium-low speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining 1 tablespoon of sugar and continue beating until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Fold the meringue into the batter. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and, using a small offset spatula, smooth as evenly as possible.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 7 minutes, or until golden brown and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center.

Unmold and Cool the Cake

Unmold the cake at once. (If necessary, loosen the sides with the tip of a sharp knife.) Grasp the long edge of the liner and gently slide the cake onto a flat surface.

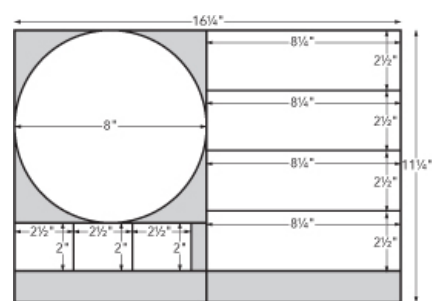
Allow the cake to cool completely. Remove the liner by flipping the cake over onto a piece of plastic wrap that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, and reinvert it so that the crust is up. (The top crust needs to be protected as it becomes part of the striped décor, so don't invert it directly onto the work surface.) If using parchment, you can run a long narrow spatula between it and the bottom of the cake. Leave the cake on the parchment.

Cut the Layers

If your half-sheet pan is the standard size listed above, the finished size of the cake is about 16¼ by 11¼ by ½ inches. (If the pan is slightly larger, the cake will be slightly less high, which means you may need to have one or two more stacked cake rectangles—you can make them from the scraps—and extra apricot preserves.)

Begin by cutting the cake widthwise into two unequal rectangles: The one for the round base needs to be 8 inches. The other, for the side pieces, can be longer.

To make the side pieces: Use a long serrated knife and ruler to cut a rectangle that will measure 11¼ by 8¼ inches. Cut this rectangle the long way into four even strips, each one exactly 2½ inches wide. Alternatively, mark where the cuts should be with the tip of a sharp knife and use scissors to cut the strips. The length of the strips will be about 8¼ inches.



To make the round base and extra side pieces: use an 8-inch pot lid or make a cardboard template and set it right at the short edges of the rectangle as a guide to cut the round base. Mark it with the tip of a sharp knife and use scissors to cut out the circle. Wrap the cake in plastic wrap to keep it soft and fresh, and refrigerate it until ready to complete the charlotte. Trim the scrap that was alongside the circle and cut it into three 2½ by 2-inch strips. (From each cake rectangle you will have a ¼-inch strip left over. Save these pieces in case they are needed to fill in any gaps.)

Strained Apricot Preserves  
Makes: about 2/3 cup/8 ounces/227 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
apricot preserves	1 cup	11.3	320
hot water (optional)	.	.	.

### Make the Strained Apricot Preserves

Heat the strained preserves, if necessary, so that they are fluid enough to spread onto the cake. If they are still too thick stir in a little hot water.

### Layer the Cake

Set the first cake strip crust side down on a piece of plastic wrap, and with a small metal spatula, spread an even coating of preserves over its surface (about 4 teaspoons). Set the second strip crust side down evenly on top. Continue with the two remaining strips, spreading preserves also on the top of the last one. You will have about ¼ cup preserves left over for another use. The stacked cake should be 1½ inches high. Wrap it well with the plastic wrap, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, and freeze it until very firm, about 2 hours or overnight, or up to 2 months. (If frozen solid, you'll need to allow it to soften for about 10 minutes at room temperature before slicing.)

Use a small serrated knife to cut 3/8-inch slices, taking care not to compress the cake when slicing. If necessary, trim each slice so that it is exactly 2½ inches high when the strips are up and down. You will need about 20 slices to line the inside of the springform pan. The remaining cake can be refrozen. Keep the slices covered with plastic wrap until ready to line the mold.

### Note

For the most tender cake, replace the flour and cornstarch with ¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons/2 ounces/56 grams Wondra flour. There is no need to sift it as Wondra incorporates very easily into the cake. The cake will be slightly lower, so you will need to use the scraps to layer and make a few extra slices.

### Poached Apples

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
2 to 3 tart baking apples	.	1 pound	454
water	1½ cups (12 fluid ounces)	12.5	354
sugar	¼ cup	1.7	50
Calvados or apple brandy	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	28
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	2 teaspoons	.	.
½ vanilla bean, split lengthwise	.	.	.

### Make the Poached Apples

Just before poaching, peel the apples, reserving the peel if it's red to add color to the syrup. Cut the apples in half and use a melon baller to core them.



In a saucepan or sauté pan just large enough to hold the apples in a single layer, combine the water, sugar, Calvados, lemon juice, vanilla bean, and the apple peel, if using, and stir to dissolve the sugar. Add the apples hollow side down and bring the liquid to a boil over medium heat. Immediately reduce the heat to very low and place a round of parchment on top of the apples to keep the rounded tops moist.

Poach tightly covered at a bare simmer for 5 minutes. Carefully turn each apple over and continue poaching for about 7 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the thickest part of an apple enters with only a little resistance. The apples should still be slightly firm. Watch carefully toward the end to prevent overcooking so that they keep their shape.

Remove the pan from the heat and cool at room temperature, covered only by the parchment; it will take about 1 hour to cool completely. Transfer the apples and their syrup, including the vanilla bean and peel, to a bowl. If not using immediately, cover it tightly and refrigerate until ready to use.

Drain the apples, reserving the liquid and vanilla bean and discarding the peel. Leave the apples in the bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate. Remove the vanilla bean and scrape the seeds into the liquid (rinse, dry, and reserve the pod for another use). If necessary, reduce the liquid or add water to equal 1¼ cups of syrup. (To reduce, use a 4-cup heatproof glass measure in a microwave on high power, or a small saucepan on the stove top.) You will need 1 cup of poaching syrup for the custard filling and ¼ cup for the glaze. Separate them into two containers, keeping them covered to prevent evaporation. Refrigerate the ¼ cup for the glaze.

Line the Mold

If molding the charlotte in a springform pan, remove the inner disk and place the outer ring directly on a serving plate. If using a loose-bottom pan, leave the inner disk in place but line it with a parchment round if you plan to remove the disk before serving. If using a flan ring, place it on a serving plate.

Lightly coat the inside of the ring and the serving plate with nonstick cooking spray or oil. Place the striped slices around the ring so that the stripes are straight up and down. In the unlikely event that you run short, use the scraps and leftover strained apricot preserves to create an extra rectangle to fill in the gap.

Fit the cake base into the bottom of the lined ring. Cover the ring tightly with plastic wrap and set it aside.

Caramel Bavarian Cream Filling  
Makes: 6 cups/22 ounces/628 grams  
Apple Caramel Custard

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
reserved syrup from poaching apples	1 cup (8 fluid ounces), divided	9.3	266
powdered gelatin	1 tablespoon	0.3	10
about 5 large egg yolks	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.3	93
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
water	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30
salt	pinch	.	.

Make the Apple Caramel Custard

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a large (2 quarts or larger) mixing bowl.

In a small bowl, place 2 tablespoons of the reserved poaching syrup and sprinkle the gelatin over the top. Stir to moisten the gelatin. Cover tightly with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation.

In a small heavy saucepan, using a silicone spatula, stir the yolks just until smooth.

In another small saucepan (or a heatproof glass measure if using a microwave on high power), heat the remaining reserved poaching syrup to the boiling point. Keep it hot.

In another small heavy saucepan, stir together the sugar and water until the sugar is dissolved. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Once it comes to a boil, cook without stirring until it turns a deep amber (370°F/188°C or a few degrees lower because its temperature will continue to rise). Remove it from the heat, and as soon as it reaches temperature, slowly and carefully pour the hot poaching liquid into the caramel. It will bubble up furiously.

Return the pan to very low heat, stirring, until the mixture is uniform in color and the caramel is fully dissolved.

Very gradually at first, stir the caramel poaching liquid into the yolks, stirring constantly. Stir in the gelatin mixture and salt. On medium-low heat, bring the mixture to just below the boiling point (180° to 190°F/80° to 88°C). Steam will begin to appear, and the mixture will be slightly thicker than heavy cream. It will leave a well-defined track when a finger is run across the back of a spoon. Immediately remove the mixture from the heat and pour it into the strainer, scraping up the thickened cream that settles on the bottom of the pan and pushing it through with the back of a spoon or silicone spatula. Set aside to cool completely.

Italian Meringue

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
2 egg whites	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	60
superfine sugar	1/3 cup	2.3	66
water	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30
cream of tartar	¼ teaspoon	.	.

Plan Ahead

Make the meringue a maximum of 30 minutes ahead of using it to fold into the bavarian cream mixture.

Make the Italian Meringue

Have ready a 1-cup heatproof glass measure.

Pour the egg whites into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater or into a medium bowl and have ready a handheld mixer.

In a small heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, stir together the sugar and water until all the sugar is moistened. Heat, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the syrup is bubbling. Stop stirring and reduce the heat to low (if using an electric range, remove the pan from the heat).

Beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Increase the heat and continue to boil the syrup until an instant-read thermometer registers 248° to 250°F/120°C (the firm-ball stage). Immediately transfer the syrup to the glass measure to stop the cooking.

If using a stand mixer, with the mixer off to keep it from spinning onto the sides of the bowl, add the syrup to the egg whites. Begin by pouring in a small amount of syrup. Immediately beat on high speed for 5 seconds. Add the remaining syrup the same way in three parts. For the last addition, use a silicone scraper to remove the syrup clinging to the glass measure and scrape it off against the beater. If the syrup has hardened before most of it has been poured, soften it to pouring consistency for a few seconds in the microwave.

If using a handheld mixer, beat the syrup into the egg whites in a steady stream. Don't allow the syrup to fall on the beaters or they will spin it onto the sides of the bowl.

Lower the speed to medium and continue beating for 2 minutes. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside until the bowl is no longer warm to the touch, or refrigerate for 5 to 10 minutes, until 70°F/21°C. Whisk it after the first 5 minutes to test and equalize the temperature.

Completed Bavarian Cream Filling

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
heavy cream, cold	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232
Apple Caramel Custard	.	.	.
Calvados or apple brandy	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	28
Italian Meringue	.	.	.

Complete the Bavarian Cream Filling

In a mixing bowl, pour the cream and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside the bowl.) Whip the cream, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, until it mounds softly when dropped from a spoon. Cover and refrigerate it while chilling the apple custard.

Cool the apple custard by placing the bowl in a larger bowl of ice water (see [Water Baths](#)) with about 1 tablespoon of salt added to the ice water; the salt will speed chilling. Stir occasionally for the first 10 minutes and then constantly but gently for about 10 minutes. If you prefer, you can refrigerate the mixture and stir occasionally for the first 10 minutes and then every few minutes. When a small amount dropped from a spoon mounds very slightly before disappearing into the surface, and the mixture starts to set around the edges but is still very liquid, remove the bowl immediately from the ice water bath and, using a large balloon whisk, whisk in the Calvados. With the whisk, fold in the Italian meringue and then the whipped cream just until incorporated. The mixture will be billowy but soupy, like melted ice cream. Finish by using a silicone spatula to reach to the bottom. Pour the mixture at once into the lined ring and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula. Cover tightly and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before applying the apple slices.

Make the Apple Rose Décor

Use a sharp thin knife to slice the poached apples lengthwise into 1/8-inch slices. Starting at the outer edge, but not overlapping the cake, place slightly overlapping rings of apple slices with the hollow cored side facing the center. Start with the larger slices and save the smaller slices for the center rows.

Apple Glaze

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
reserved syrup from poaching apples	¼ cup	2.3	66
arrowroot or cassava	1 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Apple Glaze

In a small heavy saucepan, combine the poaching syrup and arrowroot and heat, stirring constantly, until thickened. Remove from the heat and, with a clean artist's paintbrush or pastry feather, coat the apples lightly with the glaze. If the glaze doesn't go on smoothly, thin it slightly with a few drops of Calvados or hot water. Cover the pan with an inverted bowl or domed pot lid and refrigerate for at least 8 hours or up to 3 days. It can be frozen for up to 3 weeks.

Chocolate Raspberry Trifle  
Serves: 16 to 20  
Baking Time: 25 to 35 minutes

A trifle is an excellent choice for a holiday party. It can be prepared ahead, it is easy to serve, and it feeds a crowd. This chocolate and raspberry rendition is just as delicious as it is beautiful and festive. Though deceptively light in texture, making it easy to eat even after a filling dinner, it is deeply flavorful and satisfying.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor and texture, compose everything but the topping 1 day ahead. Make the raspberry cream topping up to 8 hours ahead.

Special Equipment

One 3- to 3½-quart (96 to 112 ounces) trifle bowl | Large pastry bag fitted with a large open star pastry tube (3/8 to 1/2 inch); optional

Make the Cake

Make one recipe for chocolate génoise layers baked in two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans (see [Moist Chocolate Raspberry Génoise](#)).



Raspberry Syrup  
Makes: 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons/9 fluid ounces/10.5 ounces/300 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons	3	88
water	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.2	177

Make the Raspberry Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, bring the sugar and water to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Cover immediately, remove from the heat, and cool completely. Transfer the syrup to a 2-cup glass measure and stir in the Chambord. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add enough water to equal 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons of syrup. It keeps tightly covered at room temperature for up to 24 hours or for up to several weeks refrigerated.

Crème Anglaise

Makes: 3 2/3 cups/29.3 fluid ounces/31.3 ounces/887 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
1½ vanilla beans (see <a href="#">Notes</a> ) .		.	.
sugar	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons	2.6	75
salt	1/8 teaspoon	.	.
about 12 large egg yolks	¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (7 fluid ounces)	7.7	223
milk	1 cup (8 fluid ounces), divided	8.5	242
cornstarch (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon	0.5	12
heavy cream	2 cups (16 fluid ounces)	16.5	464

Make the Crème Anglaise

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium mixing bowl.

With a small sharp knife, split the vanilla beans lengthwise in half.

In a small saucepan, place the sugar. Scrape the seeds of the vanilla bean into the sugar and rub them in with your fingers. Add the vanilla pod, salt, and yolks and, using a silicone spatula, stir until well blended.

Pour ¼ cup of the milk into a small bowl and combine with the cornstarch. Whisk or stir with a spoon to dissolve the cornstarch, and then pour the mixture into the yolk mixture, stirring to combine.

In a small saucepan (or heatproof glass measure if using a microwave on high power), combine the remaining milk with the cream and bring it just to a boil. Stir a few tablespoons into the yolk mixture and gradually add the remaining milk mixture, stirring constantly. Heat over medium-low just until below the boiling point (170° to 180°F/77° to 82°C), stirring constantly. Steam will begin to appear and the mixture will be slightly thicker than heavy cream. A finger run across the back of a spoon will leave a well-defined track.

Immediately pour the mixture through the strainer, scraping up the thickened cream that has settled on the bottom of the pan. With the back of a spoon or silicone spatula, press the mixture through the strainer into the bowl. Return the vanilla pod to the sauce until ready to assemble the trifle. Cool to room temperature, stirring very gently only once or twice. Coat plastic wrap with nonstick cooking spray and set it directly on the surface of the crème to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate for a minimum of 2 hours.

Notes

If using a Tahitian vanilla bean, use only three-quarters of a bean. Vanilla beans offer the fullest, most aromatic flavor (see [Vanilla Bean](#)), but you may substitute 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract after the sauce is at room temperature.

If you'd prefer a slightly runny crème anglaise that seeps a little between the layers, as in the photograph, use only 1 tablespoon/0.2 ounce/8 grams cornstarch.

Raspberries and Preserves

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
fresh raspberries	3 pints plus ½ cup (6½ cups), divided	1 pound 10	738
superfine sugar (optional)	3 tablespoons	1.3	38

seedless raspberry preserves      ½ cup      5.6      160

Chambord, framboise, or hot water 1 to 2 teaspoons      .      .

Prepare the Raspberries and Preserves

If the raspberries are very tart, toss 6 cups of them with the sugar and macerate for 30 minutes.

In a small bowl, stir together the preserves and Chambord until soft enough to spread easily.

Compose the Trifle

Use a long serrated knife and your fingers to remove the crust from the top of each cake layer, and remove the parchment from the bottoms. Scrape off any remaining bottom crust. Wash and dry the knife and use it to split each cake layer horizontally in half. Use the trifle bowl as a guide for trimming the layers to fit: invert the bowl over the layer and cut away the excess cake. (If the bottom of the bowl is smaller than the top, you will need to trim three of the layers slightly more to fit the bowl, but all layers should be slightly larger than the inside of the bowl to fit snugly. This will help control the amount of cream that seeps between the layers, keeping the outside edge attractive.

Place the four cake layers on a clean work surface. With a small offset spatula, spread each layer with 2 tablespoons of the raspberry preserves.

Place one cake layer preserves side down in the trifle bowl. Brush it evenly with one-quarter of the syrup (about ¼ cup). Pour about one-third of the crème anglaise over the layer and spread evenly with the back of a spoon, being careful to get as little cream as possible up the sides of the bowl. Sprinkle the crème anglaise with 2 cups of the raspberries, making sure some land against the sides of the bowl for an attractive appearance.

Continue in the same way with the second and third cake layers, syrup, crème anglaise, and raspberries, remembering always to place the cake layers preserves side down. Top with the fourth cake layer and brush it with the remaining syrup. Press it gently on top. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate it overnight.

Raspberry Cream Topping  
Makes: 3 cups/17.6 ounces/500 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
heavy cream, cold	1 1/3 cups (10.6 fluid ounces)	10.7	308
sugar	1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon	0.6	16
seedless raspberry preserves	2/3 cup	7.3	211
Chambord, framboise, or water	2 teaspoons	.	.

Make the Raspberry Cream Topping

In a mixing bowl, combine the cream and sugar and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside the bowl.)

In a small bowl, whisk together the raspberry preserves and Chambord.

Whip the cream and sugar, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, just until beater marks begin to show distinctly. Add the raspberry mixture and whip just until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised.

Final Presentation

For a piped decoration, immediately fill a pastry bag fitted with a large open star pastry tube (3/8 to ½ inch) with the raspberry cream and pipe, starting at the edges of the bowl and working toward the center, mounding it more toward the center. (You may also swirl the raspberry cream on top of the trifle with a small silicone spatula.) Place the remaining ½ cup of raspberries decoratively on top. Refrigerate. Remove the trifle from the refrigerator 1 to 2 hours before serving.

Saint-Honoré Trifle  
Serves: 16 to 20  
Baking Time: 25 to 35 minutes

I absolutely adore the flavors and textures of the classic Gâteau Saint-Honoré, a pastry that is traditionally made of puff pastry and cream puff pastry. Making it is such a complicated process that it can become a once-in-a-lifetime project. One day, however, I realized that my favorite part of this dessert is the special Chiboust cream, enhanced by the addition of whipped cream. When prepared as a pastry, adding gelatin makes the cream firm enough to slice, but for this génoise cake version, only enough gelatin is used to create a gossamer veil of support for perfect plating. The Grand Marnier mingles magnificently with the vanilla, perfuming the cream and lending to the illusion of lightness. The vision of the cream in a huge trifle bowl, crowned with spun sugar or fluted with whipped cream inspired me.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor and texture, compose everything but the topping 1 day ahead. Make the whipped cream topping, if using, up to 8 hours ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
clarified butter, preferably beurre noisette (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	2.6	73
pure vanilla extract	2 teaspoons	.	.
8 large eggs, at room temperature	1½ cups plus 1 tablespoon (12.5 fluid ounces)	14	400
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1 cup (or ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons), sifted into the cup and leveled off	3.5	100
cornstarch, lightly spooned into the cup	¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons	3.5	100

Special Equipment

Two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, coated with baking spray with flour, then topped with parchment rounds | One 3- to 3½-quart (96 to 112 ounces) trifle bowl | Large pastry bag fitted with a Saint-Honoré tube or large open star pastry tube (3/8 to 1/2 inch); optional

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Prepare the Butter

In a medium microwavable bowl, or a saucepan over medium heat, warm the butter until almost hot (110° to 120°F/40° to 50°C). Stir in the vanilla, cover, and keep it warm.

Beat the Eggs

In the bowl of a stand mixer, using a long-handled wire whisk, lightly combine the eggs and sugar. Set the bowl over a pan of simmering water and heat just until lukewarm to the touch, stirring constantly with the whisk to prevent curdling.

Attach the whisk beater. Beat the mixture on high speed for a minimum of 5 minutes. The mixture will triple in volume and be very thick and airy. (A handheld mixer will take at least 10 minutes.)

Mix the Flour and Cornstarch

While the eggs are beating, sift together the flour and cornstarch.

Make the Batter

Remove almost 1 cup of the beaten egg mixture and whisk it thoroughly into the melted butter.

Sift about half the flour mixture over the remaining egg mixture and, with a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or silicone spatula, fold it in gently

but rapidly until almost all the flour has disappeared. Repeat with the remaining flour mixture until all traces of flour have disappeared.

Fold in the butter mixture just until incorporated. With a silicone spatula, reach into the bottom of the bowl to be sure to moisten all the flour. Immediately scrape the batter into the prepared pans and smooth the surfaces evenly with a small offset spatula. If you have beaten the batter long enough, the pans will be a little more than half full.

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until the cakes are golden brown and start to shrink slightly from the sides of the pans. To prevent the collapse of its delicate foam structure, while still hot, the génoise must be unmolded as soon as it is baked. Have ready a small metal spatula and three wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Unmold and Cool the Cakes

Run the small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and invert the cakes onto two of the prepared wire racks. Leaving the parchment in place, immediately reinvert the cakes onto the prepared racks so that the firm upper crust keeps the cake from sinking. Cool completely.

Note

To clarify butter, heat 8 tablespoons/4 ounces/113 grams unsalted butter in a small heavy saucepan on very low heat. Cook uncovered, watching carefully to prevent burning. Move away any foam on the surface to check the progress. For plain clarified butter, when the liquid on top is clear and the white solids are resting on the bottom, remove it from the heat. To make beurre noisette, keep cooking the butter until the milk solids become a deep brown. For either method, immediately pour the butter through a fine-mesh strainer or a strainer lined with cheesecloth into a heatproof cup.

Grand Marnier Syrup

Makes: 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons/9 fluid ounces/10.6 ounces/300 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons	3	88
water	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.2	177
Grand Marnier	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.6	46

Make the Grand Marnier Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, bring the sugar and water to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Cover immediately, remove it from the heat, and cool completely. Transfer the syrup to a glass measure and stir in the Grand Marnier. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add enough water to equal 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons of syrup. Cover tightly to prevent evaporation. The syrup keeps for up to 24 hours at room temperature or for up to several weeks refrigerated.

Chiboust Cream

Makes: 5½ cups/44 fluid ounces/29.6 ounces/840 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
heavy cream, cold	1½ cups (12 fluid ounces)	12.3	348
milk	1½ cups (12 fluid ounces)	12.7	363
½ Tahitian vanilla bean (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	.	.	.
½ Madagascar vanilla bean, split lengthwise	.	.	.
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
about 4 large egg yolks, at room temperature	¼ cup plus ½ tablespoon (2.2 fluid ounces)	2.6	74
cornstarch (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	2 tablespoons	.	.
powdered gelatin	1½ teaspoons	.	.
Grand Marnier	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30

pure vanilla extract ½ teaspoon

### Make the Chiboust Cream

In a mixing bowl, pour the cream and refrigerate. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside the bowl.)

In a medium heavy saucepan, bring the milk to the boiling point over medium heat. Cover and keep hot.

With a small sharp knife, split the vanilla beans lengthwise in half.

In the bowl of a stand mixer, place the sugar. Scrape the vanilla bean seeds into the sugar and rub them in with your fingers. Add the vanilla pods to the chilled cream.

Attach the whisk beater and add the yolks. Beat on medium speed for 1 minute, until well mixed. Add the cornstarch and gelatin and beat for a few seconds until well blended. Gradually beat in the hot milk.

Return the yolk mixture to the saucepan and bring it to a boil, stirring constantly with a whisk, reaching well into the bottom edges of the pan. As soon as the mixture comes to a boil, it will become very thick. Reduce the heat and simmer for 1 minute, stirring constantly with the whisk. Remove the pan from the heat, whisk in the Grand Marnier and vanilla extract, and pour the mixture into a bowl. Coat plastic wrap with nonstick cooking spray and set the wrap directly on the surface of the pastry cream to prevent a skin from forming.

Allow the pastry cream to cool until it has reached room temperature. If you watch it carefully, you can speed cooling by placing the bowl in the refrigerator or the freezer. To prevent premature setting around the sides, use a glass or plastic bowl and stir gently two or three times. It will take about 30 minutes in the freezer.

When the pastry cream is cool, set it aside at room temperature so that the gelatin doesn't set while you are whipping the cream.

## Complete the Chiboust Cream

Remove the vanilla pods and rinse and dry them for another use. In the chilled bowl, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, whip the heavy cream until soft peaks form when the beater is lifted. Using a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or silicone spatula, fold it into the cooled pastry cream. Use it at once or cover and chill for up to 3 days.

## Strawberries and Preserves

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
fresh hulled strawberries (small or quartered)	2 pints	1 pound	454
sugar (optional)	3 tablespoons	1.3	38
orange marmalade (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	½ cup	5.5	157
Grand Marnier or hot water	1 to 2 teaspoons	.	.

### Prepare the Strawberries and Preserves

Reserve a few attractive strawberries for decoration. If the strawberries are very tart, in a large bowl, toss the rest of the strawberries with the sugar and macerate for 30 minutes.

In a small bowl, stir together the marmalade and Grand Marnier until soft enough to spread easily.

## Compose the Trifle

Use a long serrated knife and your fingers to remove the crust from the top of each cake layer, and remove the parchment from the bottoms. Scrape off any remaining bottom crust. Wash and dry the knife and split each cake layer horizontally in half. Use the trifle bowl as a guide for trimming the layers to fit: invert the bowl over the layer and cut away the excess cake. (If the bottom of the bowl is smaller than the top, you will need to trim three of the layers slightly more to fit the bowl, but all layers should be slightly larger than the inside of the bowl to fit snugly. This will help control the amount of cream that seeps between the layers, keeping the outside edge attractive.)

Place the four cake layers on a clean work surface. With a small offset spatula, spread each with 2 tablespoons of the marmalade.

Place one cake layer marmalade side down in the trifle bowl. Brush it evenly with about one-quarter of the syrup (about ¼ cup). Pour about 1½ cups of the chiboust cream over the layer and spread it evenly with the back of a spoon, being careful to get as little cream as possible up the sides of the bowl. Sprinkle the chiboust cream with one-third of the strawberries, making sure some land against the sides of the bowl for an attractive appearance.

Continue in the same way with the second and third cake layers, syrup, chiboust cream, and strawberries, remembering always to place the cake layers preserves side down. Top with the fourth cake layer and brush it with the remaining syrup. Press it gently on top. Spread the remaining chiboust cream evenly over the top. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. About 2 hours before serving, remove the trifle from the refrigerator and allow it to come to room temperature.



Whipped Cream Topping  
Makes: 2 cups/8.6 ounces/244 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
heavy cream, cold	1 cup (8 fluid ounces), divided	8.2	232
powdered sugar	2 tablespoons	0.5	14
cornstarch (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	1 teaspoon	.	.
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Whipped Cream Topping

In a mixing bowl, pour ¾ cup of the cream and refrigerate it for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside the bowl.)

In a small saucepan, combine the powdered sugar and cornstarch and gradually stir in the remaining ¼ cup of the cream. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring constantly, and simmer for just a few seconds until the liquid is thickened. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the mixture into a small bowl and cool to room temperature. Stir in the vanilla.

Whip the cream, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, just until traces of the beater marks begin to show distinctly. Add the cornstarch mixture in a steady stream, whipping constantly, just until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised.

Final Presentation

For a piped decoration, immediately fill a pastry bag fitted with the Saint-Honoré tube or a large open star pastry tube (3/8 to ½ inch) with the whipped cream, if using, and pipe starting around the edges of the bowl. Arrange the reserved strawberries on top.

Variation  
Praliné

If you love the flavor of hazelnuts, then when making the Chiboust cream, add ½ cup/5.5 ounces/154 grams praline paste after beating the hot milk into the yolk mixture. Beat for several minutes until well incorporated. Replace the Grand Marnier with Frangelico or Cognac.

Notes

In the pastry cream, cornstarch protects the yolks from curdling when boiled. The mixture must be boiled to fully activate the cornstarch's thickening ability. For the whipped cream, if your cream is very low in butterfat (see [Heavy Cream](#)), use 1¼ teaspoons cornstarch.

If Tahitian vanilla beans are unavailable (see [Vanilla Bean](#)), you may use a total of 1½ Madagascar vanilla beans or increase the vanilla extract to 1½ teaspoons.

I prefer sweet orange marmalade or a mixture of marmalade and apricot preserves.

Spun Sugar

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
corn syrup	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces)	3.7	109
grated beeswax (optional)	1 teaspoon	.	.

Prepare the Work Surface

Cover the floor around your work surface with newspaper. Oil the handles of two long wooden spoons or dowels and tape them to the work surface 12 inches apart, with the handles extending well beyond the edge of the work surface.

Make the Spun Sugar

Have ready a 2-cup or larger heatproof glass measure.

In a small heavy saucepan, stir together the sugar and corn syrup over medium heat and bring it to a boil, stirring constantly. Increase the heat and boil until medium amber and an instant-read thermometer registers 360°F/180°C. Immediately remove the pan from the heat and pour the syrup into the glass measure. The temperature will continue to climb to 370°F/188°C. (If the temperature is lower, the spun sugar will be white; if higher, it will have a brassy color.) Allow it to cool for a few minutes.

Add the beeswax, if using. When any smoking stops, check the caramel by lifting it with a fork to see if it will fall in strings rather than droplets.

When it falls in strings, stand on a stool so that your arms are above the wooden handles. Using a cut whisk (see [Equipment](#)) or two forks held side by side, dip into the caramel and vigorously wave back and forth, allowing the sugar to fall in long fine threads over the handles. The waving must be continuous or small droplets, called angel's tears, will form. If the caramel starts to get too thick, zap it for a few seconds in a microwave.

If not ready to use the spun sugar right away, curve it to the size of the top of the trifle bowl and set it in a pan that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Any strands left over can be formed into little nests and frozen for several months to use as containers for ice cream or sorbet.

Highlights For Success

Don't attempt to make spun sugar on a humid day; it will evaporate into thin air! If the weather is dry, you can make the spun sugar several hours ahead. Although the beeswax is optional, it does wonders keeping the spun sugar strands flexible, especially if not using them right away. (It is available in sewing supply stores.) Alternatively, curve the strands in a large circle immediately after spinning the sugar.



Spinning the sugar



Wrapping the sugar into a round form  
Holiday Pinecone Cake  
Serves: 12 to 14  
Baking Time: 7 to 10 minutes

This is the ultimate holiday dessert. I made it for the first time when The Cake Bible was published and I had the incredible good fortune of being invited to be on Charlie Rose's television show. I wanted to do something outrageously impressive, and he had requested chocolate. The design of the cake was inspired by one that Rudi Hauser, the great Swiss chocolatier, had done for Bon Appétit magazine. Since I had created a luxurious chocolate rolled fondant for the book, I decided to use it for the "bark."

As this was the first television appearance I made for The Cake Bible, at the beginning of the segment I had the look of a proverbial deer in the headlights. By the end, however, when Charlie laughingly suggested that he would be my janitor and sweep floors if we went into business together, I was able to quip that we should get married so I could become Rose Rose! You can't ask for a more erudite or gracious host than Charlie Rose. I will always treasure the memory of that time with him when I make this fudge-like, intensely chocolate cake. And I would do it again in a New York minute.

Plan Ahead

Make the fondant 1 day before using. Make the ganache filling several hours before using. Fill and chill the roll at least 2 hours ahead. Apply the fondant no more than 6 hours ahead.

Chocolate Biscuit Roulade

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¼ cup plus 1 teaspoon (sifted before measuring)	0.7	20
boiling water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59

pure vanilla extract	¾ teaspoon	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1/3 cup (or ¼ cup plus 2 teaspoons), sifted into the cup and leveled off	1.2	33
4 large eggs, at room temperature, divided	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	7	200
about 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.6	18
superfine sugar, divided	2/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon	5	145
cream of tartar	¼ teaspoon	.	.
powdered sugar for dusting	.	.	.

Special Equipment

One 17¼ by 12¼ by 1-inch half-sheet pan, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray or shortening, bottom lined with a nonstick liner or parchment, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 425°F/220°C.

Mix the Cocoa and Water

In a small bowl, with a silicone spatula, stir together the cocoa and boiling water until smooth. Stir in the vanilla, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and cool to room temperature, about 20 minutes. To speed cooling, place the bowl in the refrigerator. Bring the mixture to room temperature before proceeding.

Sift the Flour

Onto a piece of parchment or into another small bowl, sift the flour.

Prepare the Eggs

Separate 2 of the eggs, placing the yolks in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater. Place the egg whites in another bowl. To the yolks, add the 2 remaining whole eggs, the additional yolk, and 2/3 cup of the sugar. Beat on high speed until thick, fluffy, and tripled in volume, about 5 minutes. Lower the speed to medium and add the cocoa mixture, beating a few seconds until incorporated. (If you have only one mixer bowl, scrape the mixture into another large bowl and wash and dry the mixer bowl and whisk beater very thoroughly.)

Make the Batter

Sift half the flour over the egg mixture and, using a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or silicone spatula, fold it in gently but rapidly until almost all the flour has disappeared. Repeat with the remaining flour until all traces of flour have disappeared.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Beat on medium-high speed until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Beat in the remaining 1 tablespoon of sugar and continue beating until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. Fold the meringue into the batter. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with an offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 7 to 10 minutes, or until the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center.

Unmold and Cool the Cake

If necessary, loosen the sides with the tip of a sharp knife. Unmold the cake at once. Grasp the long edge of the liner and gently slide the cake from the pan onto a flat work surface. Dust the surface of the cake lightly with powdered sugar. While it is still hot, roll up the cake from the short end. Be sure to include the liner. (If using parchment, first flip the cake onto a clean dish towel and carefully remove the parchment. Then roll up the cake tightly, towel and all.) Decrease the oven temperature to 350°F/175°C to toast the almonds.

Set the roll on a wire rack and cool until it is no longer warm to the touch, about 40 minutes.

Chocolate Almond Ganache Filling

Makes: about 4 cups/2¼ pounds/1 kilogram 23 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
whole almonds, preferably unblanched	¾ cup	3.5	100

dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped . 1 pound 454

heavy cream 2 cups (16 fluid ounces) 16.5 464

Cognac or extra heavy cream ¼ cup (2 fluid ounces) 2 56

pure vanilla extract 2 teaspoons . .

Toast and Chop the Almonds

Spread the almonds evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes, or until pale gold. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely. Chop into medium-fine pieces.

Make the Chocolate Almond Ganache Filling

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

In a 4-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), scald the cream (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Pulse in the Cognac and vanilla. Scrape the ganache into a glass bowl, stir in the almonds, and allow it to cool for 1 hour. Cover it with plastic wrap and cool for several hours, or until the mixture reaches a soft frosting consistency.

Compose the Cake

Gently unroll the cake. If a liner was used, carefully detach the cake from it and then lay the cake back down on it. If parchment was used and the cake was rolled up in a towel and appears too fragile to lift off, slide it, still on top of the towel, onto a large cutting board or piece of cardboard big enough to support it. Place a piece of plastic wrap coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray on top, then place another large plastic cutting board or piece of cardboard on top and quickly flip the cake over. Remove the towel. The cake should now be on top of the plastic wrap.

Reserve half (2 cups) of the ganache and spread the cake evenly with the other half to about 1 inch from the edges to limit the amount that will seep out when the cake is rolled. Roll the cake from the short end.

You will now need to cut the cake to create the shape of a pinecone, with one end becoming the wider, rounded base and the other becoming the gently rounded pointed top end. Begin by cutting off an angled piece on each side of the top end, extending about one-third of the way to the base, keeping the pointed top slightly rounded. Move these pieces down to the base end of the roll. Have the pointed ends of these cut pieces facing you and the blunt, wider ends flush with the base of the roll. This will create the wider base.

Use some of the reserved thickened ganache to attach the cut pieces to the roll. Spread the remainder of the ganache evenly over the top and sides of the roll, maintaining rounded sides. Poke down any large almond pieces that break through the ganache; this will prevent lumps under the fondant. Chill until firm, about 2 hours. If chilling longer, wrap the roll in plastic wrap.

Chocolate Rolled Fondant  
Makes: 14.7 ounces/416 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
powdered gelatin	1 teaspoon	.	.
water	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30
corn syrup	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2.5	72
glycerin	1 teaspoon	.	.
solid white vegetable shortening, preferably Spectrum (see <a href="#">Highlights for Success</a> )	1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon	0.6	16
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.
powdered sugar	2 cups plus 4 teaspoons (lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off)	8.5	240
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¾ cup plus 3 tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	2.5	70

## Make the Chocolate Rolled Fondant

In a 2-cup heatproof glass measure or bowl, sprinkle the gelatin over the water and allow it to sit for 5 minutes (if longer, cover tightly with plastic wrap). Set in a small pan of simmering water and stir until the gelatin is dissolved. (This can also be done in a few seconds in a microwave on high power, stirring once or twice.) Stir in the corn syrup and glycerin, then add the shortening and stir until melted. Remove the glass measure from the heat and stir in the vanilla.

In a large bowl, whisk together the powdered sugar and cocoa. Make a well in the center and scrape in the gelatin mixture. Stir with a wooden spoon until blended. With your hands (food-safe latex or vinyl gloves are great to prevent sticking), knead the fondant vigorously in the bowl until it forms a ball. Turn it out onto a smooth counter or work surface, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Some of the fondant will have stuck to your fingers, so wash your hands well and continue kneading the fondant until it is smooth and satiny. If it seems dry and brittle, add a few droplets of water and knead it well. At first it will be sticky and messy, but kneading will help the water to absorb evenly. Wash your hands as necessary and coat them lightly with nonstick cooking spray. If the fondant is too sticky even after thorough kneading, knead in a little extra powdered sugar. The finished fondant should be soft, smooth, and supple. Wrap it tightly with plastic wrap and place it in an airtight storage bag or container. The moisture absorbs most evenly if the fondant is allowed to rest overnight, and the fondant is easier to work with. However, if necessary, it can be used right after making it. Fondant keeps for 1 week at room temperature, for 1 month refrigerated, and for 6 months frozen.



Cutting the ends



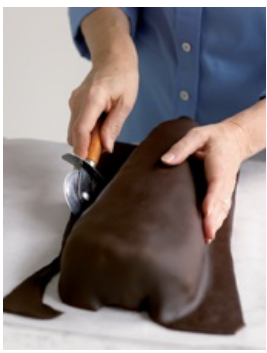
Arranging the cake to shape of pinecone



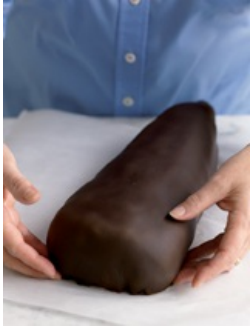
Frosting the pinecone



Shaping the fondant



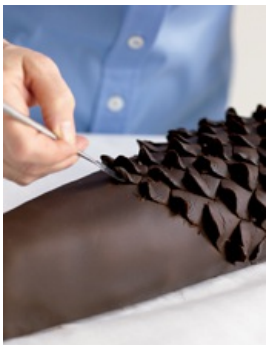
Trimming the fondant



Tucking the fondant edges under



Slashing the bark



Lifting the petals

#### Highlights for Success

Solid white shortening such as Spectrum (available in health food stores) works better than butter because butter causes streaking and because this shortening doesn't offer any perceivable flavor. Crisco without trans fat does not work for this fondant because the fondant will lack elasticity.

The fondant should be made ahead, but it is best applied within about 6 hours of serving, and if the fondant-covered cake is left uncovered at room temperature. Alternatively, cover the cake lightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate it. Allow it to come to room temperature a minimum of 2 hours before serving. If the fondant becomes slightly sticky, let it sit uncovered.

If you prefer, you can also purchase an excellent chocolate fondant called Pettinice Chocolate Rolled Fondant, imported from Bakel's in New Zealand (see Pastry Chef Central in [Equipment Sources](#)).

If stored fondant seems very stiff, a few seconds in the microwave before kneading it will make it pliable.

#### Shape the Fondant

Roll out the fondant between two sheets of plastic wrap coated with nonstick cooking spray into a large rectangle about 15 by 9 by 1/8 inches. Remove the top piece of plastic wrap and slide the fondant, still on the bottom piece of plastic wrap, next to the cake. Lift the plastic wrap by the two edges farthest from the cake and quickly but carefully flip the fondant over on top of the cake. Adjust the fondant, if necessary, to ensure good

coverage of the cake and trim it close to the edges of the roll. Tuck the fondant under the cake, maintaining the rounded sides.

### Final Presentation

Use small sharp scissors or a single-edged razor blade to cut staggered rows of Vs resembling a pinecone. It's easiest to keep them straight and staggered correctly by cutting them row by row, starting at the base, rather than by cutting up and down the pinecone. Begin by cutting Vs approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch on each side. As you work down toward the narrower end, the Vs will become smaller. Use the end of a small metal spoon handle to lift up the scalloped petals.

### Décor

Dip long white pine needles into lightly beaten egg white and dust with powdered sugar. Allow them to dry for several hours. Marzipan candles (see [Marzipan Candles](#)) make a beautiful addition. You can also make little red holly berries from red-tinted marzipan.

### Chapter 3: Mostly Flourless Cakes and Cheesecakes

The cakes in this chapter are either flourless or mostly flourless, which means that the component with the flour, such as the ladyfingers in the [Tiramisù](#), can be omitted and the custard filling spooned over fresh figs. This makes them ideal for those who are gluten intolerant or for religious observance. I didn't create these cakes to be flourless; it is the nature of the cakes themselves, but they are among my favorites. They include mousse cakes, meringue cakes, ground nut cakes, and custard cakes, such as tiramisù and cheesecakes.

Most flourless cakes depend on stiffly beaten egg whites for structure rather than on the starch usually provided by the flour. It is essential, therefore, that the egg whites be beaten correctly.

#### Highlights for Successful Flourless Cakes

The mixer bowl and beater must be free of grease, including even the tiniest trace of egg yolk, or the egg whites will not beat adequately.

Use the recommended amount of cream of tartar (1/8 teaspoon per egg white) and beat until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised. (There is no risk of breaking down the egg whites or drying them if this amount of cream of tartar is used.) For Passover, you will need to omit the cream of tartar, so care must be taken not to overbeat.

Once the egg whites are beaten, immediately fold them gently but thoroughly into the rest of the mixture.

Bake immediately after mixing.

#### Highlights for Successful Cheesecakes

When using a cookie crust, a little of the butter often leaks out the bottom. Don't decrease the butter, however, because less butter makes it hard to press the cookie crust up the sides of the pan.

Don't be tempted to use the more expensive "natural" specialty cream cheese. Philadelphia brand, available all over the world, or other regional commercial brands, offer the best and most consistent flavor and texture for these cakes. Cream cheese without gums will aerate more, yielding more volume and less creaminess.

If you prefer a less creamy, more firm cheesecake, instead of allowing the cheesecake to cool in the turned-off oven, bake it for a total of 1 hour plus 10 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center registers 147° to 160°F/64° to 70°C and the center bounces back when pressed lightly (the higher temperature will be more firm). With this method, the edges of the cake will have little cracks and be browned. Also, the sides will rise a little but will sink level with the center on cooling.

Keep in mind that to firm, cheesecakes need many hours in the refrigerator before unmolding. But if, before chilling, the center jiggles more than slightly when moved, the cheesecake won't be firm enough even after chilling, so it needs further baking. Bake cheesecakes the day before serving for the best results.

#### Cranberry Crown Cheesecake

Serves: 10 to 12

Baking Time: 45 minutes plus 1 hour with oven off

This creamy, lemony cheesecake is perfectly delicious on its own with no crust or cake, but the crown of ladyfingers provides a beautiful presentation. It also invites decorative and delicious seasonal fruit toppings. For spring or summer, for example, raspberries are a splendid alternative to more wintery cranberries.

The cake base absorbs any liquid from the filling, making the cake more moist and tender. If you use the savoiardi biscuits, the tips will remain crisp. My personal first choice, however, is homemade [Ladyfingers](#).

#### Plan Ahead

Make the cheesecake at least 1 day ahead.





Cheesecake

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
savoirdi biscuits or soft ladyfingers	17 to 19	5.3	150
one 8½-inch biscuit (see <a href="#">Apple Caramel Charlotte</a> ; <a href="#">Angel Food Cake Base Recipe</a> ), ¼ inch thick; or ladyfingers trimmed to fit	.	.	.
cream cheese (65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C)	.	1 pound	454
sugar	1 cup	7	200
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces )	5.3	150
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	47
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
sour cream	3 cups	25.6	726

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2½- to 3-inch springform pan, coated with nonstick cooking spray, set in a slightly larger silicone pan or wrapped with a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil to prevent seepage | One 12 by 2-inch round cake pan or roasting pan to serve as a water bath

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Line the Pan

Cut off a small piece from the rounded bottom edge of the savoirdi or ladyfingers to create a flat bottom. If using savoirdi, they should be 2¾ inches long as they are thicker and displace more of the filling. If using soft ladyfingers, then they should be 2½ inches long. Arrange them in the

pan trimmed end down, attractive sides facing the pan, pressing them gently against the sides of the pan.

Trim and fit a ¼-inch-thick biscuit or angel food cake round into the bottom center of the pan. (You can use the savoiardi or ladyfingers if you cut them in half horizontally.) If necessary, fill in any missing spaces with cake.

Make the Cheesecake Filling

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the cream cheese and sugar on medium-high speed until very smooth, about 3 minutes. Beat in the eggs, beating until smooth and scraping down the sides of the bowl once or twice. Beat in the lemon juice, then the vanilla and salt, until incorporated. Beat in the sour cream just until blended. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the filling into the prepared pan. Set the pan in the larger pan and surround it with 1 inch of very hot water.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 45 minutes, turning the pan halfway around in the oven and covering the cake loosely with aluminum foil after 35 minutes to keep the tips of the savoiardi or ladyfingers from overbrowning. Turn off the oven without opening the door and let the cake cool for 1 hour.

Chill and Unmold the Cake

Remove the pan from the water bath to a wire rack and cool to room temperature, about 1 hour. Cover with a large bowl or plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. To unmold, use a small propane torch to heat the outside of the pan or wipe the sides of the pan with a dish towel run under hot water and wrung out.

Note

If not using the cake base, you can replace the 3 eggs with 6 yolks. This will prevent any watering out of the filling, but it also makes it slightly more firm and less creamy.

Cranberry Crown Topping

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59
sugar	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons	2.6	75
cornstarch	2½ teaspoons	.	.
fresh or frozen cranberries, thawed	1 cup	3.5	100

Make the Cranberry Crown Topping

In a small saucepan, combine the water, sugar, cornstarch, and cranberries and bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Stop stirring, reduce the heat, and simmer for 1 minute, swirling the pan occasionally. The mixture will be thickened but pourable. Allow it to cool to room temperature.

Final Presentation

Up to 6 hours before serving, spoon the cranberry topping evenly on top of the chilled cheesecake. To serve, cut the cheesecake with a knife that has been dipped in hot water and wiped for each slice.

Variation  
Raspberry (or Strawberry) Topping

Up to 6 hours before serving, fill the center of the cheesecake with about 2 pints/1 pound/454 grams raspberries (or hulled small strawberries), pointed ends up. In a microwave (or in a small heavy saucepan over low heat), melt about ¼ cup/2.7 ounces/77 grams currant jelly. Use a small brush to paint it on the berries.

Pure Pumpkin Cheesecake  
Serves: 10 to 12  
Baking Time: 45 minutes plus 1 hour with oven off

I am forever grateful that the editors of Fine Cooking magazine encouraged me to create this glorious pumpkin cheesecake. I had feared that the spices usually associated with pumpkin-flavored desserts would fight with the cream cheese, but then I discovered that using turbinado sugar, with its mild overtones of molasses, and leaving out the spices made it possible to enjoy the true pumpkin flavor. Pecans are a time-honored complement to pumpkin, and the addition of a caramel topping ties all the flavors together so perfectly that this has become one of my very favorite desserts.

Plan Ahead

Make at least 1 day ahead.



Gingersnap Crust

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
pecan halves	½ cup	1.7	50
gingersnaps, preferably Swedish brand, processed to medium crumbs	1 cup crumbs, lightly packed	4.2	120
sugar	1 tablespoon	0.5	12
salt	2 pinches	.	.
unsalted butter, melted (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	4 tablespoons (½ stick)	2	57

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2½- to 3-inch springform pan, coated with nonstick cooking spray, set in a slightly larger silicone pan or wrapped with a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil to prevent seepage | One 12 by 2-inch round cake pan or roasting pan to serve as a water bath

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Toast the Pecans

Spread the pecans evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes to enhance their flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning.

Make the Gingersnap Crust

Place the gingersnap crumbs in a food processor. Add the pecans, sugar, and salt and process until fine crumbs, about 20 seconds. Add the melted butter and pulse ten times just until incorporated. Using your fingers or the back of a spoon, begin by pressing the crumb mixture into the bottom of the pan and partway up the sides. To keep the crumbs from sticking to your fingers, it helps to place a piece of plastic wrap over the crumbs and to press them through the wrap. With a 6-inch round cake pan or a flat-bottomed straight-sided measuring cup, smooth the crumbs over the bottom and at least 1½ inches up the sides. Be sure to press the bottom thoroughly so that the crumbs are evenly distributed.

Note

The crust has the most delicious flavor if you replace the melted butter with 1/3 cup/2.3 ounces/65 grams room-temperature but solidified beurre noisette (see [Clarified Butter and Brownd Butter \(Beurre Noisette\)](#)). If you want to make it for this recipe, you will need to start with 7 tablespoons/3.5 ounces/100 grams unsalted butter. It will take about 1½ hours to cool to a solid consistency.

Pumpkin Filling

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened pumpkin, preferably Libby's	1 cup	8.5	243
turbinado sugar	1 cup	7	200
heavy cream, cold	2 cups (16 fluid ounces)	16.5	464
cream cheese (65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C)	.	1 pound	454
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
about 2 large yolks, at room temperature	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.3	37

Make the Pumpkin Filling

In a small heavy saucepan, stir together the pumpkin and sugar over medium heat and bring the mixture to a sputtering simmer, stirring constantly. Reduce the heat to low and cook, stirring constantly, for 3 to 5 minutes, until thick and shiny. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the mixture into a large food processor and process for 1 minute with the feed tube open.

With the motor of the food processor running, add the cold cream. Add the cream cheese in several pieces and process for 30 seconds, or until smoothly incorporated, scraping down the sides of the bowl two or three times. Add the eggs and yolks and process for about 5 seconds, or just until incorporated. Using the silicone spatula, scrape the filling into the prepared pan. Set the pan in the larger pan and surround it with 1 inch of very hot water.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 45 minutes, turning the pan halfway around in the oven after the first 25 minutes. Turn off the oven without opening the door and let the cake cool for 1 hour.

Chill and Unmold the Cake

Remove the pan to a wire rack and cool to room temperature, about 1 hour. Cover with a large bowl or plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. To unmold, use a small propane torch to heat the outside of the pan or wipe the sides of the pan with a dish towel run under hot water and wrung out.

Caramel Piping Glaze

Makes: a full ½ cup/4.5 fluid ounces/6 ounces/170 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
corn syrup	½ tablespoon	0.3	10
water	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30
heavy cream, heated	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	58
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	1 tablespoon	0.5	14
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Caramel Piping Glaze

Have ready a 1-cup heatproof glass measure, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

In a medium heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, stir together the sugar, corn syrup, and water until all the sugar is moistened. Heat, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the syrup is bubbling. Stop stirring completely and allow the mixture to boil undisturbed until the mixture turns a deep amber (360°F/180°C or a few degrees lower because its temperature will continue to rise). Remove it from the heat and as soon as it reaches temperature, slowly and carefully pour the hot cream into the caramel. It will bubble up furiously. Use a silicone spatula or wooden spoon to stir the mixture gently, scraping the thicker part that settles on the bottom.

Return the pan to very low heat, continuing to stir gently for 1 minute, until the mixture is uniform in color and the caramel is fully dissolved. Remove it from the heat and gently stir in the butter until incorporated. The mixture will be a little streaky but becomes uniform in color once cooled and stirred.

Pour the caramel into the prepared glass measure and allow it to cool for 3 minutes. Gently stir in the vanilla and allow the caramel to cool until no longer warm to the touch, stirring gently three or four times.

The glaze keeps covered for up to 3 days at room temperature and for at least 3 months refrigerated. To reheat: If the caramel is in a heatproof glass container at room temperature, microwave it on high for 1 minute, stirring twice. Alternatively, place the container in a pan of simmering water and heat, stirring occasionally, until warm, about 7 minutes.

Apply the Glaze

For a decorative lacing effect, you can pour the caramel glaze from the glass measure, but for the greatest precision, use a pastry bag fitted with a small decorating tip, or a resealable plastic bag with a very small semicircle cut from one corner.

Variation  
Bourbon Butterscotch Caramel

For a mellow butterscotch quality that is lovely with the pumpkin and pecans, substitute 2 tablespoons bourbon for an equal amount of the cream. Add it with the vanilla. If desired, use an additional ½ cup/1.7 ounces/50 grams lightly toasted pecans for the décor.

Highlights for Success

After the caramel is prepared, do not stir it too much, because this may eventually cause crystallization. However, corn syrup will help to prevent the caramel from crystallizing when stirred. It also lowers the caramelization temperature. I adore the flavor of caramel, so I like to have as much depth of flavor as possible without any burned flavor. I like to bring this caramel up to 360°F/180°C for maximum flavor. Also, the darker you make the caramel, the less sweet it will seem, but you risk burning it if you don't have an absolutely accurate thermometer. A viable alternative is to use a light-colored or transparent silicone spatula so that you can see the color of the caramel as it darkens.

It's best to have the cream hot and the butter at room temperature to avoid splattering when they are added to the hot caramel. Cold cream, however, speeds the cooling and is practical if you are pressured for time, but it must be added very slowly.

Coconut Cheesecake with Coconut Cookie Crust  
Serves: 10 to 12  
Baking Time: 45 minutes plus 1 hour with oven off

If you love coconut and cheesecake, this marriage of the two will send you over the moon! The cream of coconut, embraced by a coconut cookie crust and topped with crunchy toasted coconut flakes, complements the tangy edge of the cheesecake filling.

Plan Ahead

Make the cheesecake at least 1 day ahead of serving.

Coconut Cookie Crust

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
vanilla wafers, processed to medium crumbs	1 cup crumbs, lightly packed	4.2	120
flaked sweetened coconut, preferably Baker's Angel Flake	½ cup	1.5	42
salt	2 pinches	.	.
unsalted butter, melted	3 tablespoons	1.5	42

Special Equipment

One 8 or 9 by 2½- to 3-inch springform pan, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, set in a slightly larger silicone pan or wrapped with a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil to prevent seepage | One 12 by 2-inch round cake pan or roasting pan to serve as a water bath

Make the Coconut Cookie Crust

In a food processor, process the cookie crumbs, coconut, and salt until fine crumbs, about 20 seconds. Add the melted butter and pulse about ten times just until incorporated.

Using your fingers or the back of a spoon, begin by pressing the crumb mixture into the bottom of the cake pan and partway up the sides. To keep the crumbs from sticking to your fingers, it also helps to place a piece of plastic wrap over the crumbs and to press them through the wrap. With a 6-inch cake pan or a flat-bottomed straight-sided measuring cup, smooth the crumbs over the bottom and at least 1½ inches up the sides. Be sure to press the bottom thoroughly so that the crumbs are evenly distributed.

Coconut Filling and Topping

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
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cream cheese (65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C)	.	1 pound	454
sugar	1 cup	7	200
about 8 large egg yolks, at room temperature (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (4.5 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
pure vanilla extract	1¼ teaspoons	.	.
coconut extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
sour cream	2 cups	17	484
cream of coconut (not coconut cream; see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	1 cup, processed before measuring (8 fluid ounces)	10	285
flaked sweetened coconut	½ cup	1.5	42

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Make the Coconut Filling

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the cream cheese and sugar on medium-high speed until very smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl once or twice, about 3 minutes. Gradually beat in the yolks, beating until smooth and scraping down the sides of the bowl once or twice. Add the vanilla, coconut extract, and salt and beat just until incorporated. Beat in the sour cream and cream of coconut just until blended. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the filling into the prepared pan and smooth evenly with a small offset spatula. Set the pan in the larger pan and surround it with 1 inch of very hot water.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 45 minutes, turning the pan halfway around in the oven after the first 25 minutes. Turn off the oven without opening the door and let the cake cool for 1 hour.

Chill and Unmold the Cake

Remove the pan from the water bath and set it on a wire rack to cool to room temperature or just warm, about 1 hour. Cover with a large bowl or plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. To unmold, use a small propane torch to heat the outside of the pan or wipe the sides of the pan with a dish towel run under hot water and wrung out.

Toast the Coconut Topping

Spread the grated coconut on a baking sheet in a single layer and bake for about 5 minutes, or until light brown. Watch carefully to prevent overbrowning. Shortly before serving, strew the coconut on top of the filling.

Notes

If the egg yolks are small, you will need extra. Be sure to measure or weigh them because the yolks are essential for thickening the batter.

Cream of coconut contains solid coconut oil and needs to be processed in the food processor until smooth.

Ginger Cheesecake with Gingerbread Crust  
Serves: 10 to 12  
Baking Time: 1 hour plus 1 hour with oven off

I adore the flavor of ginger in all forms and have long fantasized about the combination of fresh ginger, with its spicy and tangy flavor, and the rich creaminess of my favorite cheesecake base. I put off trying it because I feared the enzymes in the ginger would curdle the filling, but I finally decided to "go for it." Do try, as I did, adding some cardamom, which blends beautifully with the ginger. For the crust, you can purchase gingerbread cookies to make a crumb crust to pat on the bottom and partway up the sides of the pan, or you can make your own gingerbread men and women cookies to encircle the baked cheesecake, and use some of the baked dough to turn into crumbs for the bottom crust.

Plan Ahead

Make the cheesecake at least 1 day ahead.



Gingerbread Cookie Crust for the Bottom  
When making Gingerbread People using the extra cookie dough (see [Gingerbread Cookies](#) )

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
baked gingerbread cookie squares (see <a href="#">Gingerbread Cookies</a> ), processed to fine crumbs	1 cup crumbs, lightly packed	4	115
salt	pinch	.	.
unsalted butter, melted	3 tablespoons	1.5	42

Or  
Gingerbread Cookie Crust for the Bottom and Sides  
When not using Gingerbread People

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
gingersnaps, preferably Swedish brand, or gingerbread cookies	1½ cups crumbs, lightly packed	6	172
salt	large pinch	.	.
unsalted butter, melted	4½ tablespoons	2.2	63

Special Equipment

One 8 or 9 by 2½- to 3-inch springform pan, coated with nonstick cooking spray, set in a slightly larger silicone pan or wrapped with a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil to prevent seepage | One 12 by 2-inch round cake pan or a roasting pan to serve as a water bath.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Make the Gingerbread Cookie Crust

Process the cookies and salt until fine crumbs, about 20 seconds. Add the melted butter and pulse about 10 times just until incorporated.

Using your fingers or the back of a spoon, begin by pressing the crumb mixture into the bottom of the pan. To keep the crumbs from sticking to your fingers, it helps to place a piece of plastic wrap over the crumbs and to press them through the wrap. If not making the gingerbread people, continue to press the crumb mixture with a 6-inch round cake pan or a flat-bottomed straight-sided measuring cup over the bottom and at least 1½ inches up the sides. Be sure to press the bottom thoroughly so that the crumbs are evenly distributed.

Ginger Filling

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
fresh gingerroot	one 6-inch piece	.	.
cream cheese (65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C)	.	1 pound	454
sugar	1 cup	7	200
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
cornstarch	4 teaspoons	.	.
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
sour cream	3 cups	25.6	726
cardamom, freshly ground (optional); see <a href="#">Notes</a>	1/8 plus 1/16 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Ginger Filling

Grate enough ginger into a bowl that you can squeeze out 3 tablespoons/1.7 ounces/50 grams of strained juice (no need to peel). Discard the squeezed grated ginger.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the cream cheese and sugar on medium-high speed until very smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl once or twice, about 3 minutes. Gradually beat in the eggs, beating until smooth and scraping down the sides of the bowl once or twice. Add the cornstarch, vanilla, ginger juice, and salt and beat just until incorporated. Beat in the sour cream just until blended. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the filling into the prepared pan. Set the pan in the larger pan and surround it with 1 inch of very hot water

Bake the Cake

Bake for 1 hour, turning the pan halfway around in the oven after the first 30 minutes. Turn off the oven without opening the door and let the cake cool for 1 hour.

Chill and Unmold the Cake

Remove the pan from the water bath and set it on a wire rack to cool to room temperature or just warm, about 1 hour. Cover with a large bowl or plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. To unmold, use a small propane torch to heat the outside of the pan or wipe the sides of the pan with a dish towel run under hot water and wrung out.

Apply the Gingerbread People

If you made the gingerbread men and women, press them up against the sides of the cake. The moisture of the cake will keep them in place, but to secure them more firmly, you can spread a thin layer of lemon curd, apple jelly, or preserves such as ginger on the back of each cookie.

Notes

Remove the husk and fibers from about 6 cardamom pods. Crush the black seeds in a mortar with a pestle or spice mill until a fine powder. Add only the suggested amount (together with the salt) as more will develop a citruslike flavor rather than a aromatic floral quality.

If you opt to make the gingerbread cookies, you will need about twenty 1½-inch-wide cookies to hold hands around the cake. If your cookie cutter is more narrow, you will need a few more. Also make extra cookies to allow for breakage. Roll any remaining dough into a rectangle, cut into squares, and bake. Use it for the cookie crust.

Gingerbread Cookies

Makes: 20 cookies

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
bleached all-purpose flour	1¾ cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus 4 teaspoons	7.5	212



baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	1/8 teaspoon	.	.
ground ginger	1 teaspoon	.	.
cinnamon	½ teaspoon	.	.
nutmeg	¼ teaspoon	.	.
cloves	1/8 teaspoon	.	.
dark brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons, firmly packed	3.2	91
unsalted butter, refrigerated	6 tablespoons (¾ stick)	3	85
light molasses, preferably Grandma's	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2.7	80
½ egg, lightly beaten	1½ tablespoons	1	25

Special Equipment

Two nonstick, oiled, or buttered cookie sheets | Floured pastry cloth, floured rolling pin sleeve, and rolling pin | Gingerbread men and women cookie cutters, 2 inches high by about 1½ inches wide

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set two oven racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Food Processor Method

In a medium bowl, sift together the flour, baking soda, salt, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. Whisk to mix evenly.

In a food processor, process the brown sugar until fine. Cut the butter into a few pieces and add it with the motor running. Process until smooth and creamy. Add the molasses and egg and process until incorporated, scraping down the sides of the bowl. Add the flour mixture and pulse in just until the dough begins to clump together.

Electric Mixer Method

Soften the butter.

Into a medium bowl, sift together the flour, baking soda, salt, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. Whisk to mix evenly.

In a mixing bowl, cream together the brown sugar and butter until fluffy. Add the molasses and egg and beat until blended. Gradually beat in the flour mixture on low speed until incorporated.

For Both Methods

Scrape the dough onto a sheet of plastic wrap and use the wrap, not your fingers, to press the dough together to form a thick flat disk. Wrap the disk well and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

On a floured pastry cloth, roll out the dough to about 1/8 inch thickness. (The dough can be rolled between sheets of plastic wrap instead of a floured cloth, but you will need to freeze the dough until very firm before and after cutting out the shapes.) Use cookie cutters to cut out about 24 figures, allowing for breakage. You will need 20 in all. (Gather up the dough scraps, knead them together, wrap them in plastic wrap, and refrigerate until ready to roll the cookies for the crust.)

With a small offset spatula or pancake turner, lift the cut dough onto two nonstick, oiled, or buttered cookie sheets, placing the cutouts about 1 inch apart. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes for the small cookies, 10 to 12 minutes for the larger square cookies, or until firm to the touch and just beginning to color around the edges. For even baking, rotate the cookie sheets from front to back halfway through the baking period.

Reroll the remaining dough as above, this time into a rough rectangle. Cut into squares, bake, and use for the cookie crust.

No-Bake Whipped Cream Cheesecake

Serves: 10 to 12

Baking Time: No bake

Before I returned to college to finish my education, I spent two years working at the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey. A co-worker told me about a cheesecake in a local mall that was like eating whipped cream. Though our short lunch break didn't allow enough time for

driving there and back, I risked being fired to rush out and get a piece, consuming it in the car. I was a little late returning, but it was worth it. This cheesecake remained in my taste memory for more than forty years until, finally, I decided to use everything I had learned about dessert techniques and ingredients to try to re-create its impossibly light texture and lovely flavor. I'm not sure if the result is exactly the same—it's hard to match a phantom memory. But quite possibly it's even better.

The secret to achieving this airy texture while maintaining full cheesecake flavor is the whipped cream cheese, which contains neither the added milk nor the added cream of a traditional cheesecake. With less fat, it's easier to aerate. The Italian Meringue contributes a voluptuous airiness.

Fresh cherry coulis (koo-LEE) is a lovely accompaniment, but don't place them on top of the cheesecake because it's too wonderfully light to support a topping!

Plan Ahead

Chill the cheesecake at least 4 hours before serving.

Graham Cracker Crumb Crust

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
graham crackers (1 package; 11 double crackers, 4 7/8 by 2 3/8 inches)	1 1/3 cups crumbs, lightly packed	5.3	151
sugar	2 tablespoons	1	25
salt	2 pinches	.	.
unsalted butter, melted	5 tablespoons (½ stick plus 1 tablespoon)	2.5	71

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2½- to 3-inch springform pan, coated with nonstick cooking spray

Make the Graham Cracker Cookie Crust

In a food processor, process the graham crackers, sugar, and salt until fine crumbs, about 20 seconds. Add the melted butter and pulse about ten times just until incorporated.

Using your fingers or the back of a spoon, begin by pressing the crumb mixture into the bottom of the pan and partway up the sides. To keep the crumbs from sticking to your fingers, it helps to place a piece of plastic wrap over the crumbs and to press them through the wrap. With a 6-inch cake pan or a flat-bottomed straight-sided measuring cup, smooth the crumbs over the bottom and at least 1½ inches up the sides. Be sure to press the bottom thoroughly so that the crumbs are evenly distributed. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

Custard Filling

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
vanilla bean, preferably Tahitian (optional)	2 inches (4 inches if not Tahitian)	.	.
sugar	2 tablespoons	1	25
about 3 large eggs, separated, at room temperature			
yolks	3½ tablespoons (1.2 fluid ounces)	2	56
whites (for the Italian meringue)	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.2	90
powdered gelatin	1 tablespoon	0.3	10
salt	pinch	.	.
crème fraîche	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6	174
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
whipped cream cheese (65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C)		1 pound	454

Make the Custard Filling

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a small mixing bowl.

With a small sharp knife, split the vanilla bean, if using, lengthwise in half.

In a small heavy saucepan, place the sugar. If using the vanilla bean, scrape the seeds into the sugar and rub them in with your fingers. Add the vanilla pod to the pan. Using a silicone spatula, stir in the yolks, gelatin, and salt until well blended.

In another small saucepan over medium heat (or in a heatproof glass measure if using a microwave on high power), scald the crème fraîche, stirring constantly (bring it to the boiling point). Stir a few tablespoons into the yolk mixture; gradually add the remaining crème fraîche, stirring constantly. Heat the mixture on medium heat to just before the boiling point (170°F to 180°F/76° to 82°C), stirring constantly. Steam will begin to appear, and the mixture will be slightly thicker than heavy cream. It will leave a well-defined track when a finger is run across the back of the spatula. Immediately remove it from the heat and pour it into the strainer, scraping up the thickened cream that settles on the bottom of the pan. Remove the vanilla pod. Use the back of a spoon or a silicone spatula to press the custard through the strainer. Allow it to cool to room temperature and then gently whisk in the vanilla. Set a sheet of plastic wrap, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, directly on the surface to prevent a skin from forming. (Do not chill it as it will set the gelatin.)

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, beat the cream cheese and sour cream on medium speed for about 3 minutes until well incorporated. (The cream cheese and sour cream need to be near room temperature to keep the gelatin in the custard from lumping.) With the mixer running, gradually beat in the custard, beating until smooth and creamy. Remove the bowl from the stand, scrape down the sides of the bowl, and stir the custard until evenly incorporated. Set aside briefly or, if you have only one mixer bowl, scrape the mixture into a large bowl and wash the mixer bowl thoroughly.

Italian Meringue

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
3 egg whites (from above), at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.2	90
superfine sugar	¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons, divided	6.2	175
water	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.5	44
cream of tartar	3/8 teaspoon	.	.
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	47

Make the Italian Meringue

Have ready a 2-cup or larger heatproof glass measure.

Pour the egg whites into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, if you have a second mixer bowl, or in a medium bowl and have ready a handheld mixer.

In a small heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, stir together the ¾ cup of sugar and the water and stir until all the sugar is moistened. Heat, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the mixture is bubbling. Stop stirring and reduce the heat to low. (If using an electric range, remove the pan from the heat.)

Beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar, until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Increase the heat under the sugar syrup to medium-high and continue to boil for a few minutes until an instant-read thermometer registers 248° to 250°F/120°C (the firm-ball stage). Immediately transfer the syrup to the glass measure to stop the cooking.

If using a stand mixer, with the mixer off to keep the syrup from spinning onto the sides of the bowl, add the syrup to the egg whites. Begin by pouring in a small amount of syrup. Immediately beat on high speed for 5 seconds. Add the remaining syrup in the same way in three parts. For the last addition, use a silicone spatula to remove the syrup clinging to the glass measure and scrape the syrup against the beater. If it has hardened before most of it has been poured, soften it to pouring consistency for a few seconds in a microwave.

If using a handheld mixer, beat the syrup into the egg whites on high speed in a steady stream. Don't allow the syrup to fall on the beaters or they will spin it onto the sides of the bowl.

Lower the speed to medium and continue beating while adding the lemon juice. Continue beating for 2 minutes. Set the meringue aside to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch or refrigerate it for 5 to 10 minutes, until 70°F/21°C. Whisk it after the first 5 minutes to test and equalize the temperature.

Add the Italian Meringue to the Custard Filling

Using a large silicone spatula, fold about one-quarter of the meringue into the custard filling to lighten it. Then fold in the remaining meringue in two additions. Scrape the filling into the prepared crust and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

Chill and Unmold the Cake

Place a rigid cover such as a pot lid over the top (don't mar the surface) and refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

To unmold, use a small propane torch to heat the outside of the pan or wipe the sides of the pan with a dish towel run under hot water and wrung out. When cutting and serving the cake, some of the crumbs will fall off because both the cake and the crust have a delicate texture. Dip a sharp knife into hot water and dry it before cutting slices of the cake.

Cherry Coulis  
Makes: 1 cup/11.6 ounces/330 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
fresh tart pitted cherries with their juice	1¾ cups	10	280
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
cornstarch	½ tablespoon	.	.
salt	pinch	.	.
pure almond extract	1/8 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Cherry Coulis

In a 1½-quart saucepan, combine the cherries, their juice, the sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Allow them to sit for at least 30 minutes so that the sugar can draw out more of the juices.

Bring the cherry mixture to a boil over medium-low heat, stirring constantly but gently so as not to break up the cherries. Raise the heat to medium and boil for 7 to 10 minutes, or until the liquid and cherries are bright red and the juices are thickened but still fluid. Pour the mixture into a bowl and stir in the almond extract. Allow it to cool to room temperature. Spoon the cherry coulis alongside each slice of cake.

Variation  
Cherry Vanilla Coulis

For added depth of flavor, add 3 tablespoons Madeira, 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, and ½ split vanilla bean in place of the almond extract. For extra richness, at the end of cooking, remove the coulis from the heat and whisk in 2 tablespoons cold butter, ½ tablespoon at a time. Scrape the vanilla seeds into the sauce and rinse and dry the pod for future use.

Lemon Canadian Crown  
Serves: 10 to 12  
Baking Time: No Bake

This stellar frozen dessert is from my dear sister-in-law Jean Beranbaum, who is a great baker. When Elliott and I were first married, I immediately fell in love with his large Canadian family—and with this incredible torte. The lemon cream filling is simply a lemon curd made with whipped cream instead of butter; which freezes without an ice cream maker to a delicious creaminess. The lemon flavor actually seems to intensify after three days in the freezer. With its crown of ladyfingers and magnificent browned meringue topping, it is perfect for a dinner party or any special occasion. You can use packaged soft ladyfingers, but if you make your own (see [Ladyfingers](#)), the texture and flavor will be more ethereal.

Plan Ahead

Freeze the dessert for at least 5 hours or up to 3 weeks ahead.



	Volume	Ounce	Gram
ladyfingers (two 3-ounce packages); see <a href="#">Note</a>	48 fingers	6	170
lemon zest, finely grated	1 teaspoon, loosely packed	.	.
about 5 large eggs, separated, at room temperature			
yolks	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.3	93
whites	½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (5 fluid ounces), divided	5.3	150
turbinado sugar or granulated sugar	1¼ cups	8.7	250
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.6	188
heavy cream	2 cups (16 fluid ounces)	16.5	464
cream of tartar	3/8 teaspoon	.	.
powdered sugar	¼ cup (lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off)	1	28

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2½- to 3-inch loose-bottom or springform pan, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray | One 5 by 31-inch band of double-layer heavy-duty aluminum foil

Line the Pan

For lining the sides of the pan, cut off a small amount from one rounded bottom edge of 23 ladyfingers to create a flat bottom. For the inside bottom of the pan, cut both rounded edges of the ladyfingers. Arrange the ladyfingers in a ring in the pan so that the cut bottom edges are down and the attractive crust sides are against the pan.

Line the bottom of the pan with the remaining ladyfingers, placing them crust side down and cutting or tearing smaller pieces to fit into any gaps. Cover the pan with plastic wrap and place it in the freezer.

Mix the Lemon, Eggs, and Sugar

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a large bowl containing the lemon zest.

In the top of a double boiler over simmering water, whisk together the 5 yolks, 2 of the egg whites (¼ cup/2 fluid ounces/2 ounces/60 grams; refrigerate or freeze the remaining whites for the meringue), the sugar, and lemon juice. (Don't let the bottom of the container touch the water.) Cook, stirring with a whisk, for about 15 minutes, or until the mixture thickens enough to pool slightly on its surface before disappearing into the

mixture. An instant-read thermometer will register 180°F/82°C.

Immediately scrape the mixture into the strainer. Press all of it through with the back of a spoon or a silicone spatula. Stir to incorporate the lemon zest evenly. Allow the mixture to cool completely to the touch, about 1 hour at room temperature, or set in an ice water bath (see [Water Baths](#)), stirring often, for about 15 minutes.

Whip the Cream

In the bowl of a stand mixer, pour the cream and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the whisk beater alongside the bowl.)

Whip the cream, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high, just until thickened and it mounds softly when dropped from a spoon. It will continue to thicken while mixing it with the lemon filling. Using a balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or large spatula, stir about 1 cup of the whipped cream into the lemon filling. Scrape in the remaining whipped cream and gently but thoroughly fold it into the mixture until uniform in color.

Freeze the Torte

Scrape the mixture into the prepared pan but allow the ladyfingers to extend about ½ inch above the filling. Smooth the surface evenly with a small metal spatula. If you have any filling left over, it can be frozen separately. Cover the torte tightly with plastic wrap and freeze it for a minimum of 5 hours or up to 5 days.

Preheat the Oven

Position an oven rack so that the top of the springform pan will be about 3 inches below the broiler. If using an electric broiler, preheat it for a minimum of 10 minutes.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Meringue

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the remaining 3 egg whites (6 tablespoons/3 fluid ounces/3.2 ounces/90 grams) on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Sprinkle the powdered sugar evenly over the surface and continue beating until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the meringue on top of the lemon filling. Using a small metal spatula, spread it evenly right up to the surrounding ladyfingers to keep it from shrinking. Then make swirls and peaks in the meringue.

Place the torte on a baking sheet, set it under the broiler, and, watching it carefully, allow the meringue to turn golden brown. It will take under 1 minute. Remove the torte from the broiler and wrap the pan with the aluminum foil band to protect the meringue. Hold the band in place with a piece of masking tape and then tie a piece of string around the band. Immediately return the torte to the freezer for a minimum of 1 hour or for up to 3 weeks. If freezing longer than 1 hour, cover the top with plastic wrap. It will then need to soften (at room temperature) for 1 to 1½ hours, depending on freezer temperature and room temperature. The ideal temperature to serve the torte is when an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center registers 28° to 32°F/-2° to 0°C. The filling is most delicious when very cold but creamy. You can also slice the unsoftened frozen torte with a hot wet knife and allow the slices to sit for about 30 minutes before serving.

Unmold the Torte

If using a loose-bottom pan, set it on top of a canister smaller than the diameter of the sides so that when pushing down gently on the top of the pan, it can slide away from the torte. If using a springform pan, use a small propane torch to heat the outside of the pan or wipe the sides of the pan with a dish towel run under hot water and wrung out.

Use a thin sharp blade to cut the torte. (There is no need to wet it between slices if the torte has been allowed to soften.) Fresh raspberries or strawberries, and blueberries make a sweet and colorful accompaniment, if desired.

Note

The ladyfingers used for this recipe should be the soft variety found in supermarkets. You could use the Italian savoiardi biscuits, but they will remain crunchy. If making your own [Ladyfingers](#), you will need about nineteen for the sides. Use the round cake or extra ladyfingers as the base.

Ladyfingers

Makes: about 2 dozen 3 by 1½-inch ladyfingers and one 8 inch by ¼-inch round cake base, or a total of about 3½ dozen ladyfingers

Baking Time: 8 to 10 minutes

There is, perhaps, no cake more ethereal, exquisitely plain, or purely delightful as a homemade ladyfinger. I have used ladyfingers as components for several of the recipes here, but they also shine on their own. When I was a child, my grandmother sometimes served them to me with a glass of milk as a special afternoon treat.

Because the delicate piped batter is baked freeform, it must be firm enough to maintain an attractive shape. In order to achieve the ideal consistency, the egg whites must be beaten until very stiff. In past years, overbeating and drying out the whites were a great risk to the smoothness of the batter, but when I discovered that using the ideal amount of cream of tartar enabled me to beat the whites as stiff as possible without their breaking down, making ladyfingers became far less intimidating. Recently, I also discovered that using Wondra flour makes the batter stiffer and easier for it to hold its shape; at the same time, it makes the baked ladyfingers more tender than ever. I encourage you to try it!

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
about 6 large eggs, separated, at room temperature:			
yolks	¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons (3.5 fluid ounces)	4	112
	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.3	180

whites

superfine sugar	¾ cup, divided	5.3	150
warm water	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	.	.
pure vanilla extract	2 teaspoons	.	.
Wondra flour (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1 cup (spooned into the cup and leveled off) plus 1 tablespoon	5.3	150
cream of tartar	¾ teaspoon	.	.
powdered sugar	1 cup (lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off)	4	115

Special Equipment

Two large baking sheets or inverted 17½ by 12¼ by 1-inch half-sheet pans, lined with a nonstick liner, parchment, or aluminum foil and outlined with piping guides (parallel lines drawn 3 inches apart and an 8- to 9-inch circle) | Large pastry bag fitted with a ¾-inch pastry tube

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set two oven racks in the upper and lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 400°F/200°C.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the yolks and ½ cup of the sugar on high speed for 5 minutes, or until very thick and fluffy and when the beater is raised, the mixture falls in ribbons. Lower the speed and beat in the water and vanilla. Raise the speed to high and beat for 30 seconds, or until the mixture thickens again. If you have only one mixer bowl, scrape the mixture into another large bowl. Sift the flour over the yolk mixture without mixing it in and set it aside. Thoroughly wash and dry the bowl and beater.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium-low speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining ¼ cup of the sugar, beating until very stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Add one-third of the meringue to the yolk mixture and, with a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or silicone spatula, fold until all the flour is incorporated. Gently fold in the remaining meringue.

Pipe the Batter

Working quickly so that the batter does not lose volume, scoop 4 cups into the pastry bag and pipe an 8-inch disk for the base. Hold the pastry bag in a vertical (straight up and down) position with the tube at least 1½ inches above the prepared pan. To achieve full height and a rounded shape, allow the batter to fall from the tube without pressing against the pan. Start in the center and use your arm to move the tube in smooth circles. To prevent gaps, allow the spirals of batter to fall against the sides of—almost on top of—the previous spirals. The weight of the batter will cause them to fall exactly in place.

Scoop the remaining batter into the pastry bag and pipe 3 by 1¼- to 1½-inch side-by-side "fingers." Be sure to hold the pastry tube high enough above the surface of the pan so that the batter can fall freely from the tube and not get flattened by the edge of the tube.

Start piping just inside the top guideline and stop shortly before reaching the bottom one, moving the tip slightly forward and up to control the batter flow. If using Wondra flour, the "fingers" should almost be touching. If using cake or all-purpose flour, there should be a ¼-inch space between the "fingers" because they spread sideways as they are piped. (After baking, the ladyfingers will be attached to one another in continuous strips. Each finger will be 1¼ to 1½ inches wide.) Sift the powdered sugar evenly over the fingers. After a few seconds, the batter will absorb some of the sugar. For a pearled effect, sprinkle with a second coat. While baking the batter on the first pan, pipe the remaining batter onto the second pan.

Bake the Disk and Ladyfingers

Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until light golden brown and springy to the touch. Remove the sheets to wire racks and cool slightly. Bake the second batch. To prevent cracking, use a long narrow spatula or pancake turner to remove the ladyfingers from the sheets while still warm. Invert the disk onto a wire rack covered with a paper towel, peel off the liner, and reinvert onto a second wire rack. Cool completely. Ladyfingers will keep wrapped airtight for 1 day at room temperature or for 1 month frozen.

Note

In place of Wondra flour, you can use an equal weight of cake flour (1½ cups) or bleached all-purpose flour (1 1/3 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off.

Highlights for Success

The batter flows very easily so do not squeeze the pastry bag.

To stop the flow of batter, tilt the tube up just before you think it will be necessary.

Work steadily so that the batter can be baked soon after mixing to enable it to retain the maximum air and lightness of texture.



Tiramisù  
Serves: 12 to 14  
Baking Time: No Bake

Years ago, my neighbor and friend Heidi Trachtenberg, who once lived in Italy, asked me if I had ever heard of tiramisù. She laughed when I told her that it sounded like an exotic and lofty mountain peak. It is, in fact, an Italian dessert so "elevating" that its title means "pick me up." This classic dessert—consisting of savoiardi biscuits dipped in espresso and topped with a dreamy custard of egg yolks, mascarpone cheese, and marsala, then sprinkled with cocoa—will never go out of style. The secret to its incomparable texture is heating the custard, making it firm enough to cut into attractive portions and allowing it to freeze impeccably. You can also omit the ladyfingers and serve the custard spooned over fresh figs.

Plan Ahead

Compose the tiramisù at least 6 hours or up to 3 days ahead.

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
about 8 large egg yolks, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (4.5 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
superfine sugar	¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons, divided	6.2	175
sweet marsala	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces), divided	2	58
freshly brewed hot espresso (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	2 cups (16 fluid ounces)	16.6	472
pure vanilla extract	2 teaspoons, divided	.	.
mascarpone, preferably imported (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	2 cups	17.6	500
heavy cream, cold	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232
savoiardi biscuits or ladyfingers	36	10.5	300
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	1 tablespoon	.	.

Special Equipment

One 13 by 9 by 2-inch (about 16 cups) baking pan

Mix the Yolks, Sugar, and Marsala

Refrigerate a mixing bowl for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside.)

Have ready a silicone spatula and medium bowl.

In a large round-bottomed bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water, whisk together the yolks, ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons of the sugar, and 3



tablespoons of the marsala. (Don't let the water touch the bottom of the bowl.) If you have an unlined copper bowl, you can use it directly over a low flame. Copper is very responsive to temperature changes so the risk of curdling is decreased. Whisk constantly until the mixture triples in volume and begins to thicken, 3 to 5 minutes. To prevent scrambling, be careful not to overcook the yolks. An instant-read thermometer will register 165° to 170°F/75°C.

Using the silicone spatula, immediately scrape the mixture into the medium bowl. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes, or until completely cool.

#### Mix the Espresso and Sugar

In another medium bowl, stir together the espresso and ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons of the sugar until dissolved. Stir in 1 teaspoon of the vanilla and the remaining 1 tablespoon of marsala. Pour half the syrup into a shallow pan and reserve the remainder for a second layer of ladyfingers.

#### Mix the Mascarpone and Egg Yolk Mixture

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the mascarpone on low speed for about 10 seconds, or until creamy. Raise the speed slightly and gradually beat in the cooled egg yolk mixture until completely incorporated, scraping the sides of the bowl once or twice with a silicone spatula.

#### Whip the Cream

In the chilled mixing bowl, combine the heavy cream and the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar. Whip the cream, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high, until the cream begins to thicken. Add the remaining 1 teaspoon of vanilla and whip just until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised. With a large silicone spatula, fold the whipped cream into the mascarpone mixture.

#### Compose the Tiramisù

Dip each ladyfinger very quickly in the espresso syrup in the shallow pan, dipping first one side, then the other, taking no longer than about 1 second per side. The goal is to moisten most of the biscuit but maintain a firm texture and a narrow inner core that is without syrup. After each finger is dipped, set it in the pan, forming 3 rows of 6 fingers for the first layer. If necessary, press the fingers slightly to fit them into the pan. You should have less than ½ cup espresso syrup remaining. If you have more, brush the syrup evenly onto the fingers until you have a little less than ½ cup. Add the reserved syrup for the second layer to the remaining syrup in the shallow pan.

Spread half (3 cups) the mascarpone mixture evenly over the fingers. Dip the remaining fingers into the syrup and arrange a second layer on top of the mascarpone mixture. (You should have ½ to ¾ cup of leftover espresso syrup that can be discarded. If you have more, again brush the fingers evenly until no more than ¾ cup remains.) Pour the remaining mascarpone mixture over the top and use a small offset or silicone spatula to spread it evenly.

In a fine-mesh strainer held over the tiramisù, sprinkle the cocoa lightly over the surface, using a small spoon to stir the cocoa in the strainer. (I prefer a light sprinkle, but more cocoa can be added if a thicker coat is desired.) Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 6 hours or up to 3 days before serving. The tiramisù can also be frozen for up to 3 months.

To serve, use a large serving spoon or pancake turner to scoop out portions. For 12 servings, use a knife to score it in thirds the long way and quarters the short way.

#### Variation Chocolate Snowflake Topping

Dark chocolate, 60 percent to 62 percent cacao, is a lovely and sweeter alternative to the cocoa dusting, but it must be grated so finely it melts on the tongue to maintain the harmonious creaminess of the dessert. The chocolate needs to be as hard as possible to grate finely; it must not be warm. You will need 1/3 cup/1 ounce/28 grams grated chocolate. If you have a large block of chocolate, use a melon baller to scrape the chocolate, making short, light strokes that do not cut too deeply into the chocolate. Alternatively, use the coarse holes on a cheese grater to grate the edge of a chocolate bar. Hold the chocolate with a paper towel so that your fingers won't melt the chocolate. Allow the flakes to fall onto a small cool baking sheet. Place the sheet inside a large plastic bag and shake the flakes into the bag. Avoid touching them because they melt very easily. Use a large spoon to lift the chocolate flakes and sprinkle them over the surface of the tiramisù.

#### Note

This recipe requires 8 shots of espresso. Alternatively, you can use ¼ cup/0.5 ounce/15 grams Medaglia D'Oro instant espresso powder. Dissolve it with the sugar in 1 cup boiling water. Remove it from the heat and add 1 cup cold water, the vanilla, and the remaining 1 tablespoon of marsala.

#### Highlights for Success

This filling is actually very similar to Bavarian cream (see [Apple Caramel Charlotte](#)). The essential difference is that about two-thirds the volume of thick slightly tangy mascarpone, which is a triple cream cheese, replaces the usual milk. No gelatin is required to thicken it.

I like to flavor each component so that it would be delicious on its own and also blend perfectly with the others. For example, I sweeten the espresso syrup to the point that the coffee is just bitter enough to temper the sweetness of the savoiardi. The dusting of cocoa, however, is so fine that it merges beautifully with the biscuits.

Sybil's Pecan Torte with Coffee Cream  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

Sybil Zashin, Elliott's and my honorary cousin, offered this terrific traditional Passover dessert, a delicious combination of pecans and coffee. The cake is spongy and exceptionally moist and dense, with an unusually high proportion of pecans. Light toasting really brings out their unique flavor. Nielsen-Massey (see [Ingredients Sources](#)) makes a pure coffee extract that is the essence of coffee flavor.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
superfine sugar	¾ cup, divided	5.3	150
pecan halves	2¼ cups	8	225
coffee extract (or instant espresso powder, preferably Medaglia D'Oro)	2 tablespoons (or 1 tablespoon)	.	.
7 large eggs, separated, at room temperature:			
yolks	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.6	130
whites	¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (7 fluid ounces)	7.5	210
cream of tartar if not for Passover (optional)	¾ plus 1/8 teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

One 9 by 2½- to 3-inch springform pan, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round. Do not grease the sides.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Divide the Sugar

In a small bowl, place ¼ cup of the sugar for the nuts. In another small bowl, place 2 tablespoons of the sugar for the meringue. In the bowl of a stand mixer, place the remaining ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar.

Toast and Grind the Pecans

Spread the pecans evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes to enhance their flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely. In a food processor, pulse the pecans with ¼ cup sugar and espresso powder, if using, in long bursts until very fine. Stop before the pecans start becoming oily or pasty. Empty them into a medium bowl.

Mix the Yolk Mixture

In the bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, add the yolks to the sugar and beat on high speed for 5 minutes, or until very thick and fluffy and when the beater is raised the mixture falls in ribbons.

Detach the whisk from the mixer and use it to fold the pecan mixture and the coffee extract, if using, into the batter until evenly mixed. If you don't have a second mixer bowl, scrape this mixture into a large bowl and thoroughly wash, rinse, and dry the mixer bowl and whisk beater to remove

any trace of oil.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar, if using. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar and beat until stiff peaks form when the whisk is raised slowly. If not using cream of tartar, stop beating just before stiff peaks to prevent overbeating. The peaks should curve over slightly when the beater is raised.

Make the Batter

Add about one-quarter of the meringue to the yolk mixture and, with a large balloon whisk or the whisk beater, fold until completely incorporated. Gently fold in the remaining meringue in three parts. For the last addition, be sure there are no white streaks of meringue in the batter. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and, using a small offset spatula or silicone spatula, spread the surface evenly. The batter will fill the pan half full.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until the cake is springy to the touch when pressed very lightly in the center. An instant-read thermometer will register 185°F/85°C. In a 2½-inch-high pan, the batter will have risen to the top of the pan.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Immediately invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Leave it undisturbed until the pan feels completely cool to the touch. Reinvert the pan. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and remove the sides of the pan. Invert the cake onto a flat plate and remove the pan bottom and parchment. Reinvert it onto a serving plate. There will be a 3/8-inch depression to fill with coffee cream.

Coffee Cream  
Makes: 2 cups/9 ounces/256 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
heavy cream, cold	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232
superfine sugar	2 tablespoons	1	25
coffee extract (or Medaglia D'Oro instant espresso powder)	1 teaspoon (or ½ teaspoon)	.	.
water	4 teaspoons	.	.
powdered gelatin (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	¼ teaspoon	.	.
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Coffee Cream

In a mixing bowl, combine the cream, sugar, and espresso powder, if using, and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside the bowl.)

In a 1-cup heatproof glass measure, place the water and gelatin. Allow the mixture to soften for 5 minutes. Set the measure in a pan of simmering water and stir occasionally until the gelatin is dissolved. (This can be done in a microwave on high power, stirring once or twice.)

Remove the cup from the water and cool the mixture to room temperature, about 7 minutes. (It can be held longer but should be covered to prevent evaporation.) The gelatin must be liquid but not warm when added to the cream.

Whip the cream mixture, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, just until traces of the beater marks begin to show distinctly. Add the gelatin mixture in a steady stream, whipping constantly. Add the vanilla and coffee extract, if not using the espresso powder, and whip just until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised. To avoid the risk of overwhipping, when almost stiff enough, remove the beaters and use them, or a whisk, to finish whipping by hand.

Immediately swirl the cream into the depression on top of the cake or scrape it into a bowl to pass on the side. The cake can be presented upside down or top side up. It's lovely no matter how you slice it. The completed cake can be refrigerated overnight and will keep at room temperature for several hours.

Note

If filling it with the coffee cream several hours ahead, it is especially important to add the gelatin to keep it from watering out.

Chocolate Feather Bed  
Serves: 16  
Baking Time: 16 minutes

Slim layers of flourless mousseliike chocolate cake filled with whipped ganache conspire to give the impression of diving into a downy-soft feather bed. Though light in texture, especially when served at room temperature, this cake is intensely chocolaty.

You will need to make two batches of this batter to produce this 11½ by 8 by 1½-inch four-layer cake.

Plan Ahead

Make the ganache at least 2 hours before using.



Batter

Make 2 Batches

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 53% to 62% cacao, chopped	.	4	113
superfine sugar	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons, divided	2.6	75
about 6 large eggs, separated, at room temperature:			
yolks	¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons (3.5 fluid ounces)	4	112
whites	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.3	180
cream of tartar	¾ teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

Two 17¼ by 12¼ by 1-inch half-sheet pans, coated with shortening and lined with parchment, leaving a 2-inch overhang on the short sides, coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Melt the Chocolate

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the

top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Allow it to cool completely until no longer warm to the touch but still fluid.

### Beat the Yolks and Sugar

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the sugar with the yolks on high speed for 5 minutes, or until very thick and fluffy and when the beater is raised the mixture falls in ribbons. Scrape in the chocolate and beat on medium speed, scraping the sides of the bowl as needed, until evenly incorporated. Be sure to reach into the bottom of the bowl to incorporate any chocolate that may be left on the bottom. If you have only one mixer bowl, scrape the mixture into a large bowl and thoroughly wash and dry the mixer bowl and whisk beater. There must be no grease in the bowl in order to enable the egg whites to become aerated when beaten.

### Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the beater off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Raise the speed to medium-high and gradually beat in the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar, beating until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Detach the whisk beater and use it to fold one-quarter of the meringue into the chocolate mixture to lighten it. Gently fold in the remaining meringue. Finish folding with a large silicone spatula and scrape the mixture into 1 of the prepared pans and spread the surface evenly with an offset spatula.

### Bake each Cake

Bake for 16 minutes. The cake will have puffed and lost its shine and springs back when pressed lightly in the center. (Mix the batter for the second layer shortly before the first cake has finished baking so that it is ready to bake soon after the first cake comes out of the oven.)

### Unmold, Cool, and Stack the Cake Layers

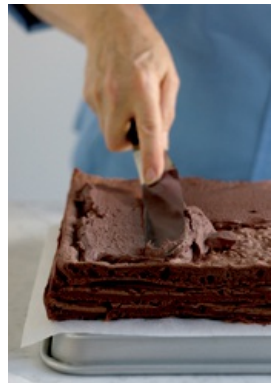
As they come out of the oven, set the pans on wire racks, cover them with clean dry towels, and allow them to cool completely.

Remove the towels and use a small metal spatula or knife to dislodge any cake that may have attached itself to the sides of the pans.

Gently pull the parchment away from around the edges of the cake to release them from the parchment. Carefully lift one cake layer by the short end of the parchment overhang and slide it on top of the other cake layer. The bottom layer will be sandwiched between the parchment it baked on and the parchment of the second layer. Cover the stacked layers with plastic wrap or a towel. Set the pan in the refrigerator to firm for 30 to 45 minutes while you make the ganache. (The layers are much less fragile and easier to handle when cold.)

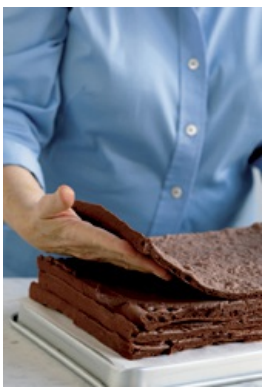


Lifting a layer



Spreading ganache on the third layer





Stacking the top layer  
Light Whipped Ganache Filling and Topping  
Makes: 4 cups/23.3 ounces/660 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 53% to 62% cacao, chopped .		8	227
heavy cream	2 cups (16 fluid ounces)	16.5	464
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
dark chocolate (for curls or grating)	small thick block	1	28

Make the Light Whipped Ganache Filling and Topping

In a food processor, process the chopped chocolate until very fine.

In a 2-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), scald the cream (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will appear around the periphery).

With the motor running, pour the cream through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Pour the mixture into the bowl of a stand mixer and refrigerate until cold, stirring every 30 minutes for 1¾ to 2 hours. Alternatively, set the bowl in an ice water bath (see [Water Baths](#)) and stir frequently. Do not allow the mixture to get too cold or it will be too stiff to incorporate air. The ideal temperature is 65° to 68°F/20°C.

In the chilled bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, add the vanilla to the cream mixture and beat on low speed for about 30 seconds, or just until the mixture forms very soft floppy peaks when the beater is raised. It will continue to thicken after a few minutes at room temperature. The safest way to prevent overbeating is to use the stand mixer until the ganache starts to thicken and then continue by hand with a whisk. Overbeating causes curdling. If the mixture is overbeaten and grainy, it can be restored by remelting, chilling, and rebeating the ganache.

Variations  
Quick Light Whipped Ganache

If you want the whipped ganache and can't wait for the mixture to chill, the following method will yield the same results, but it involves a little more work. First, refrigerate the bowl of a stand mixer and the whisk beater for at least 15 minutes.

In the top of a double boiler over simmering water, stirring often (or in a microwaveable bowl on high, stirring every 10 seconds), melt the chocolate pieces with ½ cup of the cream. Remove the pan from the heat before the chocolate is fully melted and finish melting by stirring it constantly with a silicone spatula. Set the mixture aside until it is no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid.

In the chilled bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, whip the remaining 1½ cups of cream on medium-high speed until traces of the beater marks just begin to show distinctly. Scrape in the chocolate mixture and vanilla and beat just until the cream mounds softly when dropped from a spoon.

Trim the Cakes

Remove the pan from the refrigerator. Remove the plastic wrap or towel and, using the parchment overhangs, lift each layer onto a work surface. Using a long serrated knife, trim about ¼ inch from all four sides of each cake layer. (Cover and save the trimmings, in case you need them for patching the cake.) With the serrated knife or sharp shears, cut each layer, including the parchment, into two rectangles of equal width.

With a long metal spatula, preferably offset, dislodge the cake layers from the parchment by sliding it gently between the parchment and the cake layer, pressing firmly against the parchment to avoid cutting into the cake. If at any point the layers soften, chill again until firm. Leave the layers on the parchment and restack them. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and chill for up to 12 hours until ready to compose the cake.

Compose the Cake

Spread a little ganache on a serving plate or a cardboard rectangle covered with decorative foil. Slide your hands under the cake as much as possible to support it and carefully set the first layer on top of the plate. If sufficiently chilled, the layers will be firm enough to lift with your hands.

Spread about 1 cup of the ganache on top of the layer (about 1/8 inch thick), repeat with the next two layers, and top the fourth layer with the remaining ganache. To spread the ganache, use two metal spatulas, one to lift the frosting from the other in order to keep the ganache from pulling off the crust and coming away from the cake while spreading. Be gentle so as not to compress the cake. Leave the sides of the cake bare. Use the block of dark chocolate to make curls (see [Chocolate Curls](#)) or to grate evenly and heavily over the ganache. With a bench scraper, lift any that falls on the work surface. Touching the chocolate with your fingers will melt it immediately on contact. The cake keeps for 1 day at room temperature and for up to 3 days refrigerated.

Use a long serrated or thin-bladed sharp knife to cut the cake into quarters in each direction, forming 16 pieces. If the cake has been refrigerated, run the blade under hot water between each cut. The texture is softest and the flavors fullest when the cake is at room temperature.

For a visually striking constrast and more delicate flavor, replace the light whipped ganache with a double recipe of [Gelatin-Stabilized Whipped Cream](#).

Highlights for Success

Note for commercial bakers or home bakers with a large oven or double ovens: It's fine to double the batter and make both layers at the same time or to use a full-sheet pan (17 by 24 inches). Baking time will be about 20 minutes. If dividing the double batter between two pans, use about 16 ounces/454 grams of batter in each pan.

The temperature of the ganache mixture is critical when beating. If not cold enough, it will not stiffen; if too cold, it will not aerate well.

Hungarian Jancsi Torta  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 35 to 45 minutes

There is nothing more treasured than an old family recipe, and this delicious one was created by the Hungarian great grandmother of wine writer Paul Lukacs (son of the famed Hungarian historian John Lukacs) and given to me by his wife, Marguerite Thomas. Since Marguerite is like a sister to me, and I am one-quarter Hungarian, I feel a personal attachment to it. The Jancsi (YAHNsee) is intensely chocolate and moist, with little specks of chocolate and a wonderful crunch from walnuts. Although Marguerite frosts the cake with a rich dark chocolate frosting such as ganache, I also like it either unadorned or with a thin gilding of apricot or sour cherry preserves, and sometimes topped with [Light Whipped Ganache Filling and Topping](#).



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
superfine sugar	¾ cup, divided	5.3	150
walnut halves	1½ cups	5.3	150
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, cold, chopped		5	142

about 8 large eggs, separated, at room temperature:

yolks	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (4.5 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
whites	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.5	240
cream of tartar	1 teaspoon	.	.

## Special Equipment

One 9 by 3-inch springform pan, encircled with 2 cake strips overlapped to cover the entire sides, bottom coated with shortening, topped with a parchment round, then coated with baking spray with flour. If the pan is less than 3 inches high, line it with parchment (see [Catalán Salt Pinch Cake](#)).

## Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

## Divide the Sugar

In a small bowl, place 2 tablespoons of the sugar for the nuts. In another small bowl, place 2 tablespoons of the sugar for the meringue. In the bowl of a stand mixer, place the remaining ½ cup of sugar.

## Toast and Grind the Walnuts

Spread the walnuts evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes to enhance their flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Turn them out onto a clean dish towel and roll and rub them around to loosen the skins. Break the walnuts into a bowl, scraping off and discarding as much of the skin as possible. Cool completely. In a food processor, pulse the walnuts with 2 tablespoons of the reserved sugar in long bursts until very fine. Stop before the walnuts start becoming oily or pasty. Empty them into a medium bowl.

## Grate the Chocolate

In the same bowl of the food processor, process the chocolate until very fine but not beginning to melt and clump together. Scrape the chocolate into the bowl with the walnuts and combine with a fork.

## Mix the Yolk Mixture

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, add the yolks to the sugar and beat on high speed for 5 minutes, or until very thick and fluffy and when the beater is raised the mixture drops in ribbons.

Detach the whisk from the mixer and use it to fold the chocolate mixture into the batter until evenly mixed. If you don't have a second mixer bowl, scrape this mixture into a large bowl and thoroughly wash, rinse, and dry the mixer bowl and whisk beater in order to remove any trace of oil.

## Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually add the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar and beat until stiff peaks form when the whisk is raised slowly.

## Make the Batter

Add about one-quarter of the meringue to the yolk mixture and, with a large silicone spatula, fold it in until completely incorporated. Gently fold in the remaining meringue in three parts. For the last addition, be sure there are no white streaks of meringue in the batter. Using the silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan and spread the surface evenly with a small offset spatula. The batter will fill the pan half full.

## Bake the Cake

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, or until the cake springs back when pressed very lightly in the center. An instant-read thermometer will register 200°F/90°C. The batter will have risen in the center to a little above the top of the pan.

## Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 5 minutes. It will sink about ½ inch at the sides and, on cooling, form about a ½-inch crater in the center—perfect for filling. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and remove the sides of the pan. Allow it to cool until it is warm or room temperature before inverting onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Remove the pan bottom and parchment and reinvert the cake onto a serving plate. It's delicious still warm, but if topping with ganache, cool completely.

## Décor

For the most attractive slices, cut the cake into individual pieces with a thin sharp knife that has been dipped in hot water and wiped dry. If the cake has been refrigerated, cut it while it is still cold. But for the lightest texture and fullest flavor, allow it to sit at room temperature for at least 20 minutes before serving. To add extra richness, heat ½ cup/5.6 ounces/160 grams of apricot or sour cherry preserves in a microwave or saucepan over medium-low heat just until fluid and spoon it over the cake. Or take 1 cup/8.6 ounces/244 grams of [Whipped Cream](#) and dollop soft mounds onto individual pieces and grate dark chocolate over them.

## Highlights for Success

If you prefer to use a higher percentage bittersweet chocolate, it's fine to reduce the sugar to 2/3 cup/4.7 ounces/132 grams.



Chilling the chocolate before grating helps to maintain fine dry particles. This is necessary to keep them suspended in the flourless batter.

The cake strips work particularly well for this cake because the sides have a tendency to become dry without them.

Le Succès  
Serves: 12  
Baking Time: 15 to 20 minutes

When I was translating *La Passion du Chocolat*, I asked "Papa" (Maurice) Bernachon which was his favorite dessert. I suspect he said he loved this recipe because his mother made it for him when he was a child and he enjoyed its simplicity, along with the perfect marriage of almonds and dark chocolate and the beauty of its clean and elegant lines. The Bernachon tea ganache provides a sharp floral background flavor against the dark chocolate. This ganache is thicker than usual, using a little more chocolate than cream; it blends better with the texture of the thin layers of the succès (souk-SAY), making it seem almost like a candy. You can substitute [Raspberry Ganache](#), and in berry season you can top it with fresh raspberries instead of cocoa.

Plan Ahead

Make and compose the cake 1 day ahead. Make the ganache several hours before using.



Succès

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sliced almonds, blanched	2 cups	6.3	180
superfine sugar	¾ cup plus 2½ tablespoons, divided	6.3	180
7 large egg whites, at room temperature	¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (7 fluid ounces)	7.5	210
cream of tartar	1 teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

Two 17-inch or larger flat baking sheets or inverted 17¼ by 12¼ by 1-inch half-sheet pans, buttered and floured or lined with parchment coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray or baking spray with flour, or lined with a nonstick baking mat such as Silpat | Pastry bag fitted with a large plain ½-inch pastry tube or a resealable plastic bag with one corner cut off in a curve to make a round opening for the pastry tube

Mark the Circles

You will need to mark the pans with three 8-inch circles. One of the pans will hold two circles, the other will hold one. If using parchment, use a pencil or pen and the bottom of an 8-inch round cake pan to trace the circles. Turn the side with the markings over to face the pan. Attach it to the

pan with a little shortening or a light spritz of nonstick cooking spray. If using a nonstick baking mat, mark the 8-inch circles by placing some flour or unsweetened cocoa powder on a plate and lightly dipping the rim of an 8-inch round cake pan or cake ring into it. Firmly tap the cake pan down on the mat to mark the circles and lift it straight up.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Grind the Almonds

In a food processor, process the almonds and ¾ cup of the sugar until very finely ground.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining 2½ tablespoons of sugar until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. (If the whites are not very stiff, the succès will spread slightly during baking.)

Detach the whisk beater and remove the bowl from the stand. Using the whisk beater or a large balloon whisk, quickly but gently fold in the grated almond mixture in three parts, deflating the meringue as little as possible.

Pipe the Disks

Fill the pastry bag or resealable plastic bag with meringue and pipe the batter onto the prepared baking sheets to form three 8-inch circles, starting at the perimeter and spiraling inward toward the center (see [Ladyfingers](#), piping spirals with batter for ladyfingers—it's the same technique). Because the disks will puff and expand up to ½ inch in diameter when baking, take care that you do not pipe them too close to the edge of the pan to avoid spreading over the edge. Use a small offset spatula to fill in any gaps with leftover batter and to smooth the surface. Pipe all three circles, then set aside the pan with only one disk while the first pan bakes. The batter will not spread during this time.

Bake the Succès

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or just until the disks begin to brown. Rotate the pan front to back in the oven halfway through the baking time to ensure even baking.

Cool the Succès

Place the baking sheet on a wire rack and bake the third disk on the second pan.

Loosen the succès from the sheets by carefully running a thin pie server or a long offset spatula underneath them. They will be quite soft at this point and can tear, so be gentle when loosening them. Make sure that you loosen them in the centers, not just around the edges. Allow them to cool completely on the sheets before transferring them to a work surface or serving plate. They will shrink back to their original size or slightly smaller when cooled. They will be approximately 1/8 inch thick. To obtain a perfect circle, if desired, invert an 8-inch round cake pan over the succès and trim any excess with a sharp knife.

Tea Ganache  
Makes: 3¼ cups/30.5 ounces/865 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped	.	1 pound	454
crème fraîche	1 2/3 cups (13.2 fluid ounces)	13.6	385
heavy cream	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces)	2.7	77
instant powdered lemon tea	4 teaspoons	.	.
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder (optional)	.	.	.

Make the Tea Ganache

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

In a 2-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a medium saucepan on medium heat, stirring often), whisk together the crème fraîche and cream and scald it (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream mixture through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Pulse in the instant powdered tea. Scrape the ganache into a glass bowl and let it sit for 1 hour. Cover it with plastic wrap and allow it to cool for several hours, or until the mixture reaches frosting consistency. The ganache keeps for 3 days at room temperature, for 3 weeks refrigerated, and for 6 months frozen.

Compose the Succès

Spread a little ganache on an 8-inch cardboard round or serving plate and set one disk of succès on top. Carefully spread an even layer of the ganache over the top (a slightly rounded ¾ cup). Place the second disk flat side up on top. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Spread on another layer of the ganache (again, be careful to spread it evenly) and place the third disk flat side up on top of that. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for another hour. Using a long metal spatula, spread some of the remaining ganache in a thin layer around the sides, filling in any gaps as well. Then spread the remainder evenly on top of the succès.

For a decorative design, run the back of a spoon in a circular pattern around the top surface of the ganache starting at the center. If desired, place the cocoa in a fine-mesh strainer and sprinkle it evenly over the top. Slice with a long serrated knife. The succès will keep wrapped airtight for 5 days refrigerated. Allow it to come to room temperature at least 2 hours before serving.

Zach's La Bomba  
Serves: 8 to 10  
Baking Time: 15 minutes

The stunning lacquer glaze on this chocolate blackberry mousse cake has its origins in Japan. The secret to its shine is simply gelatin. My version came from the renowned pâtissier Sugino-san, whose bakery is in Tokyo. Zach Townsend's is adapted from La Petite Rose in Paris, where its patissière is also from Japan. She uses it to glaze her signature cake, Le Valentin. Together, Zach and I perfected this glorious glaze, which is used in three other cakes in this book. Zach used it to re-create his version of Le Valentin—La Bomba. He chose to decrease the gelatin so that the glaze will rest more lightly on the delicate mousse filling and will maintain the smoothest possible surface.

There are many components to this mousse cake, but the billowy blackfruit tea sabayon filling and tart tang of the blackberries are so compelling that it's well worth the effort.

Plan Ahead

Mold and freeze the mousse at least 8 hours ahead. Unmold and glaze the cake at least 2 hours ahead.



Flourless Chocolate Mousse Cake

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 53% to 62% cacao, chopped	.	6	170
about 6 large eggs, separated, at room temperature:			
yolks	¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons (3.5 fluid ounces)	4 ounces	112 grams
whites	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.3 ounces	180 grams
superfine sugar	½ cup, divided	3.5	100
cream of tartar	¾ teaspoon	.	.

unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder

Special Equipment

One 17¼ by 12¼ by 1-inch half-sheet pan, coated with shortening or nonstick cooking spray, lined with parchment (extending slightly over the short edges), coated with baking spray with flour | One 6-cup (48 fluid ounces) silicone bombe mold or glass bowl, coated with nonstick cooking spray. (If using silicone, wipe out the excess cooking spray with a piece of plastic wrap.)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F/190°C.

Melt the Chocolate

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Cool completely, until no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid.

Beat the Yolks and Sugar

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the yolks with ¼ cup of the sugar on high speed for 5 minutes, or until very thick and fluffy and when the beater is raised the mixture falls in ribbons. Using a silicone spatula, scrape in the chocolate and beat on medium speed, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed, until evenly incorporated. If you have only one mixer bowl, scrape the mixture into a large bowl and thoroughly wash and dry the mixer bowl and whisk beater. There must be no grease in the bowl so that the egg whites can become aerated when beaten.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the beater off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Raise the speed to medium-high and gradually beat in the remaining ¼ cup of sugar, beating until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Detach the whisk beater and use it to fold one-quarter of the meringue into the chocolate mixture to lighten it. Gently fold in the remaining meringue in two additions. Finish folding with a large silicone spatula and scrape the mixture into the prepared pan and spread the surface evenly with an offset spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 15 minutes. The cake will have puffed and lost its shine, and springs back when pressed lightly in the center.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Set the pan on a wire rack. Run a small metal spatula between the long sides of the pan and the cake. Let the cake cool for 5 minutes.

Set a large piece of parchment on a work surface. Dust the top of the cake well with cocoa. Turn the pan upside down on the parchment by setting one long side onto the parchment and then quickly flipping the other side over. Lift up the pan and then gently peel the parchment off the bottom of the cake. Cool completely.

Meanwhile, measure the inside diameter of the top of the bowl you will be using to mold the mousse. If you have a pot lid of the same size, you can use it as a template. Alternatively, make a template from a piece of cardboard.

When the cake is cool, cut out two cake rounds. Remove the scraps from around the circles. (They make a delicious small trifle if you layer them in a bowl with softly whipped cream and raspberries.) Cut away the parchment so that only a small border remains around the cake circles. Wrap the circles in plastic wrap and store one for future use (it can be placed in a freezer-weight storage bag and frozen for several weeks). Refrigerate the other for at least an hour to firm and make it easy to transfer to the mousse filling.

Blackberry Mousse Filling  
Makes: 5½ to 5¾ cups/24 ounces/680 grams  
Blackfruit Tea Sabayon  
Makes: 3 cups/9.6 ounces/271 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
black currant or blackberry tea	1 tablespoon loose leaf or 1 teabag		
water	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.3	236
Valrhona Manjari dark chocolate, 64% cacao, or any fine-quality dark chocolate, 60% to 64% cacao, chopped		2	56
heavy cream	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	29

about 4 large egg yolks	¼ cup plus ½ tablespoon (2.2 fluid ounces)	2.6	74
superfine sugar	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons	2.6	75
salt	pinch	.	.

### Brew the Tea

Have ready a tea ball or two heatproof glass measures and a fine-mesh strainer.

Place the loose leaf tea in the the tea ball or the glass measure. In a small saucepan, or in a second glass measure in the microwave, heat the water to very hot (195°F/90°C). Do not let it boil in order to avoid making the tea bitter. Pour the hot water over the loose leaf tea in the glass measure or steep the tea ball or teabag in the water for 4 minutes, no longer, as the tea could become bitter if it steeps too long. If not using a tea ball or tea bag, strain the tea into the glass measure used to heat the water and discard the leaves. You will have approximately 1 cup of tea, but you will need only ¼ cup for this recipe. (The remaining tea is delicious to drink.)

### Melt the Chocolate with the Cream

In a small microwavable bowl (or in the top of a double boiler over hot, not simmering, water—don't let the bottom of the container touch the water), heat the chocolate and cream. Stir often with a silicone spatula until almost completely melted. If using the microwave, stir every 15 seconds.

Remove the chocolate mixture from the heat and continue stirring until the mixture is smooth. Set aside in a warm spot.

### Make the Sabayon

In a medium saucepan, bring about 1 inch of water to a simmer over medium-high heat. In a medium glass bowl, whisk the yolks, sugar, and salt until well blended and lightened. Set the bowl over the simmering water (make sure that the bottom of the bowl does not touch the water) and whisk very briskly, preferably with a piano wire whisk (one with 10 to 12 fine wire loops), to incorporate as much air as possible. While whisking, slowly pour in the ¼ cup tea. Be sure to whisk against the sides of the bowl so that the outside edges don't overcook. Continue to whisk vigorously until the mixture has doubled in volume to a thick foam, about 5 minutes. When it falls from the whisk, the sabayon will maintain some body before sinking back into itself. An instant-read thermometer should register 170°F/76°C.

Remove the bowl from the heat and, with the whisk, gently stir and fold in the warm chocolate mixture until the chocolate is evenly distributed throughout (make sure to maintain as much of the mixture's volume as possible).

Set the bowl in a larger bowl filled with ice water. Gently fold the outside edges of the sabayon into the center two or three times as it cools. It will take about 20 minutes to cool to room temperature. If you are not ready to use it, you can cover it with plastic wrap and refrigerate for about 1 hour.

### Completed Blackberry Mousse Filling

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
blackberries, fresh or frozen	2 cups	7	200
powdered gelatin	1 teaspoon	.	.
Valrhona Manjari dark chocolate, 64% cacao, or any fine-quality dark chocolate, 60% to 64% cacao, chopped	.	3	84
heavy cream, cold	1 cup (8 fluid ounces), divided	8.2	232
sugar	¼ cup	1.7	50
Blackfruit Tea Sabayon	3 cups	9.5	271

### Make the Blackberry Puree

Refrigerate a stand mixer bowl and whisk beater for at least 15 minutes.

If the berries are frozen, allow them to defrost. Drain and reserve the juices. In a food processor, puree the blackberries.

Press the pureed berries through a fine-mesh strainer. You should have ½ cup/4 fluid ounces/4 ounces/115 grams of puree. If using frozen berries, add as much of the juices as necessary to equal this amount.

Mix the Puree and Gelatin

In a small heatproof bowl (microwavable, if using a microwave), stir together the gelatin and about two-thirds of the puree and let the mixture sit for 5 minutes. If the gelatin sits longer, cover it tightly with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation. In a microwave, stirring every 5 seconds, or in a saucepan sitting in simmering water, stirring often to melt the gelatin, heat the mixture just until hot but not beginning to boil. Remove the container from the heat and gently stir in the remaining puree. Set aside or cool in the refrigerator for just a few minutes, or until no longer warm to the touch.

Melt the Chocolate with the Cream

In a medium microwavable bowl (or in the top of a double boiler over hot, not simmering, water—don't let the bottom of the container touch the water), heat the chocolate and ¼ cup of the cream. Stir often with a silicone spaula until almost completely melted. If using the microwave, stir every 15 seconds. Remove the chocolate mixture from the heat and continue stirring until the mixture is smooth. Set aside until no longer warm to the touch.

Complete the Blackberry Mousse Filling

In the chilled mixer bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, whip the remaining ¾ cup of cream and the sugar, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it begins to thicken, just until traces of the beater marks begin to show distinctly. Add the chocolate mixture and beat just until soft peaks form when the beater is raised.

Detach the whisk beater and remove the bowl from the stand. With the whisk beater or a large balloon whisk, fold in the cooled blackberry puree until thoroughly combined, reaching to the bottom of the bowl.

Add the cooled sabayon and fold in gently until fully incorporated. The mousse will become thinner, but it will still have a good deal of body and air. Use a silicone spatula to finish folding.

Mold and Freeze the Mousse

Place the prepared bowl upright on a flat surface. Scrape the mousse into the bowl and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula. Place the prepared chocolate cake circle on top, pressing it down slightly. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place it in the freezer for at least 8 hours or up to 24 hours.

Lacquer Glaze

Makes: 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon/8.5 fluid ounces/10.6 ounces/300 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
cold water	2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons (just under 1.5 fluid ounces)	1.5	39
powdered gelatin	1 1/8 teaspoons	.	.
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59
corn syrup	1 tablespoon	0.7	21
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	2/3 cup (sifted before measuring)	1.7	50
heavy cream	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	58

Make the Lacquer Glaze

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium metal bowl.

In a small bowl, pour in the 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons cold water and sprinkle the gelatin over the top. Stir to moisten and soften the gelatin and allow it to sit for a minimum of 5 minutes. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and set aside.

In a small heavy saucepan, whisk together the sugar and ¼ cup water over medium heat. Stir constantly with the whisk to dissolve the sugar.

Remove the pan from the heat and, with the whisk, gently stir in the corn syrup and then the cocoa until smooth, making sure to reach into the corners of the pan. The mixture will be glossy. Using a silicone spatula, stir in the cream.

Return the pan to medium heat and, stirring constantly, bring the mixture to the boiling point (190°F/88°C). Bubbles will just start to form around the edges. Remove the pan from the heat and strain the mixture into the metal bowl. Allow it to cool slightly, for about 10 minutes. An instant-read thermometer should register 122° to 140°F/50° to 60°C. With the silicone spatula, stir in the softened gelatin until it is dissolved completely and no longer streaky.

Strain the glaze into a 2-cup heatproof glass measure or bowl. (Metal will impart an undesirable flavor if the glaze is stored in it.) Allow it to cool for a few minutes, stirring very gently so as not to incorporate any air. For this cake, the glaze coats best when just made (80°F/26°C). If the glaze is made ahead and reheated, it will be thicker and should be used at around 85°F/29°C.

Once cool (after about an hour), the glaze can be covered and refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for several months. Reheat it in a double boiler over hot, not simmering, water, or very carefully in a microwave with 3-second bursts, stirring gently to ensure that it doesn't overheat or incorporate air.

### Glaze the Cake

Have ready a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, set on a 17¼ by 12¼ by 1-inch half-sheet pan or large piece of aluminum foil.

Fill a large bowl with hot water. Remove the frozen mousse from the freezer. To ensure easy removal from the glazing rack, set a cardboard round trimmed to the exact size of the cake or a little smaller on top of the cake. Carefully dip the bowl in the hot water just up to the cake for just a few seconds to melt the very outer layer of the mousse so that it will release easily. Remove the bowl from the water and wipe off any water. Set the prepared wire rack on top of the bowl, and invert it cake side down.

If using the silicone mold, its flexibility will enable you to tug on the edges to assist with the release. If using a glass bowl, it helps to insert a small metal spatula between the bowl and the filling. Once the filling releases, lift away the bowl and smooth any rough spots on the surface of the mousse with a small metal spatula or the back of a spoon. The surface needs to be as smooth as possible to ensure that no imperfections appear through the glaze. If the mousse has started to melt, return it to the freezer for about 15 minutes, or until firm.

Pour the glaze directly over the top of the dome until the sides are coated completely. Pouring directly in the center will cover the entire cake very quickly, but make sure there are no spots left uncovered on the sides. Allow the excess glaze to finish dripping, 1 to 2 minutes. Then, using a large spatula, two offset spatulas (one in each hand), or a cake transfer disk, coated with nonstick cooking spray, transfer the cake to a serving plate. Be careful not to touch the glaze on the cake to ensure that it remains flawless. Pour the excess glaze from the sheet pan into a bowl (if using the aluminum foil, you can mold it into a funnel), cover tightly, and refrigerate or freeze for future use. You will have about ½ cup left over.

Refrigerate the cake until fully thawed, about 2 hours, and serve chilled. To revive the shine of the glaze, wave a hair dryer set on low heat briefly over the cake. Garnish the plate with 3 ounces/85 grams small fresh blackberries. Cut with a sharp thin-bladed knife that has been coated with nonstick cooking spray. (Don't dip the blade in hot water as that causes the glaze to melt and discolor the filling.)



Chapter 4: Baby Cakes

The charm and appeal of the petite is universal. And when it comes to cakes, there is something especially compelling about little ones. One of the advantages of their small size is that they bake evenly and perfectly. The easiest small cake to make is a cupcake. To top them, I recommend using about two tablespoons for each cupcake, so two cups of any buttercream or ganache in the book will be a good quantity. In this chapter, I am also including three basic mix-and-match buttercreams: Golden Neoclassic Buttercream with variations, Chocolate—Egg White Buttercream, and Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting.

Highlights For Success

See the introduction to [Butter and Oil Cakes](#) and [Sponge Cakes](#).

If you want cupcakes with rounded tops, it often helps to allow the batter to sit in the muffin liners for 20 minutes before baking.

A number 30 ice cream scoop (2 inches in diameter, 2 tablespoons/1 ounce capacity) makes dispensing cupcake batter faster and easier.

Yellow Butter Cupcakes

Makes: 16 cupcakes

Baking Time: 20 to 25 minutes

This is the quintessential classic cupcake: buttery, moist, and tender.

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
sour cream or full-fat yogurt	2/3 cup, divided	5.6	160
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2 cups (or 1¾ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	7	200
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking powder	½ teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	12 tablespoons (1½ sticks)	6	170

Special Equipment

16 cupcake liners set in muffin pans or custard cups

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a small bowl, whisk the eggs, 3 tablespoons of the sour cream, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining sour cream and mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Use a number 30 ice cream scoop or a spoon to place the batter (1.7 ounces/50 grams) into the prepared cupcake liners, smoothing the surfaces evenly with a small metal spatula. The liners will be about three-quarters full.

Bake the Cupcakes

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until dark golden brown, a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean, and the cupcakes spring back

when pressed lightly in the centers.

Cool the Cupcakes

Cool the cupcakes in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove them from the pans and set them on a wire rack. Cool completely.

Chocolate Butter Cupcakes

Makes: 16 cupcakes

Baking Time: 20 to 25 minutes

These little cakes are velvety, moist, and deeply chocolaty.

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (sifted before measuring)	1.5	42
boiling water	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	118
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
water	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.5	44
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1 2/3 cups (or 1½ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	5.7	166
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking powder	2 teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	1/8 teaspoon	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	12 tablespoons (1½ sticks)	6	170

Special Equipment

16 cupcake liners, coated with baking spray with flour, set in muffin pans or custard cups

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Cocoa and Water

In a medium bowl, whisk the cocoa and boiling water until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. To speed cooling, place in the refrigerator. Bring to room temperature before proceeding.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a small bowl, whisk the eggs, the 3 tablespoons of water, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and chocolate mixture and mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Use a number 30 ice cream scoop or a spoon to place the batter (1.7 ounces/50 grams) into the prepared cupcake liners, smoothing the surfaces evenly with a small metal spatula. The liners will be about three-quarters full.

Bake the Cupcakes

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean and cupcakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers.

Cool the Cupcakes

Let the cupcakes cool in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove them from the pans and set them on a wire rack. Cool completely.

White Velvet Butter Cupcakes  
Makes: 14 to 16 cupcakes  
Baking Time: 20 to 25 minutes

The most versatile of all the layer cakes in The Cake Bible is ideally suited to cupcake size.

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
3 large egg whites, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.2	90
milk	2/3 cup (5.3 fluid ounces), divided	5.6	160
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	2 cups (or 1¾ cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	7	200
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking powder	2¼ plus 1/8 teaspoons	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	8 tablespoons (1 stick)	4	113

Special Equipment

15 cupcake liners set in muffin pans or custard cups

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a small bowl, whisk the egg whites, 3 tablespoons of the milk, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining milk and mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Use a number 30 ice cream scoop or a spoon to place the batter (1.7 ounces/50 grams) into the prepared cupcake liners, smoothing the surfaces evenly with a small metal spatula. The liners will be about three-quarters full.

Bake the Cupcakes

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean and the cupcakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers.

Cool the Cupcakes

Let the cupcakes cool in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove them from the pans and set them on a wire rack. Cool completely.

Golden Neoclassic Buttercream  
Makes: 2 cups/about 15.7 ounces/448 grams

When prepared with golden syrup, this silky buttercream is especially lovely.

Volume	Ounce	Gram
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about 3 large egg yolks	3½ tablespoons (1.7 fluid ounces)	2	56
superfine sugar	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons	2.6	75
golden syrup or corn syrup	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	3	85
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	1 teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.

## Prepare the Eggs

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, or in a medium bowl with a handheld mixer, beat the yolks on high speed until light in color.

## Mix the Liquid Ingredients

Have ready a 1-cup heatproof glass measure, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

In a small saucepan, preferably nonstick, combine the sugar, golden syrup, and lemon juice. Using a silicone spatula, stir until all the sugar is moistened. Heat over medium-high, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the syrup begins to bubble around the edges. Stop stirring completely and continue cooking for a few minutes until the syrup comes to a rolling boil. (The entire surface will be covered with large bubbles.) Immediately transfer the syrup to the glass measure to stop the cooking.

## Make the Buttercream

If using a stand mixer, with the mixer off to keep the syrup from spinning onto the sides of the bowl, add the syrup to the yolks. Begin by pouring in a small amount of syrup. Immediately beat on high speed for 5 seconds. Add the remaining syrup the same way in three parts. For the last addition, use a silicone scraper to remove the syrup clinging to the glass measure and scrape it against the beater. If the syrup has hardened before most of it has been poured, soften it to pouring consistency for a few seconds in the microwave.

If using a handheld mixer, beat the syrup into the yolks in a steady stream. Don't allow the syrup to fall on the beaters or they will spin it onto the sides of the bowl.

Continue beating on high speed for 5 minutes. Allow it to cool completely. To speed cooling, place the buttercream in an ice water bath (see [Water Baths](#)) or the refrigerator, stirring occasionally.

When the outside of the bowl feels cool, beat in the butter by the tablespoon on medium-high speed. The buttercream will not thicken until almost all of the butter has been added. Add the vanilla and beat on low speed until incorporated.

Place the buttercream in an airtight bowl. Use it at once or set it aside for up to 4 hours (it will have a slight crunch until it stands for several hours). If keeping it longer than 4 hours, refrigerate it. Bring to room temperature before using to prevent curdling and rebeat to restore the texture.

## Variations

### Apricot Neoclassic Buttercream

Beat in ¼ cup/2.7 ounces/76 grams of lekvar (see [Chocolate Apricot Roll with Lacquer Glaze](#)) or heated, strained apricot preserves.

### Chocolate Buttercream

Beat in 3 ounces melted and cooled dark chocolate, 60% to 70% cacao.

### Coffee Buttercream

Beat in 2 tablespoons coffee extract or 1 tablespoon Medaglia D'Oro instant espresso powder dissolved in ½ teaspoon boiling water.

### Lemon Buttercream

Beat in ¼ teaspoon pure lemon oil (see [Oils](#)).

### Orange Blossom Neoclassic Buttercream

Beat in 2 tablespoons orange flower water (see Kalustyan's, in [Ingredients Sources](#)) and ¼ teaspoon orange oil (see [Oils](#)).

### Raspberry Buttercream

Beat in ¼ cup/2 fluid ounces/2.3 ounces/65 grams raspberry sauce (see [Moist Chocolate Raspberry Gênoise](#)).

### Strawberry Buttercream

Beat in 1/3 cup/3.3 ounces/95 grams Seedless Strawberry Butter by American Spoon Foods (see [Ingredients Sources](#)), or other tart strawberry preserves that have been strained.

Highlights for Success

The sugar syrup must be boiling all over before pouring it into the eggs for it to thicken properly.

The egg/syrup mixture must be completely cool to the touch before adding the butter.

For the finest crystal structure, be sure to use superfine sugar.

Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting  
Makes: almost 1 cup/7.6 ounces/216 grams

The flavor of this frosting is reminiscent of cheesecake. No sugar is added because the sugar contained in the white chocolate is just enough to sweeten the frosting. It has a lovely ivory color and wonderful consistency for piping. This recipe is also offered in larger quantity (see [Classic Carrot Cake with Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting](#)).

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
white chocolate containing cocoa butter, chopped	.	3	85
cream cheese (65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C) but still cool	.	4	113
unsalted butter, softened but still cool (65°F/19°C)	2 tablespoons	1	28
crème fraîche or sour cream	½ tablespoon	0.2	7
vanilla or almond extract	1/8 teaspoon	.	.

Melt the White Chocolate

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Allow it to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid.

Make the Frosting

In a food processor, process the cream cheese, butter, and crème fraîche for a few seconds until smooth and creamy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the cooled melted white chocolate and pulse it in a few times until smoothly incorporated. Add the vanilla or almond extract and pulse it in.

Chocolate-Egg White Buttercream  
Makes: 2¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons/17.6 ounces/500 grams

This is my favorite chocolate buttercream because it can hold the largest amount of chocolate; is quick, easy, and foolproof to prepare; and has a light texture but more body than an egg yolk buttercream. It is the color of rich milk chocolate.

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 70% cacao, chopped	.	5	142
unsalted butter, preferably high fat (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227
2 large eggs whites, at room temperature	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	60
cream of tartar	¼ teaspoon	.	.
superfine sugar	½ cup	3.5	100

Melt the Chocolate

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the

top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Allow it to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid.

Beat the Butter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater (if you have two mixer bowls), or in a medium bowl with a handheld mixer, beat the butter on medium-high speed until smooth and creamy.

Beat the Egg Whites

In the bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the clean whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium speed until frothy. With the beater off, add the cream of tartar. Beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the sugar until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Make the Buttercream

Beat in the butter by the tablespoon on medium-high speed. If the mixture starts to look curdled, increase the speed and beat until smooth before continuing to add more butter. Using a silicone spatula, scrape in the cooled melted chocolate and beat until smooth and uniform in color. Place the buttercream in an airtight bowl. Use it at once or set it aside for up to 4 hours. If keeping it longer than 4 hours, refrigerate it and bring to room temperature before using. Rebeat to restore the texture, but, to avoid curdling, not until the buttercream has reached room temperature.

Designer Chocolate Baby Grands

Makes: 14 cupcakes

Baking Time: 15 to 20 minutes

The cake component of these little cupcakes is borrowed from my new, incomparably moist and chocolaty German chocolate cake base and results in cupcakes that are deeply chocolate yet mellow. The glaze, the shiniest, most amazing of all chocolate glazes, elevates these cupcakes to dinner party formal.

Plan Ahead

Glaze the baby grands at least 6 hours ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	1	33
boiling water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	54

2 large eggs, separated, plus 1 additional white, at room temperature:			
yolks	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.3	37
whites	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3	90
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.
cake flour (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	¼ cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus 2 tablespoons	1.3	37.5
bleached all-purpose flour (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1/3 cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	1.3	37.5
superfine sugar	¾ cup	5.3	150
baking powder	1 teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	1/8 teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

14 foil cupcake liners, white inner liners still attached, coated with baking spray with flour, set in muffin pans

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Cocoa and Liquid Ingredients

In the bowl of a stand mixer, by hand, whisk the cocoa and boiling water until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. To speed cooling, place the mixture in the refrigerator. Bring it to room temperature before proceeding.

Add the oil and yolks to the chocolate mixture. Attach the whisk beater. Starting on low speed, gradually raise the speed to medium and beat for about 1 minute, or until smooth and shiny, and resembling a buttercream. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Beat in the vanilla for a few seconds.

Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flours, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.

Make the Batter

Add half the flour mixture to the chocolate mixture. Beat on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the remaining flour mixture. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat for 1 minute. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl. The mixture will be very thick.

Starting on low speed, add the egg whites. Gradually raise the speed to medium-high and beat for 2 minutes. The batter will now be like a thick soup. Using a silicone spatula, scrape it into a 2-cup or larger cup with a spout. Pour the batter into the prepared cupcake liners. They will be just under half full, ¾ inch from the tops.

Bake the Cupcakes

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean and the cupcakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers. While the cupcakes are baking, make the ganache syrup. When the cupcakes are baked, set the pans on a wire rack.

Note

For the lightest and most tender texture, use part cake flour and part all-purpose flour. Alternatively, use ½ cup/2 ounces/57 grams bleached all-purpose flour and ¼ cup/1.2 ounces/36 grams cornstarch. Use an additional 1/16 teaspoon baking powder.

Milk Chocolate Ganache Syrup  
Makes: about 2/3 cup/5 fluid ounces/5.6 ounces/160 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
milk chocolate, 40% to 41% cacao (or 2 ounces lower percentage milk chocolate and 1 ounce dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao), chopped	.	3	85



heavy cream	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3	87
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Milk Chocolate Ganache Syrup

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

In a 1-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), scald the cream (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will appear around the periphery). With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. (Alternatively, grate the chocolate, place it in a small bowl, and stir in the scalded cream until the mixture is uniform in color.)

Transfer the chocolate syrup to a microwavable bowl and stir in the vanilla.

Apply the Syrup

Remove the cupcakes still in the muffin pan to a wire rack. While they are still hot, poke about 12 deep holes in each cupcake with a wooden skewer. Brush the cupcakes with syrup. It penetrates most readily when at least 110°F/43°C—almost hot to the touch. If necessary, reheat as it cools by giving it a few seconds on high power in the microwave. Allow them to sit for a few minutes, and then apply more syrup to fill the little holes left by the skewer. Continue applying the syrup until all of it has been used. There should be a thin coating covering the top of each cupcake. Allow the syrup to set until, when touched with a fingertip, it leaves no mark, about 1 hour.

Lacquer Glaze  
Makes: 1 1/3 cups/10.6 fluid ounces/13.5 ounces/380 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
cold water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59
powdered gelatin	2 teaspoons	.	.
sugar	2/3 cup	4.7	133
water	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces)	2.7	79
golden syrup or corn syrup	1 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon	1	28
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	2.3	66
heavy cream	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces)	2.7	77

Make the Lacquer Glaze

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium metal bowl.

In a small bowl, place the ¼ cup of cold water and sprinkle the gelatin over the top. Stir to moisten and soften the gelatin and allow it to sit for a minimum of 5 minutes. Cover tightly with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and set aside.

In a small heavy saucepan over medium heat, whisk together the sugar and 1/3 cup of water. Stir constantly with the whisk until the sugar dissolves.

Remove the pan from the heat and, with the whisk, gently stir in the golden syrup and then the cocoa until smooth, making sure to reach into the corners of the pan. The mixture will be glossy. Using a silicone spatula, stir in the heavy cream.

Return the pan to medium heat and, stirring constantly, bring the mixture to the boiling point (190°F/88°C). Bubbles will just start to form around the edges.

Remove the pan from the heat and strain the mixture into the medium bowl. Cool slightly, for about 10 minutes. An instant-read thermometer should register 122° to 140°F/50° to 60°C. With the silicone spatula, stir in the softened gelatin until dissolved completely and no longer streaky.

Strain the glaze into a 2-cup heatproof glass measure or bowl. (Metal will impart an undesirable flavor if the glaze is stored in it.) Cool for a few minutes, stirring very gently so as not to incorporate any air. For these cupcakes, the glaze coats best when just made (80°F/26°C). If the glaze is made ahead and reheated, it will be thicker and should be used at 82° to 85°F/28° to 29°C.

After about 1 hour, the cooled glaze can be covered and refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for up to 6 months. Reheat it in a double boiler over hot, not simmering, water, or very carefully in a microwave with 3-second bursts, stirring gently to ensure that it doesn't overheat or

incorporate air.

Lift the cupcakes from the pans and carefully remove them from the foil liners, leaving the white inner liners still attached to the cupcakes. Set the foil liners aside.

### Glaze the Cupcakes

Place the cupcakes on a wire rack set on a 17¼ by 12¼ by 1-inch half-sheet pan or a large piece of aluminum foil to catch the excess glaze.

Use a regular tablespoon (not a measuring spoon) to coat the tops of the cupcakes with the lacquer glaze. Smooth it into place with the rounded back of the spoon in a circular motion. Some of the glaze will cascade over the sides and can be reheated and repoured. Use the aluminum foil as a funnel to pour the excess glaze back into the glass measure. Should they appear, any tiny bubbles can be pierced with a sharp needle. Allow the glaze to set for about 1 hour, or until just barely tacky when touched lightly with a fingertip. Set the cupcakes back in the foil liners. They are at their most shiny within 6 hours of pouring the glaze. To revive the shine, brush lightly with a soft brush (see [Brushes](#)) or wave a hair dryer set on low heat briefly over the cupcakes. If desired, encircle them with cupcake wrappers (see [www.fancyflours.com](http://www.fancyflours.com)).

### Variation

Valrhona chocolate Les Perles can be used in place of the lacquer glaze. Apply them before the milk chocolate ganache glaze has set. Or, after glazing, scatter them on top of the glaze.

### Financiers—The Most Buttery Baby Cakes

Financiers (feeNAHNseeay) are simple little almond cakes consisting essentially of equal weights of sugar, egg whites, and beurre noisette (browned butter) and about one-quarter their combined weight of the ground almonds and flour. They often appear on the mignardises tray of tiny sweets often presented at the end of a meal at upscale restaurants and would also serve well as tea cakes.

The financier was invented in France more than a hundred years ago by the baker Lasne, whose bakery was on the Rue Saint-Denis, close to the Bourse, the financial center of Paris. The cake was said to have been named for the financiers who frequented the bakery, although the actual formula was based on the visitandine, a cake baked by nuns of the Order of the Visitation. Traditionally, financiers were baked in the shape of little gold bars. Nowadays, in America, the shapes vary widely—from bateau to ridged rounds, thimbles, and even shells (which I find confusing because certain shapes suggest specific desserts, and when I bite into a shell-shaped cake, my taste buds reasonably expect a madeleine!). Silicone molds for baking have added immeasurably to the ease with which one can turn out hundreds of these little pastries.

I thought I knew what a financier was, but when researching an article on financiers in the New York area, I found no two were alike in shape, texture, or flavor. They are so individual that I have come to think of them as the pastry chef's fingerprint. The proportion of the five basic ingredients varies widely, with butter, for instance, ranging from 23 percent to as high as 28 percent.

Though the classic financier never used baking powder, some chefs now like to add a little to lighten the texture slightly. All chefs agree, however, that it is ideal to make financiers within hours of serving so that they retain their soft springy texture and thin crisp crusts (though they are still delicious even after five days in the refrigerator). Five seconds in the microwave is enough to soften the butter and restore the soft inside texture.

### Highlights for Success

Silicone pans are ideal for baking financiers because they keep the cakes exceptionally moist. If the pan has three rows, the middle row will bake at the same rate as the others, but the mold must be set on a wire rack for best air circulation. Then set the rack on a baking sheet to make it easier to remove it from the oven.

If you have enough molds, it is easiest if you scrape the batter into a bowl or cup with a spout and pour the batter into each mold. If you don't have enough molds, you can pour the remaining batter into a pastry bag fitted with a 3/8- to 1/2-inch round pastry tube or a freezer-weight resealable plastic bag and refrigerate it for at least 1 hour or overnight. If refrigerated for more than 1 hour, it will be soft enough to pipe, but it should sit for 30 minutes in the molds at room temperature before baking. (Alternatively, you can spoon the batter into the molds, but piping is quicker and easier.) The molds should be filled about half full (1 ounce/30 grams in each for the standard-size 3 by 1 by 1¼-inch-high molds (¼ cup/2 fluid ounces; see information on silicone financier pans under [Unusual Baby Pan Shapes](#)).

### Special Tips from Renowned Pastry Chef Jean François Bonnet

Jean François uses top-quality butter, but he confided that before he found one to his liking, he added about ¼ cup heavy cream to 3 pounds butter at the beginning of clarifying. The added milk solids provided special sweetness.

Since beurre noisette plays perhaps the most significant role in the flavor of this pastry, Jean François controls the degree of browning by taking the butter's temperature. For the basic financier, he brings the beurre noisette to 275°F/135°C; for the chocolate financier, a darker 280°F/138°C. He cautions you to discard a batch that has gone too far and turned black because it will lend an unpleasantly bitter taste. (Note from me: It is very difficult to take the temperature of such small amounts of beurre noisette, but if making it in larger quantities, this is useful information. In fact, it is a good idea to make the beurre noisette in larger quantities because it will keep refrigerated for at least a year. It is best not to use a microwave to make beurre noisette because even with high butter-fat butter, the water tends to "burble" up and explode out of the container.)

Whisk the beurre noisette constantly as it cooks and darkens to distribute the flavor of the browning solids throughout the butter.

Jean François advises that when adding the butter to the batter, be sure the butter is hot in order for it to cook the flour; this results in a more mellow flavor.

Jean François prefers unblanched almonds for more flavor and better texture: The skin makes the financiers slightly more cakey and less oily. He uses whole almonds for one-quarter of the almonds and pulses them in the food processor with the flour to give the financiers more texture.

Jean François lets the batter sit at room temperature in the molds before baking if it has been refrigerated overnight so that it softens, producing a lighter texture. He also suggests freezing leftover baked financiers, then thawing them in the refrigerator and recrisping them briefly in a 350°F/175°C oven.

Gold Ingots  
Financiers Classiques  
Makes: sixteen 3 by 1 by 1¼-inch-high financiers  
Baking Time: 18 to 20 minutes

Drew Shotts of Garrison Confections in Central Falls, Rhode Island, promised me the most melt-in-your-mouth financiers, and these are just that! They are unique in that they contain butter in two different melted forms: browned clarified butter (beurre noisette) and whole melted butter. The recipe can be multiplied and made in several batches.

Plan Ahead

Make the batter at least 1 hour ahead.



	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sliced almonds, preferably unblanched	2/3 cup	2.3	66
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	11 tablespoons (1 stick plus 3 tablespoons), divided	5.5	156
superfine sugar	¾ cup	5.3	150
pastry flour (or Wondra flour)	½ cup, sifted into the cup and leveled off (or ¼ cup, lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off, plus 2 tablespoons)	1.7	50
baking powder	¾ teaspoon	.	.
4 large egg whites, at room temperature	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	120
pure vanilla extract	¼ teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

Financier mold(s), preferably silicone, 3 by 1 by 1¼ inches high (¼ cup/2 fluid ounces capacity), coated with baking spray with flour. If silicone, set it on a wire rack and then on a baking sheet. | A pastry bag fitted with a 3/8- to ½-inch round pastry tube (optional)

## Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F/190°C.

## Toast the Almonds

Spread the almonds evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes, or until pale golden. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely.

## Clarify and Brown Part of the Butter (Beurre Noisette)

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer, or a strainer lined with cheesecloth, suspended over a heatproof glass measure. In a small heavy saucepan, heat 6 tablespoons/3 ounces/85 grams of the butter over low heat until melted. Continue cooking, stirring constantly and watching carefully to prevent burning, until the milk solids turn deep brown. Immediately pour the butter through the strainer into the heatproof measure. Measure 4 tablespoons/1.7 ounces/50 grams into another glass measure and set it in a warm spot, or reheat the beurre noisette when ready to add it to the batter. Store any remaining beurre noisette in the refrigerator for at least a year.

## Melt the Remaining Butter

In a small heavy saucepan, melt the remaining 5 tablespoons/2.5 ounces/71 grams of butter over low heat. Pour the melted butter into a heatproof glass measure and set it in a warm spot, or reheat it when ready to add it to the batter.

## Grind the Almonds

In a food processor, process the toasted almonds and sugar until very fine. Stop the motor and scrape down the sides a few times to ensure that all the almonds are processed to a fine powder.

## Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the almond mixture, flour, and baking powder on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the egg whites and beat on medium speed for 30 seconds, or until well mixed. Add the vanilla and beat for a few seconds to incorporate evenly.

On medium-low speed, drizzle in the hot beurre noisette and then the hot melted butter. It should take about 5 minutes to complete the process, giving the mixture a chance to emulsify completely into a smooth golden cream.

## Fill the Molds

The molds should be filled about half full (1 ounce/30 grams in each for the standard-size mold). If you have enough molds, it is easiest if you scrape the mixture into a bowl or cup with a spout and pour the batter into each mold. If you don't have enough molds, you can pour the remaining batter into the pastry bag, if using, or freezer-weight resealable plastic bag with one corner cut and refrigerate it for a minimum of 1 hour or up to overnight. If refrigerated for more than 1 hour, it will still be soft enough to pipe, but it should sit for 30 minutes in the molds at room temperature before baking. (Alternatively, you can spoon the batter into the molds, but piping is quicker and easier.)

## Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F/190°C.

## Bake the Financiers

Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, or until golden brown and the financiers spring back when pressed lightly in the centers.

## Cool and Unmold the Financiers

Let the financiers cool completely in the silicone molds on a wire rack before unmolding. To unmold, push out each financier with your finger pressed against the bottom of the mold. If using a metal mold, set it on a wire cooling rack and cool 5 minutes before unmolding. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the molds and the financiers, pressing firmly against the molds. Invert them onto a wire rack and reinvert them onto another rack. Cool completely. The financiers keep, wrapped airtight in plastic wrap in an airtight container, for 3 days at room temperature, for 5 days refrigerated, and for several months frozen.

## Chocolate Ingots

### Financiers au Chocolat

Makes: fifteen 3 by 1 by 1¼-inch-high financiers

Baking Time: 18 to 20 minutes

Moist, tender, sparkling, and intriguingly bittersweet, with their extra chocolate flavor punch and crunch of caramelized cacao nibs, these are the best chocolate financiers I've ever encountered. I discovered them and their creator, Jean François Bonnet, owner of Tumbador, a chocolate bar in Brooklyn, when he was pastry chef at New York's Monkey Bar.

Nibs are the unsweetened chopped roasted cacao beans before they are processed into chocolate. Some people find their flavor rather bitter. However, Zach Townsend came up with the idea of caramelizing them. This way you can enjoy the sweet crunch and deep chocolate aroma of a chocolate factory. This recipe can be multiplied and made in several batches.

## Plan Ahead

Make the batter at least 1 hour ahead.

sliced almonds, preferably unblanched	½ cup	1.7	50
unsalted butter, preferably high fat (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	12 tablespoons (1½ sticks)	6	170
bleached all-purpose flour	¼ cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus 1 tablespoon	1.2	35
cornstarch	1½ teaspoons	.	.
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	2 tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	.	10
4 large egg whites, at room temperature	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	120
superfine sugar	½ cup plus 2 tablespoons	4.5	125
Caramelized Cacao Nibs (optional)	4 teaspoons	0.5	12

Special Equipment

Financier mold(s), preferably silicone, 3 by 1 by 1¼ inches high (¼ cup/2 fluid ounces capacity), coated with baking spray with flour. If silicone, set it on a wire rack and then on a baking sheet. | Pastry bag fitted with a 3/8- to ½-inch round pastry tube (optional)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F/190°C.

Toast the Almonds

Spread the almonds evenly on a baking sheet and bake them for about 7 minutes, or until pale golden. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely.

Clarify and Brown the Butter (Beurre Noisette)

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer, or strainer lined with cheesecloth, suspended over a heatproof glass measure.

In a small heavy saucepan, heat the butter over low heat until melted. Continue cooking, stirring constantly and watching carefully to prevent burning, until the milk solids turn deep brown.

Immediately pour the butter through the strainer into the heatproof measure. You should have 10 tablespoons/4.5 ounces/125 grams. Set in a warm spot, or reheat the beurre noisette when ready to add it to the batter.

Grind the Almonds

In a food processor, process the toasted almonds, flour, and cornstarch until very fine. Stop the motor and scrape down the sides a few times to ensure that all the almonds are processed to a fine powder. Add the cocoa and process to mix in evenly.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer, with a silicone spatula, stir together the egg whites and sugar until the sugar is completely moistened. Stir in the almond flour mixture until smooth. Attach the flat beater. On medium-low speed, drizzle in the hot beurre noisette. It should take about 5 minutes to add the butter, giving the mixture a chance to emulsify completely into a smooth chocolaty brown cream. If desired, add the optional caramelized cacao nibs and continue mixing just until incorporated.

Fill the Molds

The molds should be filled about half full (1 ounce/30 grams in each for the standard-size mold). Sprinkle a rounded ¼ teaspoon caramelized cacao nibs, if using, on top of the batter. If you have enough molds, it is easiest if you scrape the mixture into a bowl or cup with a spout and pour the batter into each mold. If you don't have enough molds, you can pour the remaining batter into the pastry bag, if using, or freezer-weight resealable plastic bag with one corner cut and refrigerate it for a minimum of 1 hour or up to overnight. If refrigerated for more than 1 hour, it will still be soft enough to pipe, but it should sit for 30 minutes in the molds at room temperature before baking. (Alternatively, you can spoon the batter into the molds, but piping is quicker and easier.)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F/190°C.

Bake the Financiers

Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, or until the financiers spring back when pressed lightly in the centers.

Cool and Unmold the Financiers

Let the financiers cool completely in the silicone molds on a wire rack before unmolding. To unmold, push out each financier with your finger pressed against the bottom of the mold. If using a metal mold, set it on a wire rack and cool for 5 minutes before unmolding. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the molds and the financiers, pressing firmly against the molds. Invert them onto a wire rack and reinvert them onto another rack. Cool completely. The financiers keep, wrapped airtight in plastic wrap in an airtight container, for 3 days at room temperature, for 5 days refrigerated, and for several months frozen.

Caramelized Cacao Nibs  
Makes: 1 heaping cup/4.7 ounces/132 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
cacao nibs	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	3	85
granulated sugar	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1.7	50
unsalted butter, preferably high fat (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Caramelized Cacao Nibs

In a medium heavy sauté pan, stir together the nibs and sugar over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. The sugar will begin to melt and caramelize very quickly. It will take under 4 minutes until almost all the sugar caramelizes and only a few white specks remain.

Immediately remove the pan from the heat, stir in the butter to coat the nibs, and scrape them onto a piece of parchment or a silicone mat. Cool completely.

Break the nibs into small pieces by placing them in a heavy-duty resealable plastic bag and tapping them with a rolling pin or meat tenderizer. The nibs keep in an airtight container in a cool place with low humidity for several months.

Peanut Butter Ingots  
Financiers au Beurre de Cacahuètes  
Makes: sixteen 3 by 1 by 1¼-inch-high financiers  
Baking Time: 15 to 18 minutes

French pastry chef Christophe Toury's combination of ground almonds and peanut butter is a clever riff on the traditional financier. He created this version to please his American audience. (We are pleased indeed!) It is fabulous with peanut butter, and would be terrific with praline paste as well. This recipe can be multiplied and made in several batches.

Plan Ahead

Make the batter at least 1 hour ahead.



sliced almonds, preferably unblanched	¾ cup	2.6	75
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	10 tablespoons (1 stick plus 2 tablespoons)	5	142
powdered sugar	1 1/3 cups (sifted and lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off)	5.2	150
bleached all-purpose flour	½ cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	2	57
4 large egg whites, at room temperature	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	120
creamy peanut butter, preferably Jif	3 tablespoons	1.7	50

Special Equipment

Financier mold(s), preferably silicone, 3 by 1 by 1¼ inches high (¼ cup/2 fluid ounces capacity), coated with baking spray with flour. If silicone, set it on a wire rack and then on a baking sheet. | Pastry bag fitted with a 3/8- to ½-inch round pastry tube (optional)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F/190°C.

Toast the Almonds

Spread the almonds evenly on a baking sheet and bake them for about 7 minutes, or until pale golden. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely.

Clarify and Brown the Butter (Beurre Noisette)

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer, or a strainer lined with cheesecloth, suspended over a heatproof glass measure.

In a small heavy saucepan, heat the butter over low heat until melted. Continue cooking, stirring constantly and watching carefully to prevent burning, until the milk solids turn deep brown.

Immediately pour the butter through the strainer into the heatproof measure. You should have about ½ cup/3.7 ounces/105 grams. Set it in a warm spot or reheat the beurre noisette when ready to add it to the batter.

Grind the Almonds

In a food processor, process the toasted almonds and powdered sugar until very fine. Stop the motor and scrape down the sides a few times to ensure that all the almonds are processed to a fine powder. Pulse in the flour.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium-low speed just until foamy. Add the almond flour mixture and beat on low speed until incorporated, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed.

Drizzle in the hot beurre noisette on medium-low speed. It should take about 5 minutes to add the butter, giving the mixture a chance to emulsify completely into a smooth golden cream. Add the peanut butter and mix for a few seconds, just until evenly incorporated.

Fill the Molds

The molds should be filled about two-thirds full (about 1.2 ounces/33 grams in each for the standard-size mold). If you have enough molds, it is easiest if you scrape the batter into a bowl or cup with a spout and pour the batter into each mold. If you don't have enough molds, you can pour the remaining batter into the pastry bag, if using, or freezer-weight resealable plastic bag with one corner cut and refrigerate it for a minimum of 1 hour or up to overnight.

This batter is much stiffer than the usual financier batter, so if it has been chilled for more than 1 hour, it needs to stand at room temperature to soften for piping. You can also use your fingers to shape little logs of the batter and place them in the molds. When the batter softens, use a small metal spatula or the back of a demitasse spoon to smooth the batter into the molds. They don't need to be perfectly smooth as on heating they will even out.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F/190°C.

Bake the Financiers

Bake for 15 to 18 minutes, or until the financiers spring back when pressed lightly in the centers.

Cool and Unmold the Financiers

Let the financiers cool completely in the silicone mold on a wire rack before unmolding. To unmold, push out each financier with your finger



pressed against the bottom of the mold. If using a metal mold, set it on a wire rack and cool for 5 minutes before unmolding. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the molds and the financiers, pressing firmly against the molds. Invert them onto a wire rack and reinvert them onto another rack. Cool completely. The financiers keep, wrapped airtight in plastic wrap in an airtight container, for 3 days at room temperature, for 5 days refrigerated, and for several months frozen.

Plum Round Ingots  
Financiers Aux Mirabelles  
Makes: 6  
Baking Time: 25 to 30 minutes

These financiers have the classic texture—velvety dense, sort of a cross between a pastry and a cake—crisp on top and moist inside. They are less sweet, making them especially delicious topped with fragrant plums. The plum slices, which resemble a flower, are a particularly attractive decoration as well. Pluots, a cross between a plum and apricot, make an attractive alternative.

Plan Ahead

Mix the batter at least 6 hours ahead.



Batter	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sliced almonds, preferably unblanched	½ cup	1.6	45
unsalted butter, preferably high fat (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	8 tablespoons (1 stick)	4	113
powdered sugar	1 cup (sifted and lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off)	4	115
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons (or 1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon), sifted into the cup and leveled off	1.6	45
salt	pinch	.	.
4 large egg whites, at room temperature	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	120
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.



Special Equipment

Six 3 7/8-inch tartlet pans, coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Toast the Almonds

Spread the almonds evenly on a baking sheet and bake them for about 7 minutes, or until pale golden. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely.

Clarify and Brown the Butter (Beurre Noisette)

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer, or a strainer lined with cheesecloth, suspended over a heatproof glass measure.

In a small heavy saucepan, heat the butter over low heat until melted. Continue cooking, stirring constantly and watching carefully to prevent burning, until the milk solids turn deep brown.

Immediately pour the butter through the strainer into the heatproof measure. Measure 6 tablespoons/2.6 ounces/73 grams into another heatproof measure and set it in a warm spot, or reheat the beurre noisette when ready to add it to the batter. Store any remaining beurre noisette in the refrigerator for future use.

Make the Batter

In a food processor, process the powdered sugar, flour, almonds, and salt until finely ground. Pulse in the egg whites about 14 times, or until combined. Scrape down the sides. Gradually pour in the hot beurre noisette, while pulsing, until incorporated, about 12 times. Pulse in the vanilla. Scrape the mixture into an airtight container and refrigerate for at least 6 hours or up to overnight.

Fill the Molds

Spoon or pipe ¼ cup/2 ounces/60 grams of financier batter into each prepared tartlet pan (it will fill the mold a little more than halfway). Set them aside at room temperature while preparing the plum slices.

Fruit Topping

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
2 to 3 plums or pluots, halved and pitted (or small blueberries or red currants)	1½ cups slices (or 1 cup)	7	200
powdered sugar	1 tablespoon	.	.

Slice the Plums

Set each plum cut side down on a work surface. Use a sharp thin knife to cut the plums lengthwise into very thin slices, setting each slice on a paper towel.

Arrange the Fruit Topping

Starting near the outer edge of the tartlet but not overlapping the edge of the mold, overlap plum slices around the perimeter (the hollow cored side facing the center) to resemble a rose. Angle the slices so that the bottom edges are inserted slightly into the batter and the top edges are slightly raised. Start with the larger slices and save the smaller slices for the inner row. Dust the top of each tartlet with powdered sugar.

If using blueberries, first dust the batter with powdered sugar and then place about 3 tablespoons of the blueberries evenly onto each tartlet. If using Maine blueberries, which are very little, use 1 rounded tablespoon (10 grams) for each financier and place them evenly on top.

Place the molds on a baking sheet, making sure there is at least 1 inch between them.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Bake the Financiers

Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until the outside edges of each financier are golden brown. The filling will have puffed up to the top of the mold between the plum slices and it will bounce back if pressed lightly with your fingers.

Cool and Unmold the Financiers

Let the financiers cool completely in their molds on a wire rack. They will shrink from the sides of the tartlet pans. When cool, invert them onto a flat plate (tap the bottoms sharply with your hand, if necessary) and reinvert them onto serving plates. The financiers keep, wrapped airtight in plastic wrap in an airtight container, for 3 days at room temperature or for 5 days refrigerated.

Highlights for Success

If the plums are very firm, it helps to blanch the slices used for the middle so that they become flexible enough to curve. Dip them in boiling water

for a few seconds and then in ice water.

Financier-Style Vanilla Bean Pound Cakes

Makes: 10

Baking Time: 18 to 20 minutes

Strictly speaking, these are not financiers because they do not have almonds or other nuts, but they are so tender and full of butter that I had to include them here.

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
½ vanilla bean (¼ bean if Tahitian)	.	.	.
superfine sugar	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons	2.6	75
3 large egg whites, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.2	90
milk	1½ tablespoons (0.7 fluid ounce)	0.7	21
pure vanilla extract	¾ teaspoon	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	¾ cup (or 2/3 cup), sifted into the cup and leveled off	2.6	75
baking powder	3/8 teaspoon	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	6 tablespoons (¾ stick)	3	85

Special Equipment

Financier mold(s), preferably silicone, 3 by 1 by 1¼ inches high (¼ cup/2 fluid ounces capacity), coated with baking spray with flour. If silicone, set it on a wire rack and then on a baking sheet. | Pastry bag fitted with a 3/8- to ½-inch round pastry tube (optional)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Vanilla Bean with the Sugar

With a small sharp knife, split the vanilla bean lengthwise in half.

In a medium bowl, scrape the vanilla seeds from the vanilla bean into the sugar and rub them in with your fingers. Remove the vanilla pod and reserve for future use. In a food processor, process the vanilla seeds and sugar until the seeds are evenly distributed throughout the sugar.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the egg whites, milk, and vanilla extract just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the vanilla sugar, flour, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and half the egg mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1 minute. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the remaining egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 20 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Don't be concerned if the batter seems to curdle. It is very high in butter and will bake out to a fine, even crumb.

Fill the Molds

Scrape the batter into a pastry bag, if using, or freezer-weight resealable plastic bag with one corner cut. (Alternatively, you can spoon the batter into the molds, but piping is quicker.) Pipe the batter into the cavities, filling them about three-quarters full (1 ounce/32 grams in each).

Bake the Financiers

Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, or until the financiers spring back when pressed lightly in the centers. The financiers should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cakes

Let the financiers cool completely in the silicone molds on a wire rack before unmolding. To unmold, push out each financier with your finger pressed against the bottom of the mold. If using a metal mold, set it on a wire rack and cool for 5 minutes before unmolding. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the molds and the financiers, pressing firmly against the molds. Invert them onto a wire rack and reinvert them onto another rack. Cool completely. The financiers keep, wrapped airtight in plastic wrap in an airtight container, for 3 days at room temperature or for 5 days refrigerated.

Mini Vanilla Bean Pound Cakes

Serves: 8 to 10

Baking Time: 35 to 45 minutes (20 minutes for the cupcakes)

Brushing these little vanilla cakes with vanilla Cognac syrup extends their shelf life, making them ideal for holiday gifts. Be sure to let them sit for twenty-four hours before slicing as the flavor mellows, becoming less sweet, and the syrup penetrates more evenly.

Plan Ahead

Make the cakes at least 1 day ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
2 vanilla beans (1 bean, if Tahitian)	.	.	.
superfine sugar	¾ cup	5.3	150
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.5 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
milk	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.6	45
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1½ cups (or 1 1/3 cups), sifted into the cup and leveled off	5.3	150
baking powder	¾ teaspoon	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

Two 5¾ by 3¼-inch loaf pans (2 cups each), coated with baking spray with flour. (These pans are also available as disposable aluminum foil or heat-proof paper pans, see [Little Loaf Pans and Disposable Pans for Gift Giving.](#)) | Two cupcake liners set in custard cups or ramekins. (Note: If you double the recipe, you can use five 2-cup loaf pans.)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Vanilla Bean(s) with the Sugar

With a small sharp knife, split the vanilla bean(s) lengthwise in half.

In a medium bowl, scrape the vanilla bean seeds into the sugar and rub them in with your fingers. Remove the vanilla pod(s) and reserve for future use.

In a food processor, process the vanilla seeds and sugar until the seeds are evenly distributed throughout the sugar.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, milk, and vanilla extract just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the vanilla sugar, flour, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and half the egg mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1 minute. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the remaining egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 20 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Don't be concerned if the batter seems to curdle. It is very high in butter and will bake out to a fine, even crumb. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pans no more than ½ inch from the tops (10 ounces/285 grams in each pan) and smooth the surfaces evenly with a small metal spatula. Use the remaining batter to fill the two cupcake liners.

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, about 20 minutes for the cupcakes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the centers comes out almost completely clean. An instant-read thermometer will register 196°F/91°C.

To get an attractive split down the middle of the crust, wait until the natural split is about to develop (about 15 minutes) and then, with a lightly greased sharp knife or single-edge razor blade, make a shallow mark about 4 inches long down the middle of each cake. This must be done quickly so that the oven door does not remain open very long. Otherwise the cakes will fall. When the cakes split, they will open along the mark. After 25 minutes, tent with aluminum foil to prevent overbrowning.

While the cakes are baking make the syrup.

Vanilla Cognac Syrup

Makes: ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons/3 fluid ounces/3.3 ounces/96 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	2 tablespoons	1	25
water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59
vanilla Cognac, such as Navan	1 tablespoon	0.5	14

Make the Vanilla Cognac Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, stir together the sugar and water until all the sugar is moistened. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring constantly. Cover and remove it from the heat. Cool completely, then add the Cognac.

Apply the Syrup

As soon as the cakes come out of the oven, place the pans on a wire rack, poke the cakes all over with a thin skewer, and brush them with about one-third of the syrup. Allow them to cool for 10 minutes before unmolding.

Unmold the Cakes

If not using disposable pans, run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and invert the cakes onto a wire rack or baking sheet covered with plastic wrap and coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Brush the bottoms of the

cakes with the remaining syrup and reinvert the cakes onto another rack. Cool completely.

The cakes keep, wrapped airtight in plastic wrap in an airtight container, for 3 days at room temperature, for 1 week refrigerated, and for 3 months frozen.

Baby Lemon Cheesecakes  
Makes: 12  
Baking Time: 25 to 35 minutes

Creamy cheesecakes set on a gossamer base of thin sponge cake (biscuit) and topped with lemon curd are a real favorite for a dinner party, an afternoon tea, or any special event. Make all twelve as there will surely be calls for seconds! If you want to make a charming flourless version, bake and serve the cheesecakes without the cake in lovely pastel silicone Sili-cups (see [Muffin or Cupcake Pans](#)).

Plan Ahead

Chill the composed cakes at least 2 hours before unmolding.

Make the Biscuit

Make one biscuit recipe (see [Apple Caramel Charlotte](#)).



Filling

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
cream cheese (65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C)	.	8	227
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
1 large egg, at room temperature	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	50
about 2 large egg yolks, at room temperature	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.3	37
lemon juice, freshly squeezed	1½ tablespoons (0.7 fluid ounce)	0.7	23
salt	1/8 teaspoon	.	.
sour cream	1½ cups	12.7	363

Special Equipment

Two silicone muffin pans, each with six cups (about 4 ounces capacity), coated lightly with baking spray with flour and set on a wire rack. (You can also use aluminum muffin pans lined with foil muffin liners.) | One 18 by 9-inch baking pan or roasting pan large enough to fit the wire rack and

to serve as a water bath. (If you have a roasting pan and wire rack large enough to fit both pans, you can bake them at the same time. Alternatively, while the first pan is baking, fill the second pan and refrigerate it covered until ready to bake.)

Line the Pans

Cut out the sponge cake with a biscuit cutter or scissors to conform to the size of the bottoms of the muffin cups. Line each cup with a round of cake.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack on the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Make the Filling

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the cream cheese and sugar on medium speed until very smooth, about 3 minutes. Beat in the egg and yolks, beating until smooth and scraping down the sides of the bowl once or twice. Add the lemon juice and salt and beat until incorporated. Beat in the sour cream on low speed just until blended, about 20 seconds.

Fill the Pans

The easiest way to fill the pans is to pour the batter into a disposable pastry bag, or gallon-size resealable plastic bag, with a small part of one of its corners cut off, and pipe the batter into the cups, filling them almost to the tops (2.2 ounces/63 grams each). Alternatively, scrape the batter into a large measuring cup or pitcher with a spout and pour it in. Set the pan on the wire rack in the larger pan and add very hot water to reach about halfway up the sides of the muffin pan.

Bake the Cheesecakes

Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer registers 160°F/70°C. When the pan is moved, the batter will jiggle like jelly and the top will be set and bounce back when pressed lightly.

Cool the Cheesecakes

Remove the large pan to a wire rack and add a handful of ice cubes to the water to stop the heating. Allow the cheesecakes to cool for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the water is cool enough that you can remove the muffin pans. Cover the pans with plastic wrap, being careful not to allow it to touch the surface of the cheesecakes. Refrigerate for a minimum of 1 hour to firm up before topping with the lemon curd. Prepare the lemon curd just before you are ready to pour it on top of the cheesecakes.

Lemon Curd  
Makes: ¾ cup plus 1½ tablespoons/8.2 ounces/234 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
about 3 large egg yolks, at room temperature	3½ tablespoons (1.7 fluid ounces)	2	56
sugar	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon	4	113
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	3 tablespoons	1.5	42
lemon juice, freshly squeezed and strained (about 4 large lemons)	4½ tablespoons (2.2 fluid ounces)	2.5	70
salt	pinch	.	.

Make the Lemon Curd

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium bowl.

In a small heavy saucepan, whisk the yolks, sugar, and butter until well blended. Whisk in the lemon juice and salt. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula and scraping the sides of the pan as needed, until thickened and resembling hollandaise sauce, which thickly coats the spatula but is still liquid enough to pour. The mixture will change from translucent to opaque and begin to turn a yellow color on the spatula. Don't allow it to come to the boil or it will curdle. Whenever steam appears, remove the pan briefly from the heat, stirring constantly, to keep the mixture from boiling. When the curd has thickened and will pool thickly when a little is dropped on the surface, pour it at once into the strainer and press it through with the back of the spatula.

Apply the Lemon Curd

Transfer the lemon curd to a pitcher or measuring cup with a spout and pour the hot curd evenly over the top of each cake. Use about 1 tablespoon for each. Smooth the curd or make concentric circles, if desired, with a small metal spatula.

Cover the pan carefully with plastic wrap, stretching it so that it doesn't dip down and mar the top of the curd, or cover the pan with a larger pan, such as a disposable aluminum foil pan. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before unmolding.

Unmold the Cakes

Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans, and with your finger, push up the bottom of the silicone pan. The cheesecake will rise up and out of the pan and can be supported with a small offset metal spatula and then transferred to a serving plate. If using aluminum muffin pans, lift out the cakes by grasping each side of the foil liners. Remove the liners and, if you desire smooth sides, use a small metal spatula run under hot water.

Quail Egg Indulgence Cake  
Serves: 2  
Baking Time: 25 to 30 minutes

Something magical happens here in the synergy among butter, heavy cream, vanilla, and yolks. Make it for your sweetheart who loves vanilla and butter more than chocolate. Still exquisite with chicken egg yolks, the quail egg yolks have an indefinably extra-delicious taste. If left uncovered and eaten the same day it is baked, this cake is melt-in-your-mouth moist and buttery with an exceptionally velvety-fine crumb and crispy crunchy top crust. You can serve it with lightly sweetened [Whipped Cream](#) flavored with a few drops of your favorite essence or extract, but it is already perfect on its own.

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
5 quail egg yolks, at room temperature (see <a href="#">Notes</a> ) .		1	28
heavy cream (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces), divided	2	58
pure vanilla extract	3/8 teaspoon	.	.
cake flour	¾ cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	2.6	75
superfine sugar	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons	2.6	75
baking powder	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	1/8 teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	5 tablespoons (½ stick plus 1 tablespoon)	2.6	75

Special Equipment

One 5 7/8 by 2-inch-high (3 cups) heart-shaped pan, coated with baking spray with flour (One 6 by 2-inch round cake pan can be used, but the cake will be only about 1 inch high.)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the yolks, 1 tablespoon of the cream, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining cream. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture to the batter in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan, smoothing the surface evenly with a small metal spatula.

Bake the Cake

Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until golden brown, a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean, and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. It will just begin to shrink from the sides of the pan.

Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes before unmolding. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the cake, pressing firmly against the pan, and invert the cake onto a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert it so that the top side is up. Cool completely. The cake keeps uncovered for 1 day at room temperature. For longer storage, wrap airtight in plastic wrap. It will still be delicious after 3 days, but the crust will have softened.

Notes



Quail eggs are available in some specialty and Asian markets. The shell is a little difficult to break. If you use quail eggs on a regular basis, you'll want to invest in an attractive, well-designed little quail egg decapitator from France (see JB Prince, under [Equipment Sources](#)). Alternatively, use a small sharp knife to make a lengthwise crack in the shell and carefully peel away enough shell to be able to remove the egg. Separate the yolk through your fingers or with a wire mesh egg separator.

Don't use high-butterfat cream for this cake (if you're lucky enough to have access to it) as there will be little moist spots in the crumb toward the bottom of the cake due to the higher amount of butterfat.

Marionberry Shortcake  
Serves: 6  
Baking Time: 15 to 20 minutes

Summer brings special culinary rewards that simply do not exist at other times of the year. For me, one of the most delicious is the marionberry, a hybrid from Marion County, Oregon. It is a happy marriage of the red raspberry and the blackberry, a velvety, intensely flavorful berry that resembles the king variety of blackberry in shape but with a reddish purple hue. The marionberry is far less bitter than the raspberry and far less seedy than the blackberry—a perfect balance of sweet tart reminiscent of an earthy cabernet. The most distinctive characteristic of the marionberry is that when frozen and defrosted, it is the only berry that maintains its texture, making it possible to have a taste of the joy of fresh summer berries all year round.

My favorite way to eat marionberries is uncooked and lightly sugared as shortcake, with a sponge cake (génoise) base and a cloud of lightly sweetened whipped crème fraîche or cream. Sponge cake is ideal for absorbing the berry juices, which moisten the cake without rendering it soggy as they would layer cakes or biscuits.

Make the Shortcake

Make one shortcake recipe (see [Chocolate Bull's-eye Cakes](#)).

Marionberry Filling

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
frozen marionberries (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	4 cups	1 pound	454
sugar	2½ tablespoons	1	31
Chambord black raspberry liqueur or framboise (optional)	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	32

Make the Marionberry Filling

In a large bowl, place the marionberries. Sprinkle with the sugar. Toss to coat evenly and set them aside to thaw, about 2 hours at room temperature or longer in the refrigerator). Drain the marionberries thoroughly, reserving the syrup. There should be ½ cup/4 fluid ounces syrup. If not, allow the berries to sit longer.

Place the syrup in a 4-cup heatproof glass measure, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, and, in a microwave on high power, reduce it to ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons/3 fluid ounces (½ cup/2.4 fluid ounces, if not using the Chambord). (Or reduce it in a saucepan on the stove, stirring frequently.) When cool, add the Chambord, if using. Cover tightly and set aside.

Note

Marionberries are harvested in July and are available in supermarket frozen food sections across the country throughout the year. Of course, you can substitute other berries such as strawberries, raspberries, or blackberries, but use only fresh berries. For mixed berries or berries that are juicy, such as strawberries, simply sugar them and allow them to sit for at least 30 minutes to release their juices. Then use the juices to brush on the cake to moisten it. For blueberries, make a half recipe of the syrup for the [Chocolate Bull's-eye Cakes](#).

Compose the Cakes

If you baked the cakes in custard cups, use a small sharp knife to cut a ¼- to 3/8-inch-deep circle out of the center of the cakes, leaving a ¼-inch-wide rim around the outer edge of the cake.

Use a serrated knife to trim off the crust from the flat bottoms. Brush the bottoms of the cakes with about half the syrup, using more toward the outside than the center. Invert the cakes onto serving plates. Brush the remaining syrup on top of the cakes, especially on the sides and on top of the side border. There will be 4 teaspoons of syrup for each little cake.

Up to 1 hour before serving, spoon the berries into the wells. Serve with a dollop of lightly sweetened whipped crème fraîche or whipped cream, if using.

Whipped Crème Fraîche  
Makes: ½ cup/4.3 ounces/122 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
crème fraîche, cold	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4	116

superfine sugar      1½ teaspoons      .      6

Make the Whipped Crème Fraîche

In a mixing bowl, combine the crème fraîche and sugar and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes.

Using a whisk or handheld mixer on low speed, whip only until soft peaks form when the whisk is raised. This will happen very quickly. It will not increase in volume.

The whipped crème fraîche can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.

Variation  
Whipped Cream  
Makes: 1 cup/4.3 ounces/122 grams

	Volume		Ounce	Gram
heavy cream, cold	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4	1	16
superfine sugar	1½ teaspoons	.	6	
pure vanilla extract	¼ teaspoon	.	.	

Make the Whipped Cream

In a mixing bowl, combine the heavy cream, sugar, and vanilla and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside the bowl.)

Starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it thickens, whip until the mixture mounds softly when dropped from a spoon.

The whipped cream can be refrigerated for up to 6 hours. For longer storage, see [Stabilized Whipped Cream](#). There are four different versions.

Coffee Chiffonlets with Dulce de Leche Whipped Cream  
Serves: 4 to 6  
Baking Time: 20 to 25 minutes

These moist, featherlight chiffon cakes pack a strong coffee punch thanks to the coffee extract and the Kahlúa liqueur. The incomparable caramel-like flavor of the dulce de leche whipped into the creamy topping and a light dusting of chocolate are delicious complements to the deep coffee flavor.

I have sampled every dulce de leche on the market, and have made my own from whole milk and sugar, but the classic version from Borden's Eagle Brand is my favorite. It's easy to make and results in a unique caramel flavor with undertones of vanilla and coconut, even though neither is added. I discovered, to my delight, that when combined with heavy cream, not only does it add sweetness and flavor, it magically stabilizes it, keeping it from watering out. Although you need only three tablespoons of dulce de leche for the whipped cream, whatever is left over is also great on top of ice cream.

Plan Ahead

For best flavor, compose the cake and syrup 1 day ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons (or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup), sifted into the cup and leveled off	3	85
superfine sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 1 tablespoon, divided	4	113
baking soda	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon	.	.
salt	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon	.	.
coffee extract (or instant espresso powder, preferably Medaglia D'Oro)	$4\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons (or $2\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons)	.	.
water	1 to 2 tablespoons	.	.
3 large eggs, separated, plus 1 additional white, at room temperature	$3\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons (1.7 fluid ounces)	2	56
yolks	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	120
whites			
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	3 tablespoons	1.5	40
pure vanilla extract	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	.	.
cream of tartar	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

Four  $4\frac{1}{2}$  by almost 2-inch nonstick mini angel food cake pans ( $1\frac{3}{4}$  cups capacity) or six 4 by  $1\frac{3}{4}$ -inch ( $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups capacity) nonstick mini angel food cake pans, ungreased

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F/160°C.

Mix the Dry Ingredients

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, mix the flour, all but 2 teaspoons of the sugar, the baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Make a well in the center of the mixture.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a small bowl, stir together the coffee extract and 1 tablespoon of the water (or the instant espresso powder and 2 tablespoons of the water until the coffee granules have dissolved). Into the well in the dry ingredients, add this mixture together with the yolks, oil, and vanilla. Beat on medium speed for about 1 minute, or until very smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary. If you don't have a second mixer bowl, scrape this mixture into a large bowl and thoroughly wash, rinse, and dry the mixer bowl and whisk beater to remove any trace of oil.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the clean mixer bowl and with the clean whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the beater off, add the cream of tartar. Beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat in the remaining sugar, beating until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Make the Batter

With a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or large silicone spatula, stir about one-fourth of the meringue into the batter. Gently fold the remaining meringue into the batter just until uniform in color. Pour the batter evenly into the pans.

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted between the tubes and the sides comes out clean and the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the middle.

Cool the Cakes

Immediately invert the pans onto a wire rack to cool completely, 20 to 30 minutes.

While the cakes are cooling, make the syrup.

Kahlúa Syrup

Makes: ½ cup/4 fluid ounces/4.6 ounces/132 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	3 tablespoons	1.3	37
water	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces)	2.7	79
Kahlúa	4 teaspoons	0.7	22
coffee extract (or instant espresso powder, preferably Medaglia D'Oro)	2½ teaspoons (or 1¼ teaspoons)	.	.

Make the Kahlúa Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, stir together the sugar and water until all the sugar is moistened. Bring the mixture to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Cover it at once and remove it from the heat. Cool completely. Transfer it to a measuring cup with a spout and stir in the Kahlúa and coffee extract. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add water to equal ½ cup/4 fluid ounces of syrup.

Apply the Syrup and Unmold the Cakes

Reinvert the pans onto a wire rack and set the rack on a half-sheet pan or sheet of aluminum foil to catch any falling syrup. Brush the surfaces of the cakes with about one-quarter (2 tablespoons) of the Kahlúa syrup. Run a wire cake tester around the center tube of each pan and a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans. Lift out the center tubes and run the spatula between the cakes and the bottom of the tube base. Invert the cakes onto a large plate and brush the bottoms and sides with the remaining Kahlúa syrup.

Dulce de Leche

Makes: 1 full cup/9 fluid ounces/12.7 ounces/360 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sweetened condensed milk (1 container; see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1 cup plus 3 tablespoons (9.5 fluid ounces)	14	396

Special Equipment

One 9-inch pie plate | One 12-inch round cake pan or roasting pan to serve as a water bath

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 450°F/230°C.

Make the Dulce de Leche

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium bowl.

Pour and scrape the sweetened condensed milk into the pie plate. Cover the pie plate with a sheet of aluminum foil and set it in a pan large enough to hold it surrounded by water. Pour in hot water to just below the level of the pie plate rim.

Carefully set the pans in the oven and bake for 1½ hours, or until thick and caramel colored. (Check after 1 hour and 15 minutes.) Stir with a silicone spatula until smooth. Strain into the bowl, pushing the dulce de leche through with the spatula. The dulce de leche keeps for 2 weeks refrigerated.

Note

It is not considered safe to caramelize the condensed milk in an unopened can as it can explode.

Dulce de Leche Whipped Cream  
Makes: 1½ cups/8 ounces/227 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
heavy cream, cold	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6	174
Dulce de Leche	3 tablespoons	2.2	60
dark chocolate snowflakes .	.	.	.

Make the Dulce de Leche Whipped Cream

In a mixing bowl, combine the cream and dulce de leche and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. (Chill the mixer's beaters alongside the bowl.) Whip the mixture, starting on low speed, gradually raising the speed to medium-high as it begins to thicken, until stiff peaks form when the beater is lifted. This makes enough to frost the tops and centers of the cakes. If you want to frost the sides as well, double the recipe. The whipped cream keeps, in an airtight container, for 3 to 5 days, refrigerated.

Compose the Chiffonlets

With a small metal spatula, frost the top of each little cake with the whipped cream. Be sure to push it into the centers as well. Grate a flurry of [Chocolate Snowflakes](#) over each. Serve at once or hold at room temperature for up to 1 hour. The chiffonlets keep, in an airtight container, for 3 days, refrigerated. Remove the cakes to room temperature for at least 30 minutes before serving.

Individual Pineapple Upside-Down Cakes  
Serves: 6 to 8  
Baking Time: 20 to 30 minutes

The classic American homespun cake, usually baked in a skillet, is transformed into an elegant plated dessert worthy of the fanciest dinner party. In fact, these cakes were my contribution to a dinner for six prepared by Arianne Daguin of D'Artagnan and André Soltner, formerly of Lutèce, and auctioned off at Sotheby's to benefit breast cancer.



Pineapple and Cherries Topping

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
6 to 8 fresh pineapple slices, preferably from a Del Monte Gold, cored cut 3 by under ¼-inch thick slices		.	.
6 to 8 pitted sweet cherries	1 small can	.	.
turbinado sugar	1/3 cup	2.3	66
unsalted butter	2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons	1.3	37
lime juice or pineapple juice	2 teaspoons	.	.

Special Equipment

One Nordic Ware Mini Pineapple Pan with 6 cavities (each 7 fluid ounces) or eight 3 1/8 by 1 3/8-inch ramekins (each 5 fluid ounces), coated with baking spray with flour. If using the pineapple pan, brush the coating into the crevices. If using the ramekins, place them on a sheet pan.

Prepare the Pineapples and Cherries

Have ready a 1-cup or larger heatproof glass measure, coated with nonstick cooking spray.

Place the pineapple and cherries on paper towels to absorb excess moisture.

Make the Topping

In a small heavy saucepan, stir together the sugar, butter, and lime juice. Heat, stirring gently, to caramelize the mixture to a dark amber, about 300°F/150°C, or a few degrees lower because its temperature will continue to rise (lower than usual because of the turbinado sugar). Remove it immediately from the heat and pour it into the prepared glass measure. Pour it evenly into the molds. If the caramel starts to get too thick to pour, a few seconds in the microwave will make it fluid again. (Alternatively, allow the caramel to harden, process it to a powder, and sprinkle it into the molds. To make an even caramel layer in the molds, put the pan with the caramel powder in the preheating oven for about 10 minutes.) Top with pineapple slices and place one cherry in the middle of each mold.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
1 large egg, at room temperature	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	50

full-fat yogurt	1/3 cup, divided	2.7	80
pure vanilla extract	¾ teaspoon	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1 cup (or ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons), sifted into the cup and leveled off	3.5	100
turbinado sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
baking powder	¼ teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	¼ teaspoon	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	6 tablespoons (¾ stick)	3	85

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F/190°C.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the egg, 4 teaspoons of the yogurt, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining yogurt. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on low speed, gradually add the egg mixture to the batter in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure.

Fill the Molds

Pipe or spoon 2.2 ounces/63 grams or, if using ramekins, 1.7 ounces/47 grams batter into the fruit-lined molds, smoothing the surfaces evenly with a small metal spatula. They will be a little more than half full.

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 20 to 30 minutes, or until golden brown and the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers.

Unmold and Cool the Cakes

If using the metal pan, loosen the top edges with a small metal spatula. Place a sheet pan lined with aluminum foil that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray on top of the mold and flip to unmold. If using ramekins, run a small metal spatula between the sides of the mold and the cakes, reaching a little underneath the pineapple, and invert each onto a serving plate. Cool to room temperature.

Pineapple Caramel Drizzle  
Makes: ½ cup/4 fluid ounces/8.5 ounces/240 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened pineapple juice	1 cup (8 fluid ounces), divided	8.6	245
turbinado sugar	2/3 cup	4.6	133

Make the Pineapple Caramel Drizzle

Have ready a 1-cup or larger heatproof glass measure, coated with nonstick cooking spray.

In a medium heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, with a silicone spatula stir together 1/3 cup of the pineapple juice and the sugar until all the sugar is moistened. In a microwave, or a small saucepan on the cooktop, heat the remaining pineapple juice until very hot. Set aside.

Boil the sugar syrup, stirring constantly, on medium heat until the sugar dissolves and the syrup is bubbling. Stop stirring completely and allow it to boil undisturbed until it turns a deep amber and an instant-read thermometer registers almost 300°F/150°C (lower than usual because of the turbinado sugar). Immediately remove it from the heat, keeping the thermometer in place until it rises to 300°F/150°C, which will happen within



seconds. Immediately, but slowly and carefully, pour the remaining pineapple juice into the caramel. It will bubble up furiously, so it is best to do this over the sink.

Return the caramel to low heat and use a silicone spatula or wooden spoon to stir the mixture until smooth, scraping the thicker part that settles on the bottom. Raise the heat and boil, stirring occasionally, for 5 to 10 minutes, or until the caramel reaches 240°F/115°C and is reduced to between ½ and 2/3 cup (4 to 5 fluid ounces). Pour it into the prepared glass measure and set aside until cool.

Décor

For extra shine and a hint of tartness, glaze the tops of the cakes with heated strained apricot preserves and garnish the plate with dried pineapple slices. Use a squeeze bottle to drizzle the pineapple caramel onto the plate.

Highlights for Success

If you use all the remnants of the pineapple and process and strain the juice, you will get at least 1 cup.

The residual molasses in the turbinado sugar causes it to caramelize at a lower temperature. The acidity of the pineapple juice is highly effective for preventing crystallization.

Any extra pineapple caramel drizzle keeps for weeks in the refrigerator and makes a delicious addition to plain yogurt.

Caramelized Pineapple Pudding Cakes

Serves: 6

Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes

With a little effort, you can make this three-star restaurant dessert from New York's Mercer Kitchen with great success at home. The elegant, soufflélike dessert propels the concept of pudding to stellar heights. Make it for New Year's Eve and other holidays, or any occasion when the intention is to dazzle and delight.

Plan Ahead

Dry the brioche cubes 8 hours ahead. Soak the brioche cubes at least 2 hours ahead. The pudding cakes can be baked up to 8 hours ahead.



Brioche

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
<a href="#">Classic Brioche</a> or purchased brioche, 1 day old about 2/3 of a loaf	7	200	

Special Equipment

Six (3 by 2-inch) 6-ounce soufflé molds or custard cups, buttered or coated with nonstick cooking spray or oil | Roasting pan to use as a water bath | One 13 by 9-inch glass or ceramic baking pan for soaking

Cut the Brioche

Trim the crust from the brioche and cut it into ¾-inch cubes. You will need about 4 heaping cups/7 ounces/200 grams. Set the cubes on a wire rack and allow them to dry for about 8 hours. (You can also dry them in a 200°F/95°C oven for about 1 hour.) They will weigh about 5 ounces/144 grams after drying.

Crème Anglaise  
Makes: 2½ cups/20 fluid ounces/22.6 ounces/640 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
heavy cream	1 cup (8 fluid ounces), divided	8.2	232
milk	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.5	242
turbinado sugar	1/3 cup	2.3	66
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
about 2 large egg yolks, at room temperature	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.3	37
fresh whole nutmeg	a small grating	.	.
salt	pinch	.	.
pure vanilla extract	¼ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Crème Anglaise

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over the glass or ceramic baking pan.

In a small heavy saucepan over medium heat, scald ½ cup of the cream and the milk (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will appear around the periphery).

In a medium bowl, whisk together the sugar, whole eggs, yolks, nutmeg, and salt. Gradually whisk in the hot cream mixture. Whisk in the remaining ½ cup of cream. Pass the mixture through a strainer into the baking pan. Stir in the vanilla.

Soak the Brioche Cubes

Add the bread cubes to the cream in a single layer. Cover the pan with plastic wrap and refrigerate for a minimum of 2 hours or up to 12 hours. Turn the cubes over partway through to allow them to absorb the cream evenly.

Caramel  
Makes: ½ cup/4 fluid ounces/4.7 ounces/132 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	1 cup	7	200
water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	1½ tablespoons	0.7	21

Make the Caramel

Have ready a 1-cup or larger heatproof glass measure, coated with nonstick cooking spray.

In a small saucepan, stir together the sugar and water until all the sugar is moistened. Heat, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the syrup is bubbling. Stop stirring completely and allow it to boil undisturbed until it turns a pale amber and an instant-read thermometer registers 310°F/154°C. Immediately remove it from the heat and gently stir in the butter. Pour the caramel into the glass measure. (The cup retains the heat, keeping the caramel fluid, and can be placed in the microwave to reheat, if necessary.) Divide the caramel evenly among the prepared molds.

Roasted Pineapple

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
fresh pineapple, preferably Del Monte Gold, halved lengthwise	½ pineapple	.	.

2-inch piece of vanilla bean	.	.	.
turbinado sugar	¾ cup	5.3	150
golden syrup or corn syrup	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	3	85
unsweetened pineapple juice (canned)	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.3	122

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 400°F/200°C.

Prepare the Pineapple

Peel, halve lengthwise, and core each quarter. Remove the "eyes."

Make the Syrup

With a small sharp knife, split the vanilla bean lengthwise in half.

In a 10-inch ovenproof sauté pan, place the sugar. Scrape the vanilla bean seeds into the sugar and rub them in with your fingers. Reserve the vanilla pod for future use. With a heatproof silicone spatula or wooden spoon, stir in the golden syrup until the sugar is moistened. Heat, stirring constantly, over medium heat until the sugar dissolves and the syrup is bubbling. Stop stirring and boil, swirling the pan occasionally, to a dark amber and an instant-read thermometer registers 300°F/150°C (lower than usual because of the turbinado sugar). Remove it immediately from the heat as the temperature will continue to rise, or remove it slightly before it reaches temperature and wait until it does, which will happen in seconds. Add the pineapple quarters and pineapple juice and return the pan to the heat. Cook, stirring constantly, for about 3 minutes, or until bubbling.

Roast the Pineapple

Place the sauté pan in the oven and roast, basting the pineapple with the juices every 5 minutes, until tender when pierced with a skewer. The juices will have thickened to the consistency of a sauce. Reduce the oven temperature to 300°F/150°C. Remove the pan from the oven and allow the pineapple to cool to room temperature. Slice the pineapple widthwise into 1/8-inch-thick slices. Cut each slice into thirds. Arrange the slices in a single-layer fan pattern on top of the caramel-coated molds. Fill in the centers with cut pieces of pineapple. Reserve the remaining slices and the thickened juices to garnish the plate.

Bake the Brioche Pudding

Drain and reserve any crème anglaise that has not been absorbed by the bread cubes. There will be almost ½ cup. In a small saucepan, stir this crème over low heat until slightly thickened and an instant-read thermometer registers 140° up to 160°F/60° to 70°C. Strain it into a heatproof cup or pitcher.

Fill the molds with bread cubes and press down lightly. Set the molds in the roasting pan and pour boiling water into the pan to come halfway up the sides of the molds. Tent the molds with aluminum foil and bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer registers 160°F/70°C.

Remove the puddings from the water bath and unmold immediately. Alternatively, let them cool on wire racks and refrigerate them for up to 8 hours. Reheat in a preheated 350°F/175°C oven, in a water bath, covered with aluminum foil, for 30 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the center feels hot.

Unmold the Brioche Puddings

Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the molds and the puddings, pressing against the molds, and invert the puddings onto serving plates. Drizzle with the reserved juices and crème anglaise, and garnish with roasted pineapple slices.

Classic Brioche  
Makes: 19 ounces/540 grams dough or one 8½ by 4½-inch loaf (17.5 ounces/500 grams)  
Baking Time: 35 to 40 minutes

This is actually an easy, enjoyable dough to make. You can even mix it in a bread machine, which is just perfect for this small amount of dough. Use two-thirds of the loaf for the [Caramelized Pineapple Pudding Cakes](#), and slice the rest for toast.

Plan Ahead

Start making the dough 8 hours or up to 2 days ahead.

Dough Starter (Sponge)

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
water, at room temperature (70° to 90°F/20° to 30°C)	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30

sugar	1 tablespoon	0.5	12
instant yeast	¼ teaspoon	.	.
unbleached all-purpose flour	½ cup (lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off) plus 4 teaspoons	2.5	71
1 large egg, at room temperature	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	50

Special Equipment

Heavy-duty mixer with dough hook attachment or bread machine | One 8½ by 4½-inch loaf pan, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, oil, or butter | Baking stone or sheet pan

Make the Dough Starter (Sponge)

In a small bowl, combine the water, sugar, instant yeast, flour, and egg. Whisk to incorporate air until very smooth, about 3 minutes. The dough will be the consistency of a very thick batter. At first, the dough may collect inside the whisk, but just shake it out and keep whisking. If it's too thick to whisk, it means you've added too much flour and will need to add a little of the egg normally added below when mixing the dough. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Dough

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unbleached all-purpose flour	1 cup (lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off) plus 2½ tablespoons	5.5	156
sugar	2 tablespoons	1	25
instant yeast	1¼ teaspoons	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
2 large eggs, cold	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
unsalted butter, must be very soft (75° to 90°F/23° to 32°C)	8 tablespoons (1 stick)	4	113

Combine the Flour Mixture

In a small bowl, mix the flour with the sugar and yeast. Whisk in the salt.

Mixer Method: Make the Dough

In the bowl of a stand mixer scrape the sponge. Sprinkle the flour mixture on top of the sponge. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and let it stand for 1½ to 2 hours. The sponge will bubble through the flour mixture in places. This is fine. ( To suit your time schedule, the sponge can be refrigerated after the first hour or for up to 24 hours. If you're in a rush, you can skip the waiting period entirely, but the added depth of flavor makes it worth the wait.) Attach the dough hook. Add the eggs to the sponge and beat on low speed for about 1 minute, or until the flour is moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 2 minutes. Using a silicone spatula, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, scrape down the sides of the bowl. Continue beating for about 5 minutes, or until the dough is smooth and shiny but very soft and sticky. It will mass around the dough hook, but it will not pull away from the bowl completely. Add the butter by the tablespoon, waiting until the butter is almost completely absorbed before adding the next tablespoon. Continue beating until all the butter is incorporated.

Let the Dough Rise

Using a silicone spatula, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, scrape the dough into a 2-quart dough-rising container or bowl, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray or oil. The dough will weigh about 19 ounces/536 grams. (It will increase slightly in weight after rolling and folding it.) It will be very soft and elastic and will stick to your fingers unmercifully. Don't be tempted to add more flour at this point; the dough will firm considerably after chilling. Lightly coat the top of the dough with nonstick cooking spray and cover the bowl with a lid or plastic wrap. With a piece of tape, mark on the side of the container approximately where double the height would be. Allow the dough to rise at room temperature until doubled, 1½ to 2 hours.

Chill the Dough

Refrigerate the dough for 1 hour to firm; this will prevent the butter from separating. Gently deflate the dough by stirring it with a silicone spatula. Return it to the refrigerator for another hour so that it will be less sticky to handle.

Turn the dough onto a well-floured surface and press or roll it into a rectangle, flouring the surface and dough as needed to keep the dough from sticking. The exact size of the rectangle is not important.

Give the dough a business letter turn (fold it in thirds), brushing off any excess flour, and again press down on it or roll it out into a rectangle. Rotate it 90 degrees so that the closed end is facing to your left. Give it a second business letter turn and round the corners. Dust it lightly on all sides with flour. Wrap it loosely but securely in plastic wrap and then place it in a large resealable plastic bag and refrigerate for 6 hours or up to 2 days to allow the dough to ripen (develop flavor) and firm.

Bread Machine Method: Make the Dough

In a bread machine with a programmable setting and pause button, scrape the sponge. Sprinkle the flour mixture on top. Allow it to sit as with the mixer method.

When ready to mix the dough, add the eggs, mix the dough for 3 minutes, and then let it proceed to the knead cycle for about 8 minutes, or until the dough is smooth, shiny, and elastic. You will need to pause the machine a few times to scrape any flour or dough that collects in the corners of the container. Add the butter all at once and continue the kneading cycle until it is incorporated, about 3 minutes, pausing and scraping down the sides, if necessary.

Make the Dough Rise

For the first rise, turn off the machine and let the dough rise (with the lid closed) for 1½ to 2 hours, or until approximately doubled. Remove the container, cover it with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Return the container to the bread machine (you can leave the plastic wrap in place) and deflate the dough by pressing the Mix button and mixing for about 30 seconds. Return the container to the refrigerator for 1 hour. Then proceed as with the mixer method, rolling and turning the dough.

Both Methods: Shape the Dough and Let It Rise

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and gently press down the dough to deflate it. Press or roll the dough into a rectangle 7½ inches wide and about 5 inches long. Roll it from the top in three turns, being sure to brush off any excess flour, pressing with your thumbs to seal the dough. Place it seam side down in the prepared pan, pressing it down firmly. Cover it with plastic wrap, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, and allow it to rise at room temperature until the top of the dough reaches the top of the pan, 1½ to 2 hours.

Egg Glaze

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
I large egg yolk	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.6	18
heavy cream or milk	1 teaspoon	.	.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lowest level of the oven and place a baking stone or baking sheet on it before preheating the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Make the Egg Glaze

In a small bowl, using a fork, stir together the yolk and cream.

Glaze, Slash, and Bake the Brioche

Brush the top of the dough with the egg glaze. With a sharp knife or straight-edged razor blade, make a ¼- to ½-inch-deep, lengthwise slash in the dough, starting about 1 inch from either end of the pan. Set the pan on the hot stone. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until golden brown and an instant-read thermometer registers 190°F/88°C.

Unmold and Cool the Brioche

Unmold the brioche onto a wire rack. Allow it to cool until it is barely warm, at least 2 hours.

Highlights for Success

On some mixers there may not be an adjustment to raise the bowl, and a dough hook may not work as well for this small amount of dough. If this is the case, switch to the flat beater instead.

If, after unmolding the brioche loaf, the sides are still pale in color, place the loaf directly on the rack in the oven and continue baking for about 5 minutes to brown the sides and make them firm, preventing collapse.

If a deeper shine is desired, the brioche can be double glazed by brushing it with the egg glaze immediately after shaping and then a second time just before baking. This also serves to prevent the dough from drying during rising.

The Bostini  
Serves: 8  
Baking Time: 25 to 30 minutes

This transformed Boston cream pie is the signature dessert of pastry chef Kurtis Baguley. My dear colleague and friend Flo Braker introduced me to him because the cake component of his dessert is my recipe for orange chiffon from The Cake Bible. The Bostini is so popular that when he worked at Scalla's in San Francisco, Kurtis had it written into his contract that he could take the recipe with him wherever he goes. When you taste it, you will see why.

Kurtis's silken pastry cream is a cross between pastry cream and crème anglaise (one-third the cornstarch of pastry cream though richer, with more yolks and heavy cream and perfumed with lots of vanilla bean). It is also much less sweet (about half the sugar).

The Orange Glow Chiffon, baked in muffin molds, is exceptionally tender and more velvety than usual and when inverted into the cream sauce, absorbs some of it into its crumb. For an incredibly opulent effect, the dark chocolate glaze, poured over the tops of the cupcakes and dripping down the sides of the cups, gives rise to the impulse to lick it on the spot.

To make just six Bostini, use half the cake recipe and three-quarters the recipes for pastry cream and chocolate glaze.



Orange Glow Chiffon Cupcake Batter  
Makes: 12 cupcakes

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (or 1 cup), sifted into the cup and leveled off	4	112
superfine sugar	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup, divided	5.3	150
baking powder	1 teaspoon	.	.
salt	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon	.	.
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	54
about 4 large eggs, separated, plus about 1 additional white, at room temperature	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2.6	74
yolks	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons (5 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
whites			
orange zest, finely grated	1 tablespoon, loosely packed	.	6
orange juice, freshly squeezed	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.2	91
pure vanilla extract	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	.	.

cream of tartar

½ plus 1/8 teaspoon

.

.

Special Equipment

Silicone muffin pan with twelve 4-ounce cavities, set on a wire rack and then on a baking sheet, or muffin pans (either type of pan should be coated very lightly with baking spray with flour; without flour the cupcakes would collapse) | Eight tall slender 6- or 7-ounce custard cups or cappuccino cups (the diameter should be about the same size as the top of the cupcake mold)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F/160°C.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, mix the flour, all but 1 tablespoon of the sugar, the baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Make a well in the center. Add the oil, yolks, orange zest, orange juice, and vanilla and beat on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat for 1½ minutes, or until very thick. If you don't have a second mixer bowl, scrape this mixture into a large bowl and thoroughly wash, rinse, and dry the mixer bowl and whisk beater to remove any trace of oil.

Beat the Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the clean mixer bowl fitted with the clean whisk beater, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Beat in the remaining 1 tablespoon of sugar and continue beating until very stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Add the Meringue to the Batter

Using a large balloon wire whisk, slotted skimmer, or large silicone spatula, gently fold the meringue into the batter in two parts until just blended. Spoon the batter into the muffin pans filling them up to the top.

Bake the Cupcakes

Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean and the cupcakes spring back when lightly pressed in the centers.

Cool and Unmold the Cupcakes

Let the cupcakes cool in the pans for about 15 minutes, or until just warm. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cupcakes, pressing against the pans, and turn each cupcake gently in its pan to loosen it. Lift each cupcake out and invert it onto a wire rack, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Cool completely.

Vanilla Bean Pastry Cream Sauce  
Makes: 3½ cups/28 fluid ounces/1 pound, 14 ounces/860 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
milk	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.2	121
cornstarch	2 tablespoons	0.7	19
about 6 large egg yolks, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons (3.5 fluid ounces)	4	112
1 large egg, at room temperature	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	50
1 vanilla bean, preferably Tahitian (see <a href="#">Note</a> )		.	.
sugar	6 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons	3	85
salt	pinch	.	.
heavy cream	2½ cups (20 fluid ounces)	20.5	580

Prepare the Egg Mixture

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer over a medium bowl. Have ready the custard cups.



In a medium bowl, stir together the milk and cornstarch until smooth. Whisk in the yolks and whole egg until completely blended. Set it aside.

Mix the Vanilla Bean with the Dry Ingredients

With a small sharp knife, split the vanilla bean lengthwise in half.

In a small bowl, combine the sugar and salt. Scrape the vanilla bean seeds into the sugar and rub them in with your fingers.

Make the Vanilla Bean Pastry Cream Sauce

In a medium heavy saucepan, scald the cream, sugar mixture, and vanilla pod over medium heat (bring it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery), stirring often. Whisk vigorously while adding about 1/3 cup of this mixture to the egg mixture. Quickly add all of the egg mixture into the remaining cream mixture, whisking rapidly. Continue whisking rapidly for 1 to 3 minutes, or until the mixture thickens. Remove it from the heat and strain it into a bowl. Use the back of a spoon or silicone spatula to scrape any thickened cream from the bottom of the pan and to press it through. Whisk vigorously to cool it slightly. Remove the vanilla pod and rinse and dry it for future use.

Immediately pour the cream sauce into the custard cups to fill them about two-thirds full. (If you use a short, wider-mouth cup, it is best to fill it only half full with cream to prevent the cream from overflowing when the cake is eaten. The tall slender cup works best because the cake acts as a "cork" to prevent the cream from coming up over the cup.) Place a piece of plastic wrap directly on top of the cream to prevent a skin from forming. Allow the cream to cool to room temperature and then refrigerate until cold.

Note

You can use 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract, but a vanilla bean really shines here.

Chocolate Butter Glaze

Makes: 1¼ cups/14 fluid ounces/15.5 ounces/436 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsalted butter	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped		8	227

Make the Chocolate Butter Glaze

In a medium saucepan, melt the butter until it starts to simmer. (Or place it in a 4-cup heatproof glass measure in the microwave on high power for 1½ to 2 minutes.) Remove it from the heat and stir in the chocolate. Whisk the mixture until smooth and strain it into a 2-cup or larger heatproof glass measure. Keep the glaze warm. (You can pour it into a thermos or reheat it in a microwave or double boiler.)

Compose The Bostini

Up to 30 minutes before serving, place the custard cups, filled with the pastry cream sauce, on small dessert plates. Push each cupcake top side down into the custard cup so that it rests on top of the cream sauce and the bottom rises at least a little above the cup.

Just before serving, pour the warm chocolate glaze over each cupcake so that it coats the cake and a little of it dribbles down the sides of the custard cup. Serve immediately while the glaze is still warm and fluid. If desired, garnish with chocolate shavings and a light dusting of powdered sugar.

Deep Chocolate Rosebuds

Makes: Twelve 2-inch cakelets

Baking Time: 15 minutes

These exquisite chocolate cakelets contain hidden little puddles of ganache baked into their centers for a double hit of chocolate. These are my signature special-occasion baby cakes. They hit just the right sweet spot after a grand dinner.



Dark Chocolate Ganache Puddles  
Makes: 3.5 ounces/100 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		1.5	42
heavy cream	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	58

Make the Dark Chocolate Ganache Puddles

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water). Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted.

In a 1-cup heatproof glass measure in a microwave or small saucepan, heat the cream, stirring often, until warm (110°F/43°C). (Don't worry if it gets a little hot; it will just take longer for the ganache to cool and thicken.) With a silicone spatula, gradually stir the cream into the chocolate. Allow the ganache to sit uncovered for about 30 minutes, or until slightly thickened to the consistency of softly whipped cream. Whisk for a few minutes to lighten and firm the texture so that it holds its shape like buttercream. Cover and set aside at room temperature until ready to use.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¼ cup plus ½ tablespoon (sifted before measuring)	0.7	21
boiling water	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	59
about 2 large egg yolks, at room temperature	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.3	37
water	1½ tablespoons	.	.
pure vanilla extract	¾ teaspoon	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	¾ cup plus ½ tablespoon (or 2/3 cup), sifted in the cup and leveled off	2.7	78
superfine sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
baking powder	1 teaspoon	.	.
salt	¼ teaspoon	.	.

### Special Equipment

Nordic Ware Sweetheart Rose pan with 12 cavities (1/3 cup each) or small muffin pans, coated with baking spray with flour. If using the Sweetheart Rose pan, brush the coating into the crevices.

### Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

### Mix the Cocoa and Water

In a medium bowl, whisk the cocoa and boiling water until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap and cool to room temperature, about 20 minutes. To speed cooling, place the bowl in the refrigerator. Bring it to room temperature before proceeding.

### Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In another bowl, whisk the yolks, the 1½ tablespoons of water, and the vanilla just until lightly combined.

### Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the cocoa mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in two parts, beating on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

### Fill the Molds

Pipe or spoon the batter into the prepared pan cavities (they should be about half full) and smooth the surfaces with the back of the spoon. Dab 1 teaspoon/5 grams of the ganache onto the center of each. (Any leftover ganache can be chilled until firm enough to roll into instant truffles. Roll them in unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder, if desired.)

### Bake the Cakelets

Bake for 15 minutes, or until the cakelets spring back when pressed lightly with a greased fingertip.

### Cool and Unmold the Cakelets

Let the cakelets cool in the pan on a wire rack for 5 minutes. Unmold them onto a serving plate or wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. They will be about 1¼ inches high and are delicious still warm or at room temperature.

### Molten Chocolate Soufflé and Lava Cakes

Makes: nine 3-ounce fluted brioche or seven 4-ounce cupcakes

Baking Time: 3-ounce silicone brioche molds, 10 minutes; 4-ounce silicone muffin containers, 14 minutes

The first time I tasted this dessert, at one of Jean-Georges Vongerichten's restaurants in New York, I thought it was the most perfect chocolate dessert I had ever tasted. Legend has it that the liquid center was the result of a fortuitous accident of underbaking. Although the recipe started appearing in every magazine and newspaper, I could see that it presented a real challenge to the home baker because if even slightly overbaked, the luscious liquid center would no longer flow. The solution was to use ganache instead of solid chocolate. This ganache requires chocolate with a relatively high cacao content.

### Plan Ahead

Make the ganache centers several hours before using. Bake the cakes at least 8 hours ahead.



Ganache Centers  
Makes: 8 tablespoons/5 ounces/140 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao (see <a href="#">Note</a> ), chopped .		2	58
heavy cream	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3	87

Melt the Chocolate

A silicone bowl is perfect for melting the chocolate, especially because after stirring in the cream, the bowl can be squeezed together to create a spout for pouring the chocolate mixture into the container for shaping.

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted.

Make the Ganache Centers

In a 1-cup heatproof glass measure in a microwave or small saucepan, heat the cream, stirring often, until warm (100°F/43°C). (Don't worry if it gets a little hot; it will just take longer for the ganache to cool and thicken.) Gradually stir the cream into the chocolate.

Line an egg crate with a piece of plastic wrap, pressing the plastic into each of the cavities. Pour or spoon the ganache evenly into nine of the cavities, about 0.5 ounce/14 grams each. If a few of the ganache balls are left over, they are delicious rolled in unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder and eaten as truffles. Cover with a second piece of plastic wrap and refrigerate for several hours, or until firm enough to mold.

Note

If the mixture never becomes firm enough to shape, it is because the chocolate contains a lower amount of cacao than 60 percent. If this is the case, you will need to freeze the chocolate briefly in order to shape the balls. Avoid using a higher than 62 percent cacao chocolate to ensure a flowing consistency.

With scissors, cut between the plastic wrap to separate each of the portions of ganache. Lift each out with the plastic wrap and use the wrap to press the ganache into round balls. Refrigerate until ready to bake the cakes.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		1.5	43

unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	¼ cup plus ½ tablespoon (sifted before measuring)	0.7	21
unsalted butter	3 tablespoons	1.5	42
about 3 large eggs, separated, plus 1 large egg white, at room temperature			.
yolks	3½ tablespoons (1.7 fluid ounces)	2	56
whites	½ cup (4 fluid ounces), divided	4.2	120
crème fraîche or heavy cream	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.5	43
cream of tartar	½ teaspoon	.	.
sugar	3½ tablespoons	1.5	44

Special Equipment

Nine 3-ounce silicone brioche molds or seven 4-ounce silicone muffin containers, coated with baking spray with flour, but only Baker's Joy, as other brands may cause sticking and unpleasant odors. You can also use clarified butter and a dusting of flour. (You will need only 2 teaspoons, so if you don't have any on hand, simply melt about 2 tablespoons butter and use only the clear upper part, avoiding the milk solids and water below.)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 400°F/200°C.

Melt the Chocolate, Cocoa, and Butter

In the top of a double boiler, set over hot, not simmering, water, heat the chocolate, cocoa, and butter. (Don't let the bottom of the container touch the water.) Stir often with a silicone spatula until melted and smooth. Remove from the heat. Let the mixture cool just until warm to the touch.

Make the Batter

Whisk together the yolks and crème fraîche and whisk into the chocolate mixture. Lightly whisk the ½ cup of egg whites to break them up for easier pouring. Measure out 2 tablespoons and, with the whisk, gently stir these two tablespoons of egg white into the chocolate mixture just until incorporated.

Beat the Remaining Egg Whites into a Stiff Meringue

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the remaining lightly beaten egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and continue beating until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the sugar and continue beating until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. Use a wire whisk to stir one-fourth into the chocolate mixture to lighten it. Fold in the remainder.

Fill the Molds

Arrange the molds on a baking sheet. Fill them about three-quarters full with the chocolate batter. Gently place the ganache balls directly in the center of each. (Avoid pushing them down.)

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 10 minutes in the 3-ounce containers and for 14 minutes in the 4-ounce ones. The cakes will have puffed, the top surfaces dulled, and they will have a slight crack in the centers.

Cool and Unmold the Cakes

Let the cakes cool in the molds for 20 to 30 minutes, or until they appear to have pulled away slightly from the edges. Carefully invert each mold onto a nonstick pan, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray, or a pan lined with nonstick aluminum foil. Gently tug on the molds until the cakes release completely. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and refrigerate until completely cool or up to overnight.

When ready to serve, use a thin metal pancake turner to lift each cake onto an individual plate. Reheat each cake for 10 to 15 seconds on high power in the microwave until warm to the touch. To double-check, you can insert a wire cake tester in the center and, if it's warm, the chocolate center will be flowing. Serve with a smile and a spoon and perhaps a dash of cocoa powder. Once baked and unmolded, the cakes keep, covered, for 1 day, refrigerated.

Chocolate Bull's-eye Cakes  
Serves: 6  
Baking Time: 15 to 20 minutes

The "eyes" of this decadent cake are perfectly creamy pools of chocolate pot de crème, reminiscent of an extra-creamy truffle enriched with egg yolk. This recipe consists of several small components, including génoise, but it is quick, easy, and keeps perfectly for several days once you have completed it.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
clarified butter, preferably beurre noisette (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	3½ tablespoons	1.5	43
pure vanilla extract	¾ teaspoon	.	.
2 large eggs	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
1 large egg yolk	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.6	18
superfine sugar	1/3 cup	2.3	66
Wondra flour (see <a href="#">Notes</a> )	½ cup (lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off) minus ½ tablespoon	2.3	66

Special Equipment

Mary Ann or shortcake pan with 6 cavities, or six 10-ounce (4 by 2-inches) Pyrex dessert dishes coated with baking spray with flour. (If using the dessert dishes, set them on a baking sheet.)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Prepare the Butter

In a medium microwavable bowl or saucepan, warm the butter until almost hot (110° to 120°F/40° to 50°C). Stir in the vanilla, cover, and keep warm.

Beat the Eggs

In the bowl of a stand mixer set over a pan of simmering water, heat the eggs, yolk, and sugar until just lukewarm to the touch, stirring constantly with a long-handled whisk to prevent curdling.

Immediately remove the bowl to the stand mixer and attach the whisk beater. Beat on high speed for a minimum of 5 minutes. It will more than quadruple in volume and be very thick and airy. (A handheld mixer will take at least 10 minutes.) Remove almost ½ cup of the beaten egg mixture and whisk it thoroughly into the melted butter.

Make the Batter

Sift about half the flour over the remaining egg mixture and, with a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or silicone spatula, fold it in gently but rapidly until almost all the flour has disappeared. Repeat with the remaining flour until all traces of flour have disappeared.

Fold in the butter mixture until just incorporated. With a silicone spatula, reach into the bottom of the pan to be sure to moisten all the flour.

Fill the Pan

Pour the batter into the prepared cavities. It will be ¾ inch from the top of each Mary Ann pan. In the Pyrex dishes, it will be one-third full.

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden brown and the cakes start to shrink slightly from the sides of the cavities. In the Pyrex dessert dishes, the cakes will puff slightly, but will not pull away from the sides. The cakes will rise in the center to a little above the sides of the pans and then sink slightly when baked fully. Avoid opening the oven door before the minimum baking time as these fragile cakes could fall. Test toward the end of baking by opening the oven door a crack and if the cakes don't appear done, continue baking another 5 minutes.

Unmold and Cool the Cakes

To prevent the collapse of its delicate foam structure, while still hot, the génoise must be unmolded as soon as it is baked. Have ready a small metal spatula and a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Immediately loosen the sides of the cakes with a small metal spatula. Place the wire rack on top of the pan and invert it. The Pyrex dishes need to be inverted individually. Cool completely.

Notes

To clarify butter, heat 5 tablespoons/2.5 ounces/71 grams of unsalted butter in a small heavy saucepan over very low heat. Cook uncovered, watching carefully to prevent burning. Move away any foam on the surface to check the progress. For plain clarified butter, when the liquid on top is clear and the white solids are resting on the bottom, remove it from the heat. To make beurre noisette, keep cooking the butter until the milk solids become a deep brown. For either method, immediately pour the butter through a fine-mesh strainer or a strainer lined with cheesecloth, into a heatproof cup.

Wondra flour is easiest to integrate into the batter and results in the most tender texture. You can substitute a combination of 1/3 cup/1.2 ounces/33 grams cake flour (or ¼ cup plus 2 teaspoons/1.2 ounces/33 grams bleached all-purpose flour), sifted into the cup and leveled off, and ¼ cup plus 1 teaspoon/1.2 ounces/33 grams cornstarch, lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off. Sift the flour and cornstarch together before sifting it over the egg mixture.

Syrup  
Makes: ½ cup/4 fluid ounces/4.5 ounces/128 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sugar	2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons	1.2	33
water	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces)	2.7	79
liqueur of your choice, vanilla Cognac, such as Navan, or extra water plus ¼ teaspoon pure vanilla extract	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.6	45

Make the Syrup

In a small saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, stir together the sugar and water until all the sugar is moistened. Bring the mixture to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Cover at once and remove from the heat. Cool completely. Transfer the syrup to a measuring cup with a spout and stir in the liqueur. If the syrup has evaporated slightly, add water to equal ½ cup of syrup.

Apply the Syrup

When the cakes are cool, if you baked the cakes in dessert dishes, leave them inverted and use a small sharp knife to cut a ¼- to 3/8-inch-deep circle out of the center of the cakes, leaving a ¼-inch-wide rim around the outer edges of the cakes. The cakes baked in the Mary Ann pans get their center depression from the shape of the pan. Brush the cakes all over the sides and centers with the syrup, especially on the sides and on top of the borders. There will be 4 teaspoons of syrup for each little cake.

Apricot Glaze  
Makes: ¼ cup/2.3 ounces/69 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
apricot jelly or preserves	¼ cup	3	85
apricot brandy or water	1 or 2 teaspoons	.	.



Make the Apricot Glaze

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a small bowl.

In a small saucepan (or in a heatproof glass measure if using a microwave on high power), heat the apricot jelly until bubbling. Pass it through the prepared strainer. Add the brandy as necessary to achieve a thick consistency that is just barely pourable.

Apply the Glaze

With a small, clean artist's paintbrush or pastry brush, brush the glaze onto the cakes, covering the sides and top borders well to keep them from drying out.

Chocolate Cream Filling

Makes: about 2/3 cup/5 fluid ounces/6 ounces/170 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		2	56
heavy cream	¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons (3.5 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
1 large egg yolk	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.6	18
sugar	1½ tablespoons	0.6	18
salt	pinch	.	.
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Chocolate Cream Filling

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a small glass mixing bowl.

In a small saucepan (or in a microwavable 2-cup heatproof glass measure if using a microwave on high power), heat the chocolate and cream until the chocolate has melted and the mixture is hot but not boiling.

In a small heavy saucepan, using a silicone spatula, stir together the yolk, sugar, and salt until well blended.

Stir a few tablespoons of the hot chocolate mixture into the yolk mixture. Gradually add the remaining chocolate mixture, stirring constantly. Heat the mixture to just below the boiling point to prevent curdling (170° to 180°F/76° to 82°C), stirring constantly. Steam will begin to appear, and the mixture will be slightly thicker than heavy cream. It will leave a well-defined track when a finger is run across the spatula. Immediately remove the pan from the heat and pour the mixture into the strainer, scraping up the thickened cream that settles on the bottom of the pan. Press it through the strainer and stir in the vanilla.

Pour the chocolate cream into a heatproof glass measure and carefully fill each depression in the cakes up to the very top. Cover the cakes, still on the wire rack, with a large cake pan or bowl and allow the mixture to set before applying the drizzle glaze. (To speed setting, put the rack in the refrigerator.)

Chocolate Drizzle Glaze

Makes: 3.5 tablespoons/1.7 ounces/53 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		1	28
heavy cream, hot	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	29

Make the Chocolate Drizzle Glaze

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted.

Pour the cream on top of the chocolate and stir until smooth. The mixture should drop thickly from a spoon. If too thin, allow it to cool for a few minutes.

Apply the Glaze

Pour the mixture into a disposable pastry bag, or a freezer-weight resealable pint- or quart-size plastic bag, and close it securely. Use it at once to pipe onto the cakes. (If using the resealable plastic bag, cut off a very small corner from the bag.) Transfer the cakes to a large plate or individual serving plates, or set a piece of aluminum foil under the wire rack to catch the falling glaze. Drizzle lines of chocolate back and forth over the tops of the cakes, first in one direction (front to back) and then the other (side to side) to form a lacy design of chocolate webbing.

Barcelona Brownie Bars  
Makes: fourteen 3 by 1 by 1 1/8 -inch brownies  
Baking Time: 12 to 15 minutes

An invitation to Barcelona by the L  ku   silicone company to do baking demonstrations at culinary schools resulted in these fudgy brownies. Once you've made them in their individual silicone financier molds, you'll never want to bake them any other way! The brownies pop right out  each a perfect shape and size and with a fine crust all around that helps keep them fresh. It's far easier piping or spooning the batter into the molds than baking them in a square pan and having to cut them afterward. You can even use the batter to make madeleine shapes. These brownies get their moistness from cream cheese. For extra creaminess, little plugs of ganache can be poured into holes made with a chopstick after baking. Chocolate never gets better than this.

Plan Ahead

Make the optional ganache plugs, if using, 1 hour ahead.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
pecans, broken or chopped medium coarse	3/4 cup	2.6	75
unsalted butter	9 tablespoons (1 stick plus 1 tablespoon)	4.5	130
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped	.	2	56
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	1	33
sugar	3/4 cup plus 1/2 tablespoon	5.5	156
2 large eggs, at room temperature	1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
pure vanilla extract	1 1/2 teaspoons	.	.
cream cheese (65�� to 70��F/19�� to 21��C), cut in pieces	.	2	56

all-purpose flour, either bleached or unbleached	1/3 cup (dip and sweep)	1.7	50
salt	pinch	.	.

Special Equipment

Financier mold(s), preferably silicone, 3 by 1 by 1¼ inches high (¼ cup/2 fluid ounces capacity), coated with baking spray with flour. If using silicone, set it on a wire rack and then on a baking sheet. | Pastry bag fitted with a ¼-inch round decorating tip (number 12; optional)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F/160°C.

Toast the Pecans

Place the pecans evenly on a baking sheet and bake them, stirring occasionally, for about 7 minutes, to enhance their flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely.

Melt the Butter and Chocolate

In the top of a double boiler over hot water, heat the butter and chocolate, stirring often, until melted. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the melted chocolate mixture into the bowl of a stand mixer or a large mixing bowl.

Make the Batter: Mixer Method

In the bowl of the stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, beat the melted chocolate mixture with the cocoa and sugar on medium speed until incorporated. Beat in the eggs and vanilla for about 30 seconds. The mixture will become thick and glossy. Beat in the cream cheese until only small bits remain. Add the flour and salt and mix on low speed only until all the flour is moistened, about 10 seconds. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the pecans and mix for 3 seconds.

Make the Batter: Hand Method

In the bowl containing the melted chocolate mixture, whisk in the cocoa and then the sugar until incorporated. Whisk in the eggs and vanilla until the mixture becomes thick and glossy. With a blending fork or wooden spoon, stir in the cream cheese until only small bits remain. Stir in the flour and salt only until all the flour is moistened. Stir in the pecans.

Fill the Molds: Both Methods

Scrape the batter into a pastry bag, if using, or a freezer-weight resealable plastic bag. (You can use a spoon, but it's a lot faster and easier to use a pastry bag or resealable plastic bag with one corner cut.)

Pipe the batter into the cavities, filling them about three-quarters full (1.5 ounces/45 grams in each). Smooth the tops with a small offset spatula or the back of a spoon.

Bake the Brownies

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until the batter has set. An instant-read thermometer should register about 194°F/90°C and the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers. The batter will puff and rise a little above the top of the cavities, but sinks slightly on cooling.

Optional Ganache Plugs

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		2	56
heavy cream	1/3 cup (2.6 fluid ounces)	2.7	77

Make the Ganache Plugs

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water). Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted.

In a 1-cup heatproof glass measure in a microwave or small saucepan, heat the cream, stirring often until warm (110°F/43°C). (Don't worry if it's hotter; it will just take longer for the ganache to cool and thicken to piping consistency.) With a silicone spatula, gradually stir the cream into the melted chocolate until uniform in color.

Allow the ganache to thicken to a soft, pipable consistency (about 72°F/22°C) for about 30 minutes at cool room temperature. If cooling longer, cover it tightly to prevent evaporation. You can speed thickening by placing the ganache in the refrigerator and stirring gently every 10 minutes, but be careful that it doesn't thicken too much to spread easily. If it becomes colder and too stiff, reheat it with few-second bursts in the microwave, or in a double boiler, taking care to stir gently with the silicone spatula so as not to incorporate air and lighten the color. If piping the ganache plugs, scrape the mixture into the prepared pastry bag.

Fill the Brownies If Using the Optional Ganache Plugs

As soon as the brownies are removed from the oven, while still on the rack, oil the end of a wooden chopstick or ¼-inch dowel and insert it into each brownie, at three evenly spaced intervals, all the way to the bottom, twisting slightly as you insert and withdraw it. Pipe or use a spoon to fill the holes with the ganache until slightly rounded above the surface of each brownie.

Cool and Unmold the Brownies

If not making the ganache plugs, unmold the brownies after 10 minutes of cooling. Run a small metal spatula between the side of the mold and the brownies, pressing firmly against the mold. Invert the brownies onto a wire rack and reinvert them onto a second rack. Cool completely. (If using silicone molds, push each brownie out with your finger pressed against the bottom of the mold.)

If making the ganache plugs, let the brownies cool completely in the pan on a wire rack before unmolding. The ganache will sink in as it cools and more ganache can be added to fill in any depressions as long as the brownies are still warm enough to melt it. (If necessary, you can set the brownies under a lamp to heat the ganache plugs and make them smooth.) Allow the brownies to sit at room temperature until the ganache plugs are firm to the touch before unmolding them. If desired, you can then use the leftover ganache to coat the top of the brownies.

The brownies keep individually wrapped in plastic wrap in an airtight container for 1 week at room temperature, for 1 month refrigerated, and for several months frozen. Try eating them frozen or chilled if you like a chewy brownie or at room temperature for a softer, creamier texture.

Variation  
Cherry Version

Replace the pecans with 2 ounces/56 grams dried tart cherries, chopped and macerated in 2 tablespoons Cherry Heering liqueur or 1 tablespoon kirsch and 1 tablespoon water.

Baby Chocolate Oblivions  
Serves: 12  
Baking Time: 15 minutes

There is something special about having a whole little cake that you love all to yourself. Silicone cupcake pans are required for this size cake because they are so flexible, allowing you to unmold the baby cakes easily. My original version of the Chocolate Oblivion, which appears in The Cake Bible, used Lindt chocolate, which was 56 percent cacao. For this baby cake version, I like to use either Valrhona Le Noir Gastronomie, which is 61 percent cacao, or Scharffen Berger, which is 62 percent cacao.

Plan Ahead

Cool the cakes for 45 minutes and refrigerate at least 4 hours ahead of serving.

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		1 pound	454
unsalted butter	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227
sugar	3 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon	1.5	42
6 large eggs	1 cup plus 3 tablespoons (9 fluid ounces)	10.6	300

Special Equipment

Silicone muffin pan with twelve 4-ounce cavities (no need to oil), set on a wire rack, then set in a roasting pan large enough to fit the rack and serve as a water bath | Silicone gloves for removing the hot muffin pans or a poultry baster to remove the hot water after baking | One 13 by 9-inch aluminum foil or metal pan

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 425°F/220°C.

Melt the Chocolate, Butter, and Sugar

In a large heatproof bowl set over a pan of hot, not simmering, water (don't let the bottom of the bowl touch the water), place the chocolate, butter, and sugar and allow them to stand, stirring occasionally, until smooth and melted. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl and set aside.

Beat the Eggs

In the bowl of a stand mixer, with a long-handled whisk, lightly whisk the eggs. Set the bowl over a pan of simmering water and heat just until warm to the touch, stirring constantly with the whisk to prevent curdling.

Immediately remove the bowl to the stand mixer and attach the whisk beater. Beat on high speed for about 5 minutes, until triple in volume and the eggs are billowy and almost ready to form soft peaks when the beater is raised. (If using a handheld mixer, beat the eggs over simmering water until they are hot. Then remove them from the heat and beat for a minimum of 5 minutes.)

Using a large balloon whisk, slotted skimmer, or silicone spatula, fold half the eggs into the chocolate mixture until almost evenly incorporated. Fold in the remaining eggs until almost no streaks remain. Use a silicone spatula to finish folding, scraping up the mixture from the bottom to ensure that all the heavier chocolate mixture gets incorporated.

### Fill the Molds

Spoon the mixture into the cavities of the muffin pan set in the roasting pan, filling each almost to the top. Pour very hot water into the roasting pan so that it reaches about halfway up the sides of the muffin pan.

### Bake the Cakes

Bake for 5 minutes. Invert the 13 by 9-inch pan over the top of the muffin pan so that it is resting on the outer edges of the pan. Continue baking for another 10 minutes. The cakes will appear set but will wobble slightly if the pan is moved. An instant-read thermometer will register 150°F/65°C.

### Chill the Cakes

Remove the roasting pan from the oven. Using silicone gloves, lift out the wire rack with the muffin pan and set it on a countertop to cool. (If not using silicone gloves, siphon off the water with a poultry baster before setting the wire rack and muffin pan on the countertop.) Let the cakes cool in the molds for about 45 minutes, or until barely warm. Set the cakes, still on the rack, in the refrigerator and place the inverted metal pan back on top of them. (If there is not enough room to use the metal pan as a cover, use a piece of domed aluminum foil, tucking the edges under the edges of the muffin pan, making sure the foil does not touch the tops of the cakes.) Refrigerate until very firm, a minimum of 4 hours or up to overnight.

### Unmold the Cakes

Have ready 12 serving plates.

Set a piece of parchment or wax paper on top of the cakes in the muffin pan and set a wire rack on top. Invert the muffin pan onto the lined rack. Use a hot damp dish towel to wipe the sides and the bottom of each mold. The cakes should slip out easily. If necessary, push the bottom of the mold lightly with your thumb, or apply a little more heat with the hot damp towel. Use a small offset spatula to lift each cake from the lined rack and invert it top side up onto the serving plate. Serve with fresh raspberries and whipped cream, if desired. The cakes keep, in an airtight container, for 1 week refrigerated.

### Variation

#### Milk Chocolate Oblivions

Replace 6 ounces/170 grams of the dark chocolate with milk chocolate, 40% to 41% cacao.

### Two Fat Cats Whoopie Pie

Makes: six 3½-inch whoopies

Baking Time: 8 to 10 minutes

Whoopie pie originated in the Pennsylvania Dutch country. There are many versions, including some that use Marshmallow Fluff as part of the filling. This one, created by pastry chef Deborah Hartman, is simply the best! I had never heard of whoopie pie before enjoying it at the Two Fat Cats Bakery in Portland, Maine. There, one of the bakers was in the midst of scooping the chocolate batter onto baking sheets and I was mystified because I never had seen cake batter baked on a flat sheet. Then I was entranced by the soft, moist cake sandwich filled with a sweet, white fluffy buttercream that perfectly balanced the intense bittersweetness of the chocolate. Deborah adds meringue to the creamed butter instead of the reverse, an easier technique all around and one that I now use for all of my mousseline-type buttercreams, including the Whoopie "Marshmallow Cream." Although it's technically a mousseline, it has more than double the butter and three times the sugar of a classic mousseline.



Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped	.	1.5	40
dark brown sugar, preferably Muscovado	½ cup, firmly packed	4.2	120
1 large egg, at room temperature	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.7	50
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	2 tablespoons	1	28
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	2 tablespoons	1	28
bleached all-purpose flour	1 cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus 1½ tablespoons	4.5	125
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	3 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons (sifted before measuring)	0.6	18
baking powder	½ teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	½ teaspoon	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
low-fat buttermilk	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.3	121

Special Equipment

2 baking sheets or inverted half-sheet pans, coated with nonstick cooking spray or shortening (flour not needed)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or longer before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 400°F/200°C.

Melt the Chocolate

Heat the chocolate until almost completely melted. Use a small microwavable bowl, stirring with a silicone spatula every 15 seconds (or use the top of a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, stirring often—do not let the bottom of the container touch the water).

Remove the chocolate from the heat and, with the silicone spatula, stir until fully melted. Set it aside to cool until it is no longer warm to the touch but is still fluid.

Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, beat the brown sugar, egg, oil, and butter on medium speed for about 5 minutes. The mixture will become smooth and paler in color. Lower the speed and beat in the cooled melted chocolate until evenly incorporated.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Sift to remove any lumps from the cocoa and baking soda.

Add the dry ingredients to the egg mixture, alternating with the buttermilk, in three additions. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed and beat just until incorporated, starting on low speed and raising the speed to medium. With a 1-ounce (2-tablespoon) ice cream scoop (number 40), scoop 6 evenly spaced rounded mounds (1.5 ounces/42 grams each) onto one of the prepared baking sheets.

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, rotating the pan after 6 minutes, or until the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers. While they are baking, finish mounding the remaining batter on the second baking sheet and bake as soon as the first batch is removed from the oven.

Cool the Cakes

Let the cakes cool on the pan on a wire rack for 5 to 10 minutes. Using a thin pancake turner, lift them from the pan and set them on wire racks to finish cooling. Store in an airtight container until ready to fill.

Whoopie "Marshmallow Cream"  
Makes: 1 cup plus a rounded 1/3 cup/8.5 ounces/240 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	¼ cup	1.7	50
corn syrup	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1.5	41
water	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.5	14
1 large egg white, at room temperature	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30
cream of tartar	1/8 teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter, preferably high fat (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	1 tablespoon	0.5	14
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Sugar Syrup

This small amount works best made with a handheld mixer.

Have ready a 1-cup or larger heatproof glass measure.

In a small heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, combine the sugar, corn syrup, and water and stir until all the sugar is moistened. Heat, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the mixture is bubbling. Stop stirring and reduce the heat to low. (If using an electric range, remove the pan from the heat.)

Beat the Egg White into a Stiff Meringue

In a mixing bowl with a handheld mixer, beat the egg white on high speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Beat until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Bring the Sugar Syrup to the Proper Temperature

Increase the heat under the sugar syrup and boil until an instant-read thermometer registers 248° to 250°F/120°C (the firm-ball stage). Immediately transfer the syrup to the glass measure to stop the cooking.

Add the Syrup to the Meringue

Beat the syrup into the meringue in a steady stream. Don't allow the syrup to fall on the beaters or they will spin it onto the sides of the bowl. Use a silicone scraper to remove the syrup clinging to the glass measure. Lower the speed slightly and continue beating until the outside of the bowl no

longer feels hot, about 3 minutes. Beat in the butter until smooth. Beat in the vanilla. Refrigerate the meringue mixture for 8 to 10 minutes, or until it is cool but still soft (ideally 70°F/21°C).

Finishing Cream for the "Marshmallow Cream"

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
unsalted butter, high fat, preferably slightly softened but cool (65°F/19°C)	8 tablespoons (1 stick)	4	113
powdered sugar	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off)	1.5	43

Make the Finishing Cream

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, beat the butter and powdered sugar on medium speed until soft and creamy. Attach the whisk beater. Beat on high speed for about 2 minutes, or until the mixture is very light in texture and almost white in color. Lower the speed to medium, add all the meringue, and beat until incorporated and the buttercream is smooth and light in texture, about 10 seconds. Step back on your heels and congratulate yourself for having produced a perfect buttercream.

Compose the Whoopie Pie

Place a mound (about 3 gently rounded tablespoons/almost 1.5 ounces/40 grams) of whoopie cream between two cakes to make a sandwich, pressing down slightly so that cream reaches the edges of the cakes, which have now officially become whoopie pies.

Mud Turtle Cupcakes  
Makes: 16  
Baking Time: 15 to 20 minutes

When I think of mud turtles, I think of my beloved nephew, Alexander, when he was a little boy. He had been given a new slingshot and decided to try it out on a poor unsuspecting mud turtle. Despite a considerable distance, Alex's aim was perfect but happily the turtle was unharmed. What I remember best was his look of astonished pride followed immediately by deep remorse. It told me everything I needed to know about what kind of man he would become. Alex's young son, Haydn, and little daughter, Mary Jane, love this story.

Picture this mud turtle: First you encounter the taste of toasted whole pecans; quickly thereafter, the ganache "mud" mingling with the slightly sticky caramel; finally, your teeth sink into the most tender, full-flavored chocolate cake. (In fact, the cupcakes are so good that you can forgo the "mud" and eat them warm with vanilla bean ice cream.) This is the ultimate crowd-pleaser birthday cake for children and grown-up children alike!

Plan Ahead

Make the ganache several hours before using.



Batter



Volume		Ounce Gram	
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (sifted before measuring)	1.5	42
sour cream	2/3 cup	5.6	160
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (or bleached all-purpose flour)	1½ cups plus 1 tablespoon (or 1¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons), sifted into the cup and leveled off	5.5	156
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking powder	¾ teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	¼ teaspoon	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	14 tablespoons (1¾ sticks)	7	200

### Special Equipment

16 cupcake liners, coated with baking spray with flour, set in muffin pans or custard cups

### Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

### Mix the Cocoa with the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the cocoa, sour cream, eggs, and vanilla just until the consistency of slightly lumpy muffin batter.

### Make the Batter

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and half the cocoa mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. With the mixer off between additions, add the remaining cocoa mixture in two parts, starting on medium-low speed and gradually raising the speed to medium. Beat on medium speed for 30 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Using a silicone spatula, spoon the batter into the prepared cupcake liners, smoothing the surfaces evenly with a small metal spatula. They will be about three-quarters full.

### Bake the Cupcakes

Bake for about 15 to 20 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the centers comes out almost clean and the cupcakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers.

### Cool and Unmold the Cupcakes

Let the cupcakes cool in the pans on wire racks for 10 minutes before unmolding onto the racks. Cool completely.

### Ganache "Mud"

Makes: 1 cup/8.7 ounces/248 grams

Volume		Ounce Gram	
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped	.	4	113
heavy cream	½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (5 fluid ounces)	5	145
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Ganache "Mud"

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

In a 1-cup or larger microwavable cup with a spout (or in a medium saucepan, stirring often), scald the cream (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Pulse in the vanilla. Scrape the ganache into a glass bowl and let it sit for 1 hour. Cover it with plastic wrap and allow it to cool for a few hours, until the mixture reaches frosting consistency.

Soft Sticky Caramel

Makes: ½ cup/4 fluid ounces/5.3 ounces/150 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
corn syrup	½ tablespoon	.	10
water	2 tablespoons (1 fluid ounce)	1	30
heavy cream, hot	3 tablespoons (1.5 fluid ounces)	1.5	44
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	1 tablespoon	0.5	14
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Soft Sticky Caramel

Have ready a 1-cup heatproof glass measure coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

In a medium heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, stir together the sugar, corn syrup, and water until all the sugar is moistened. Heat, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the syrup is bubbling. Stop stirring completely and allow the syrup to boil undisturbed until it turns a deep amber (360°F/180°C) or a few degrees lower because its temperature will continue to rise. Remove it from the heat, and as soon as it reaches temperature, slowly and carefully pour the hot cream into the caramel. It will bubble up furiously.

Use a silicone spatula or wooden spoon to stir the mixture gently, scraping the thicker part that settles on the bottom. Return it to very low heat, continuing to stir gently for 1 minute, or until the mixture is uniform in color and the caramel fully dissolved.

Remove it from the heat and gently stir in the butter until incorporated. The mixture will be a little streaky but becomes uniform once cooled and stirred.

Pour the caramel into the prepared glass measure and allow it to cool for 3 minutes. Gently stir in the vanilla and allow it to cool until no longer warm to the touch, stirring gently three or four times.

Pecan Topping

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
pecan halves	80 (about 3 cups)	10	284
Valrhona Les Perles or mini semisweet chocolate chips (optional)	112 Valrhona Les Perles (1 heaping tablespoon)	0.5	12

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Toast the Pecans

Spread the pecans evenly on a baking sheet and bake for 7 minutes to crisp them slightly and enhance their flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool to room temperature.

Compose the Turtles

The quickest and easiest way to apply the ganache "mud" and the caramel is with a disposable pastry bag or a resealable plastic bag with one corner cut in a semicircle to make a round opening. The turtles will come out just as pretty using a small metal spatula, and you can even apply the cooled caramel with buttered fingers. Measure using teaspoons for the first one to see how much ganache and caramel are intended, and then

you can do the rest by eye. Pipe or spread 2 teaspoons of ganache onto the top of each cupcake. Make a quarter-size hollow in the center and pipe or spoon 1 teaspoon of caramel into it. (If the caramel is too firm, reheat it for a few seconds in the microwave.)

On top of each cupcake, arrange 5 pecans in a star formation that resembles a turtle head and feet. Press them into the caramel and chocolate. (If they don't hold well, set the cupcake in the freezer for a minute or two to firm up the caramel and chocolate.) Pipe or spoon another teaspoon of caramel on top of the center of the pecans and pipe or spread another teaspoon of ganache on top. Press 5 to 7 Les Perles or upside-down mini semisweet chocolate chips, if using, into the chocolate.

Chapter 5: Wedding Cakes

Wedding cakes present the greatest challenge but also the greatest visual opportunity of all cakes. They need to be spectacular—elegant, but not fussy—and they need to be moist enough to give you sufficient time to decorate them. This is a tall order indeed, but here I have created five cakes that meet the criteria. They include, for example, a fabulous chocolate cake with chocolate lacquer glaze and a delicious groom's cake with a hidden treasure of fudgy brownie baked into the already tasty chocolate cake. I've also included instructions for making four different varieties of wedding cupcakes.

Extra Sheet Cakes

The average wedding cake consists of three tiers: 12 inches, 9 inches, and 6 inches. It can feed 150 people. I find it both impractical and undesirable to make larger round tiers. The texture suffers, becoming less fine, and larger tiers are hard to serve in a timely manner: By the time all the cake is served, half the guests may have departed.

For a larger number of servings, you can bake and frost extra layers to be plated behind the scenes. For example, one 12-inch layer will make about 40 more servings. One 18 by 12 by 2-inch sheet pan is the equivalent of two 12-inch layers and will serve 80. But to prevent doming in these large pans, you must increase the leavening slightly for the butter cakes.

Sheet Cake	Total Leavening	Baking Time
Tropical Cake	3 teaspoons baking powder, 4 teaspoons baking soda	40 to 50 minutes
Golden Dream	3½ teaspoons baking powder, 1½ teaspoons baking soda	40 to 50 minutes
Grand Marnier	4 teaspoons baking powder, 1½ teaspoons baking soda	40 to 50 minutes
Deep Chocolate Passion	3½ teaspoons baking powder, 2 teaspoons baking soda	25 to 35 minutes

The Deep Chocolate Passion is an exception, as it needs ½ teaspoon less baking powder rather than more. (If you choose the 100 percent all-purpose flour version, use only 2¼ teaspoons baking powder.) The baking soda remains the same.

For the cakes with syrup, use the same amount as indicated for the two 12-inch layers. There is no need to frost the sides of a sheet cake, so you will need about 4 cups extra frosting for the top. For the Deep Chocolate Passion, however, you will need to increase the Dark Chocolate Lacquer Glaze recipe by one and one-third to ensure that you have enough to cover the top.

Baking the Cake Layers

Large cake pans, such as the 12-inch round ones and the 18-inch sheet cakes, benefit particularly from being encircled or wrapped with cake strips (see [Cake Strips](#)) before baking in order to slow down the baking at the edges. Because the edges are so far from the center of the pan, what happens is that by the time the center sets, it is higher than the sides and the outside edges are overbaked. The strips will keep the layers flatter on top and more moist near the outer edges.

Since cake pans require space between them and the sides of the oven walls for air circulation, you can either mix the batter for each one separately, in which case you can reduce the baking time slightly, or you can fill the cake pans immediately after mixing and refrigerate one while the other is baking. In this case, you will need to bake the refrigerated layer a bit longer (about 10 minutes, depending on the size of the pan).

Baking times are approximate, so be sure to check for doneness toward the estimated end.

If baking on two racks, stagger the pans so that one is not positioned directly over another one on the rack below. After three-quarters of the estimated baking time, for even baking, reposition the cakes quickly top to bottom and turn them halfway around.

Preparing the Layers for Frosting

Wedding cake layers need to be as level as possible. The layers for the [Deep Chocolate Passion Wedding Cake](#) are perfectly level, but some of the layers for the other wedding cakes such as the banana cake layers for the [Tropical Wedding Cake](#) will need to be leveled. If you need to level a cake that contains syrup, such as the cake layers for the [Golden Dream Wedding Cake](#), first brush the layers on both sides with syrup. Reinvert the layers after you level them so that the firm bottom crust is up, which will make them easier to frost. Use a serrated knife that has a blade longer than the diameter of the cake to level it. Cake leveling knives (see [Leveling Knives](#)) also work well. Another method for leveling is to place the cake in the pan in which it was baked and use the rim of the pan as a guide for cutting with a long serrated knife. If the cake sits too low in the pan, you can raise it slightly by placing cardboard rounds underneath it.

To ensure that no cake crumbs get into the frosting, brush off any loose crumbs from the sides of the cake. If the sides are not well sealed with unbroken crust, before frosting the cake, brush them with heated strained apple or apricot jelly or piping gel and allow it to dry until it feels tacky before frosting the cake. It is also possible to apply a very thin layer of frosting to seal in the crumbs before proceeding with the rest of the frosting.

Unmolding the Cake

Large 12-inch layers need to cool in the pan on a wire rack for 20 minutes before unmolding. To unmold the cakes, run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pan and the sides of the cake, pressing against the pan, to ensure the complete release of the cake's sides with crumb intact.

Syrups and Glazes

If you are applying syrups or glazes, after brushing the tops of the cakes with syrup, and leveling them if necessary, the bottom layer of each tier should be inverted directly onto a cardboard round of corresponding size and then brushed with more syrup.

Once syrup is applied to a cake, the cake becomes much more fragile and also sticky, making it more difficult to slide the top layers onto the bottom layers. For the top layers, I find it works best to apply the syrup to the top and bottom of the cakes, and to allow them to cool completely, which will help to firm them and flatten the tops. Then I invert the cakes to level them, if necessary, and reinvert them onto plastic wrap, coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray; nonstick aluminum foil—lined disks; or open-sided baking sheets (I often use the nonstick bottoms of tart pans). You will be better able to slide them off the sheet onto the frosted bottom layers.

Wrap the layers well with plastic wrap until ready to complete the cake.

### Supporting the Cake for Frosting and Tiering

Each tier must be supported by a rigid but lightweight base. You can make your own from cardboard or purchase standard-size corrugated cardboard rounds (see [Cardboard Rounds](#)) that provide just the right distance between the sides of the cake and the edge of the cardboard for frosting, about ¼ inch.

### The Cake Serving Base

In addition to the cardboard support rounds for each tier, you will also need a strong base to support the entire cake. Most cake decorating supply stores have sturdy foam-core cake bases in many sizes, covered with attractive foil. You can also make your own using ¼-inch plywood covered with florist foil or even ¼- to ½-inch sandblasted glass, or 1/8-inch Plexiglas or a mirror. I like the cake base to be 3 to 5 inches larger than the diameter of the bottom layer of the cake. In order to be certain that the cardboard round supporting the bottom cake layer does not slide on the cake base, I spread a thin layer of royal icing (see [Royal Icing, Gum Paste, and Crystallized Flowers](#)) on the cake base before setting the bottom layer on its cardboard round on top of it. It's fine to use a royal icing mix available from cake decorating supply stores (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

### Filling and Frosting the Cake

A heavy-duty turntable (see [Turntables](#)) is indispensable for filling and frosting large cakes.

The amount of frosting between and on top of the layers should be between 1/8 and ¼ inch thick. Use the following guideline for approximate amount of frosting to spread between cake layers.

6-inch layers 1/3 cup

8-inch layers ¾ cup

9-inch layers 1 cup

12-inch layers 1¾ cups

I have offered four different frosting options in this chapter (all but the lacquer glaze can also be used as fillings): [Passion Mousseline and Macadamia Topping](#), [White Chocolate—Vanilla Bean Buttercream](#), [Grand Marnier Ganache](#), and [Dark Chocolate Lacquer Glaze](#). The most versatile is the mousseline, which can be made in many different flavors.

Buttercreams become spongy on sitting at room temperature, so rewhisk them lightly by hand to keep them smooth and creamy.

### Sandwiching the Layers

Begin by spreading a small dab of frosting on the cake round to hold the cake layer in place. Set the cake layer on top. (I like to use nonstick removable bottoms of fluted tart pans to support the cake, but a cake lifter or open-sided baking sheet will also work well, especially if coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.)

Heap a mound of frosting onto the top of the cake and, with a long narrow spatula held at about a 45-degree angle, turn a turntable or spread the frosting in a back-and-forth motion to cover the entire top of the cake. Avoid lifting away the spatula until the crust is covered because it will lift up the crust. Remove any excess frosting. Chill the cake for 5 minutes in the freezer or for about 20 minutes in the refrigerator to set the frosting before placing the second layer on top.

### Applying Frosting to the Sides and Top

Either support the sandwiched cake layers in the palm of one hand or set them on a heavy-duty turntable. (Two-layer cakes larger than 8 inches require the turntable.)

Use a metal spatula to place a large gob of frosting on a side of the cake. Press it from side to side without lifting away the spatula so that it doesn't lift away any crust. Continue all around the cake layer, allowing the frosting to rise about ¼ inch above the top.

Frost the top of the cake in the same way as the top of the first layer. When the entire surface is covered, hold the spatula halfway across the cake with the blade almost flat against the frosting. Pressing lightly, rotate the turntable in one full circle.

Remove the excess frosting from the sides by holding a small metal spatula parallel to the sides and rotating again.

If the cake needs further smoothing, dip a spatula in hot water, shake or wipe off the water, and repeat the smoothing process, pressing lightly because there will be little excess frosting to remove.

If desired, you can use a small metal spatula to make swirls in the top and sides of the frosting.

### Tiering and Transporting the Cake

If at all possible, transport cake layers separately and tier the cake at its final destination. If you are transporting a tiered cake, to keep the tiers from sliding, it is advisable to drive a 3/8-inch wooden dowel, sharpened at one end, through the tiered cake layers. For ease in removal, choose a dowel that is about 6 inches longer than the height of the finished cake. Before placing the cake layers on top, it is a good idea to cut two 1-inch slits in the center of each cardboard round to form an X. This will enable the dowel to penetrate the cardboard without the risk of compressing the frosted cake. There is no need to make the cuts on the cardboard supporting the bottom tier. Use a hammer, tapping gently, to drive the dowel through to the bottom of the cake. When the cake is ready to be displayed, remove the dowel by twisting and pulling it up and out of the cake. Frost or place an ornament on top of the cake to hide the small hole.

Alternatively, you can use a 3/16-inch decoratively covered wooden cake base and a 1/2-inch dowel attached to its center with a flat-head screw (similar to a sheetrock screw). Be sure first to make a hole in the dowel slightly smaller than the screw to prevent the dowel from splitting. The dowel must be shorter than the height of the completed cake. Also drill a slightly larger than 1/2-inch hole in the center of each cardboard round before placing the cake layer on top. When you are ready to tier the cake, lift the layer supporting it with the palms of your hands. Line up the center hole with the top of the dowel and carefully slip the layer down to the base or layer beneath it. To prevent marring the frosting, when the cake layer gets almost to the base or layer beneath it, remove your hands and allow it to drop gently into place.

### Plastic Straw Internal Support

Inflexible plastic drinking straws placed evenly in a circle on each layer that will support another layer ensures that the upper layer will not sink. This was a brainstorm of my husband, Elliott, who assured me that straws could withstand a significant amount of weight without displacing nearly as much cake as wooden dowels, which are much more difficult to cut to size as well.

To insert the straws, first mark an outline on the frosted cake tier of where the next tier will be placed. You can use the pan the layer was baked in as a guide by inverting it over the center and touching it down lightly to mark the frosting. Insert a plastic straw into the center of the cake until it touches the base and use a pencil to mark off on the straw the height of the layer. Remove the straw and cut it off at the pencil mark. Use this straw as a guide to cut other straw supports the same length. (If the cake will be assembled where it will be presented, you can cut the straws 1/8 inch higher than the cake to prevent frosting from sticking to the tier above and make serving easier.)

Insert one straw in the center of the cake (unless you plan to drive a stake through the center) and then insert the other straws in an equidistant circle just inside the guide marks. A 12-inch layer needs eight straws and one for the center. A 9-inch layer needs six straws and one for the center. The top tier does not need straw supports unless something heavy is to be placed on it.

In order to place one tier on top of another, at the beginning you will need an inflexible heavy-duty pancake turner that can support the full weight of each tier, and then a small offset spatula to finish setting the tier in place.

Begin by centering one tier over the tier below, using the outline on the frosting as your guide. Let the side opposite the spatula touch down on the frosting first. Gradually lower the tier, leaving space to keep the spatula from touching the frosting on the tier below. Transfer the weight from the large spatula to the small offset spatula and then remove the larger one. Carefully finish lowering the tier, moving the small spatula out to the very edge and then slipping it out completely.

Pipe a border of buttercream around the base of each tier to seal in the freshness, hide the edges of the cardboard round, and give the edges a finished appearance.



Mark and outline on the frosted cake tier where next tier will be placed using inverted pan/pot lid.



Insert a plastic straw into center of cake until it touches the base; mark straw with pencil at cake's surface.



Cut the marked straw with sharp shears and use this straw as a guide to cut the other straws.



Insert a straw in the center of the cake and other straws evenly spaced within the circle outline.



Using inflexible heavy-duty pancake turner, lift and place one frosted layer on top of another.



Using small offset spatula helps support edge while removing pancake turner.

### Serving the Tiered Cake

Wedding cake portions traditionally are smaller than usual dessert portions because they are most often served after a large dinner that includes other desserts. Some servers cut thin slices from the full height of each sandwiched tier, 4 inches high by 2 inches deep by  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide, but you can also cut a square 2 inches high by 2 inches deep by  $1\frac{5}{8}$  inches wide.

The most practical way to cut 8-inch or larger tiers of wedding cake is in concentric circles until the small 4- to 6-inch center round remains. This section can then be cut into narrow wedges.

After the bride has cut the traditional feed-the-groom first piece from the bottom tier, it is easiest to start cutting slices from the top tier by removing each tier to a countertop before cutting. If you prefer, however, you can also cut the tiers while they are still in place, thanks to the built-in supporting structure. A deeply serrated bread knife works far better than the fancier-looking cake servers generally available.

### Tropical Wedding Cake

Serves: 110 servings (4 by 2 by  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches)



Baking Time: 35 to 45 minutes for the 8-inch, 45 to 55 minutes for the 12-inch layers

I stopped making wedding cakes for a living a long time ago, but when good friends such as Marguerite Thomas and Paul Lukacs got married on May 30, 2002, I made a loving exception. This two-tier banana cake, with its moist, dense, but soft crumb, is enriched with Passion Mousseline and encrusted with lightly toasted macadamia nuts. I decorated the cake with gum paste daisies and then enjoyed it, along with the guests, served with Banfi Rosa Regale.

Twelve large bananas will be more than enough for the cake, but remember to purchase them about a week before you Make the Cake so they become sweet and ripe, with lots of black spots.

Plan Ahead

Bake the cake layers at least 1 day before composing the cake. This allows the cake to become firm enough to make moving the layers easier. Make the buttercream at least 6 hours before using.

Special Equipment

A 6-quart stand mixer\* | Gum paste daisies (see Country Kitchen Sweetart in [Equipment Sources](#)) or miniature daisies and florist's flower sinkers or vials (optional; see [Flower Sinkers](#)) | Cake pans and cake strips | Wire racks for cooling | One 8-inch cardboard round and one 12-inch cardboard round | Cake presentation base, at least 15 inches | Plastic drinking straws for support

\*If using a 5-quart stand mixer, the batter for the two 8-inch pans can be made as one batch, but the batter for the two 12-inch pans will need to be divided in half and made in two batches.



Batter  
For two 8 by 2-inch pans

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
about 4 medium very ripe bananas, peeled and lightly mashed	1½ cups	12	344
sour cream	¾ cup	6	172
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
lemon zest , finely grated	1 tablespoon, loosely packed	.	6
pure vanilla extract	2 teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	3 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	10.6	300



turbinado sugar	1¼ cups	9	255
baking powder	2 teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	1½ teaspoons	.	.
salt	¾ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	226

Special Equipment

Two 8 by 2-inch round cake pans, encircled with cake strips (for silicone strips, see [Cake Strips](#)), bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour

Batter  
For two 12 by 2-inch pans

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
about 8 large very ripe bananas, peeled and lightly mashed	3½ cups	28	800
sour cream	1 2/3 cups	14	400
7 large eggs, at room temperature	1 cup plus 6 tablespoons (11 fluid ounces)	12.3	350
lemon zest, finely grated	2 tablespoons, loosely packed	0.5	12
pure vanilla extract	5 teaspoons	.	.
cake flour (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	7 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	24.7	700
turbinado sugar	3 cups	21.2	600
baking powder	3 teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	3½ teaspoons	.	.
salt	1¾ teaspoons	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	4 sticks plus 3 tablespoons	1 pound 1.5 ounces	500

Special Equipment

Two 12 by 2-inch cake pans, encircled with cake strips, bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set the oven racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Bananas and Liquid Ingredients

In a food processor, process the bananas and sour cream until smooth, stopping the processor and scraping down the sides as needed. Add the eggs, lemon zest, and vanilla and process until combined.

Make the Batters

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and half the banana mixture. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the remaining banana mixture in three parts, beating on medium speed for 20 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pans and smooth the surfaces evenly with a small metal spatula. Each pan should be about half full: 25 ounces/710 grams for the 8-inch pans; 58.5 ounces/1,661 grams for the 12-inch pans.

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes for the 8-inch layers, 45 to 55 minutes for the 12-inch layers, or until a wire cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean and the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers. The cakes should start to shrink from the sides of the pans only after removal from the oven.

Cool and Unmold the Cakes

Let the cakes cool in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes for the 8-inch layers, 20 minutes for the 12-inch layers. Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes and invert the cakes onto wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. To prevent splitting, reinvert them so that the tops are up. Cool completely. The cakes will keep, wrapped airtight or in an airtight container, for 3 days at room temperature, for 5 days refrigerated, and for 3 months frozen.

Note

Cake flour is necessary for this cake as the higher protein of all-purpose flour would result in overbrowning for the 12-inch layers.

Passion Mousseline and Macadamia Topping  
Serves: about 9½ cups/almost 4 pounds/1 kilogram 800 grams  
Classic Passion Curd  
Serves: 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons/9 ounces/258 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
about 3 large egg yolks, at room temperature	3½ tablespoons (1.7 fluid ounces)	2	56
sugar	½ cup	3.5	100
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	3 tablespoons	1.5	42
fresh or frozen passion puree (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	½ cup, divided (4 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
salt	pinch	.	.

Make the Classic Passion Curd

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium bowl.

In a heavy saucepan, whisk the yolks, sugar, and butter until well blended. Whisk in 5 tablespoons of the passion puree and the salt. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula (be sure to scrape the sides of the pan), until thickened and resembling hollandaise sauce, which thickly coats the spatula but is still liquid enough to pour. The mixture will change from translucent to opaque and begin to have a rich golden color on the spatula. Don't allow the mixture to come to a boil or it will curdle. Whenever steam appears, briefly remove the pan from the heat, stirring constantly to keep the mixture from boiling. When the curd has thickened and will pool thickly when a little is dropped on its surface, pour it at once into the strainer and press it through with the spatula. Gently stir in the remaining 3 tablespoons of the passion puree and allow the curd to cool for 30 minutes. Cover tightly and refrigerate until no longer warm, about 3 hours. The passion curd keeps, in an airtight jar or container, for 3 weeks refrigerated. (Longer storage dulls the fresh citrus flavor.)

Note

If using Perfect Purée concentrate (see [Purees](#)), use only 5 tablespoons and add it all at the beginning.

Completed Mousseline and Macadamia Topping

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsalted butter, preferably high fat, softened but cool (65°F/19°C)	7 sticks plus 2 tablespoons	1 pound 13 ounces	822
9 large egg whites, at room temperature	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (9 fluid ounces)	9.5	270
sugar	1¾ cups plus 1 tablespoon, divided	12.7	360
water	¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons (3.5 fluid ounces)	3.6	103

cream of tartar	1 1/8 teaspoons	.	.
vanilla Cognac, such as Navan, or vanilla liqueur (or pure vanilla extract) ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (or 2 teaspoons)	4.5		128
Classic Passion Curd	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons	9	258
unsalted macadamia nut pieces	.	1 pound	454

Complete the Mousseline

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, beat the butter on medium-high speed until creamy, about 1 minute. Set aside in a cool place (no warmer than 70°F/21°C).

Prepare the Egg Whites

Pour the egg whites into the bowl of a stand mixer if you have a second bowl, or in a large bowl and have ready a handheld mixer.

Heat the Sugar Syrup

Have ready a 2-cup or larger heatproof glass measure.

In a small heavy saucepan, preferably nonstick, stir together 1½ cups of the sugar and the water until all the sugar is moistened. Heat on medium, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves and the mixture is bubbling. Stop stirring and reduce the heat to low. (If using an electric range, remove the pan from the heat.)

Beat the Egg Whites

Attach the whisk beater. Beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form when the beater is raised. Gradually beat in the remaining sugar until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Bring the Sugar Syrup to the Proper Temperature

Increase the heat under the sugar syrup and boil the syrup for a few minutes until an instant-read thermometer registers 248° to 250°F/120°C (the firm-ball stage). Immediately transfer the syrup to the glass measure to stop the cooking.

Add the Sugar Syrup to the Egg Whites

If using a stand mixer, with the mixer off, pour a small amount of syrup into the egg whites. Immediately beat on high speed for 5 seconds. Add the remaining syrup the same way in four parts. For the last addition, use a silicone spatula to remove the syrup clinging to the glass measure and scrape it off against the beater. If the syrup has hardened before most of it has been poured, soften it to pouring consistency for a few seconds in the microwave.

If using a handheld mixer, beat the syrup into the egg whites in a steady stream. Don't allow the syrup to fall on the beaters or they will spin it onto the sides of the bowl. Lower the speed to medium and continue beating for up to 2 minutes. Refrigerate the meringue for 20 to 30 minutes, until 70°F/21°C. Lightly whisk every 10 minutes to test and equalize the temperature.

Beat the Meringue into the Butter

Set the mixer bowl containing the butter in the stand and attach the whisk beater that was used for the egg whites (no need to wash it). Beat on medium-high speed for about 3 minutes, or until the butter lightens in color and is no warmer than 70°F/21°C.

With the silicone spatula, scrape the meringue into the butter. Beat on medium speed until smooth and creamy, about 2 minutes, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary. At first the mixture will look slightly curdled. If it starts to water out, check the temperature. It should feel cool and be no lower than 65°F/19°C, no higher than 70°F/21°C. If it is too warm, set it in a bowl of ice water (see [Water Baths](#)), stirring gently to chill it before continuing to whisk. If it is too cool, suspend the bowl over a pan of simmering water and heat very briefly, stirring vigorously when the mixture just starts to melt slightly at the edges. (Don't let the bottom of the container touch the water.) To stop the warming, dip the bottom of the bowl in a larger bowl of ice water for a few seconds to cool it. Remove the bowl from the ice water and beat the mousseline by hand until smooth.

On medium-low speed, beat in the Cognac until incorporated. Add the passion curd and continue beating until smoothly incorporated.

Use the mousseline to fill and frost the cake. The mousseline becomes spongy and fluffy on standing, which is lovely, but not until after it's applied to the cake. If you don't use it right away, whisk it lightly by hand to maintain a silky texture before applying it to the cake. Do not, however, rebeat chilled mousseline until it has reached 70°F/21°C in order to prevent it from breaking down.

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F/160°C.

Toast the Macadamia Nuts

Spread the nuts evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 12 minutes, or until pale golden. Watch carefully after the first 7 minutes, and stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and to avoid overbrowning. Cool completely. You will have about 4 ounces/113 grams macadamia nuts left over with which to garnish the serving plates.

Apply the Macadamia Nuts

It helps to have a very large bowl for the nuts. Then you can hold a frosted cake layer directly over the bowl, tilt it slightly toward your other hand, and scoop up a handful of nuts. Press them gently into the sides of the cake, allowing any that don't adhere to fall back into the bowl.

Compose the Cake

See the introduction beginning with [Preparing the Layers for Frosting](#) for filling, frosting, and composing a wedding cake. The nature of banana cake is that most of each cake layer will be 2 inches high, but starting at about 1 inch from the edges, it starts to slope to 1½ inches and at the very edge to 1¼ inches. My preference is to trim and level each layer to 1½ inches and use extra buttercream to fill in the small gap at the edges. You can also opt to leave the layers untrimmed and use more buttercream to fill the larger gaps at the edges (make 1.33 times the mousseline). If an eccentric design is desired, mark the placement and set the support straws so that the top tier is about ½ inch in from the edge of the bottom tier. To pipe the beaded border, see [Decorative Piping](#).

Golden Dream Wedding Cake

Serves: 150 servings (4 by 2 by ¾ inches)

Baking Time: 35 to 45 minutes for the 6-inch, 45 to 55 minutes for the 9-inch, 50 to 60 minutes for the 12-inch layers

This cake, which I designed for Devon Updegraf and Eric Day for their wedding on March 28, 2009, consists of three tiers (two layers each) of butter-rich lemon almond cake moistened with lemon syrup. Each tier is then sandwiched and frosted with lemon-flavored White Chocolate-Vanilla Bean Buttercream and, if desired, graced with easy-to-make lemon peel roses (see [Dazzling Lemon and Orange Peel Roses](#)).

This buttercream is lighter in texture than the one prepared with lemon curd (see [White Chocolate Lemon Buttercream](#)), but the addition of the lemon zest and lemon oil, if using, gives it a lovely lemon flavor that blends perfectly with the lemon of the cake. The benefit of the lemon oil rather than extra zest is that it punches up the flavor without adding more texture.

You can keep the cake component fresh for three days at room temperature, which makes it an ideal choice if you plan to use rolled fondant or create elaborate decorations. If you plan only to frost the cake, you can store the frosted cake either at cool room temperature (70°F/21°C) no longer than one day or in the refrigerator for up to three days.

Plan Ahead

Bake the cake layers at least 1 day before composing the cake. This gives the syrup a chance to moisten the cake evenly and the crumb to become firm enough to make moving the layers easier. Make the two batches of buttercream at least 6 hours before using.

Special Equipment

A 6-quart stand mixer\* | Cake pans and cake strips | Wire racks for cooling | Cardboard rounds | A cake presentation base, at least 15 inches | Plastic drinking straws for support | Gold and silver ribbon lined with parchment and gold and silver dust (optional; see [Gold](#))

\*If using a 5-quart stand mixer, divide the batters in half and make each in two batches.



Batter

For two 6 by 2-inch pans and two 9 by 2-inch pans

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
blanched sliced almonds	1½ cups	5.3	150

turbinado sugar	3 cups plus 2 tablespoons, divided	22	625
7 large eggs, at room temperature	1¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons (11 fluid ounces)	12.3	350
about 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.6	18
sour cream	2 cups, divided	17	484
pure vanilla extract	4 teaspoons	.	.
pure lemon oil, preferably Boyajian	1 teaspoon	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	5½ cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	22	625
baking powder	4 1/8 teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	1¼ teaspoons	.	.
salt	1¾ teaspoons	.	.
lemon zest, finely grated (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	5 tablespoons, loosely packed	1	30
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	5 sticks	1 pound 4 ounces	567

Special Equipment

Two 6 by 2-inch round cake pans and two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, encircled with cake strips (for silicone strips, see [Cake Strips](#)), bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour

Batter  
For two 12 by 2-inch pans

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
blanched sliced almonds	1¾ cups	6.3	180
turbinado sugar	3¾ cups, divided	26.5	750
9 large eggs, at room temperature	1¾ cups (14 fluid ounces)	15.7	450
sour cream	2½ cups, divided	21.2	600
pure vanilla extract	4½ teaspoons	.	.
pure lemon oil, preferably Boyajian	1 teaspoon	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	6 2/3 (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	26.5	750
baking powder	3 1/8 teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	1½ teaspoons	.	.
salt	2 teaspoons	.	.

lemon zest, finely grated (see [Note](#)) 6 tablespoons, loosely packed 1.3 36

unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C) 6 sticks 1 pound 8 ounces 680

Special Equipment

Two 12 by 2-inch round cake pans, encircled with cake strips, bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, and coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set the oven racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Toast and Grind the Almonds

Spread the almonds evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes, or until pale golden. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely. In a food processor, process until fairly fine. Add about 2/3 cup of the sugar and process until very fine.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, the sour cream (2/3 cup for the 6- and 9-inch batter, ¾ cup for the 12-inch batter), the vanilla, and lemon oil just until lightly combined.

Make the Batters

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the ground almonds, the remaining sugar, the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and lemon zest on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining sour cream. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in three parts, beating on medium speed for 20 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pans and smooth the surfaces with a small offset spatula. Each pan should be about half full.

For the 6- and 9-inch layers, begin by spooning the batter into each 6-inch pan to fill half full (14 ounces/400 grams). Scrape the rest into each 9-inch pan (35.3 ounces/1,000 grams).

For the 12-inch layers, divide the batter evenly between the two pans (60.2 ounces/1,708 grams in each pan).

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes for the 6-inch layers, 45 to 55 minutes for the 9-inch layers, and 50 to 60 minutes for the 12-inch layers, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the centers comes out clean and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the centers registers 200° to 205°F/93° to 96°C. The cakes should just begin to come away from the sides of the pan.

While the cakes are baking, prepare the wire racks or clean surfaces for unmolding. You will need a wire rack for each layer. Also, for each set of layers, you will need one cardboard round base of the corresponding size (6, 9, and 12 inches) for the bottom layers and, for inverting and transferring the upper layers, two flat supporting surfaces at least the diameter of the layers, such as additional cardboard rounds, baking sheets with at least one open side, or the loose bottoms of fluted tart pans. In order to prevent sticking and ensure that the upper layer will slide readily off the supporting surface, cover the surface with plastic wrap or aluminum foil that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Shortly before the cakes are finished baking, make the lemon syrup. If desired, the syrup can be made in one large batch and divided before use.

Note

You can substitute a good-quality lemon oil, such as Boyajian, for the zest. (The lemon oil is very intense. Replace the 5 tablespoons or the 6 tablespoons with 1 additional teaspoon oil.)

Lemon Syrup

Serves: 1 1/3 cups/10.6 fluid ounces/14 ounces/400 grams

For the 6- and 9-inch layers

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
turbinado sugar	1¼ cups	8.7	250
lemon juice, freshly squeezed ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (5 fluid ounces)	5.6	160	

Serves: 1½ cups/12 fluid ounces/17 ounces/480 grams

For the 12-inch layers

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
turbinado sugar	1½ cups	10.6	300

Make the Lemon Syrup

In a 2-cup or larger microwavable measure (or in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), heat the sugar and lemon juice until the sugar is dissolved. Do not allow it to boil. Cover it to prevent evaporation. You may want to divide the syrup into separate containers to make it easier to control the amount brushed on each side of each layer. Each 6-inch layer needs a total of 3 tablespoons/2 ounces/59 grams; each 9-inch layer, a total of ¼ cup plus 3½ tablespoons/5 ounces/141 grams; and each 12-inch layer, a total of ¾ cup/8.5 ounces/240 grams.

Apply Half the Syrup

As soon as the cakes come out of the oven, place each pan on a wire rack, poke the cakes all over with a thin skewer, and brush the cakes with half the appropriate amount of syrup. Apply more toward the edges and less toward the center. Allow the 6- and 9-inch layers to cool for 10 minutes and the 12-inch layers for 20 minutes before unmolding.

Unmold the Cakes and Apply the Remaining Syrup

Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans. Working with one layer of each size at a time (these will be the top layers), set the prepared supporting surface on top of the cake and invert the cake onto it. Remove the pan and poke the bottom of the cake all over with the skewer. Brush the bottom of the cake with the appropriate amount of syrup, again applying more toward the edges and less toward the center. Cool completely. If the cake had a slight dome, it will have flattened on cooling, but if necessary, reinvert the cake onto the second prepared supporting surface. Trim the cake to make it level and reinvert it so that the firm bottom crust is up, which will make it easier to frost.

Brush and trim each remaining layer, if necessary, and invert directly onto a cardboard round base of the corresponding size (6, 9, and 12 inches). Wrap the layers well with plastic wrap that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray and let them sit at room temperature for at least 1 day. If desired, after this preliminary 24 hours at room temperature, the layers can be stored for 3 days at room temperature, for 1 week refrigerated, and up to 3 months frozen.

White Chocolate-Vanilla Bean Buttercream  
Serves: 14 cups/6 pounds/2 kilograms 740 grams  
White Chocolate Custard Base  
Serves: 4¼ cups/2 pounds 7.5 ounces/1 kilogram 120 grams

Make 2 batches.

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
white chocolate containing cocoa butter and vanilla seeds, preferably Green & Black's, chopped (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	.	1 pound 2.5 ounces	525
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	2¼ sticks plus ½ tablespoon	9.2	262
7 large eggs, at room temperature	1¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons	12.3	350

Make the White Chocolate Custard Base

Combine the white chocolate and butter in a large bowl set over hot, not simmering, water. Melt the mixture, stirring often until smooth and creamy. (Don't let the bottom of the container touch the water.)

Whisk the eggs lightly to break them up and then whisk them into the melted white chocolate mixture. Continue whisking and heating the mixture until an instant-read thermometer registers 140°F/60°C. The mixture will have thickened slightly. Remove the bowl from the heat. Cover and refrigerate for 2 to 2½ hours, stirring every 20 minutes until cool to the touch. An instant-read thermometer should register 65° to 70°F/19° to 21°C.

Completed White Chocolate-Vanilla Bean Buttercream

Make 2 batches.

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	2 sticks plus 1½ tablespoons	8.7	248
White Chocolate Custard Base	4¼ cups	2 pounds 7.5 ounces	1 kilogram 120
lemon zest, finely grated	1 tablespoon, loosely packed	0.2	6



lemon oil (optional)  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon

### Complete the Buttercream

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the butter on medium speed until creamy, about 30 seconds. Gradually beat the white chocolate custard base into the butter, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Raise the speed to medium-high and beat for 2 minutes until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised. Add the lemon zest and lemon oil, if using; beat for a few seconds until evenly incorporated. Cover and set aside at cool room temperature for 2 hours, or until the mixture is slightly thickened and spongy. It should be no warmer than 70°F/21°C. If necessary, chill it in an ice water bath (see [Water Baths](#)) for a few minutes, stirring constantly. Beat on medium-high speed for 1 minute until smooth, light, and creamy. Use the buttercream to fill and frost the cake. The buttercream keeps for 1 day at room temperature, for 1 week refrigerated, and for 3 months frozen.

### Compose the Cake

See the introduction beginning with [Preparing the Layers for Frosting](#) for filling, frosting, and composing a wedding cake. Encircle each tier with a glittery ribbon, and decorate the cake with Dazzling Lemon Peel Roses (see [Dazzling Lemon and Orange Peel Roses](#)), if desired.

### Note

Green & Black's white chocolate contains vanilla seeds. If using another high-quality white chocolate such as Valrhona, which doesn't contain vanilla seeds, you can scrape the seeds of two vanilla beans into the white chocolate mixture or add 2 teaspoons of pure vanilla extract with the custard base.

Grand Marnier Wedding Cake with the "In Love" topper from Steuben Glass (see [Equipment Sources](#))

Grand Marnier Wedding Cake

Serves: 150 servings (4 by 2 by  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches)

Baking Time: 35 to 45 minutes for the 6-inch, 45 to 55 minutes for the 9-inch, 50 to 60 minutes for the 12-inch layers

A dream I had was to offer one of my favorite cakes from my Cordon Rose Cooking School, the Gâteau au Grand Marnier et Chocolat, as a special wedding cake with three tiers (two layers each), frosted and filled with Grand Marnier Ganache. All of my testing with the larger layers was well worth it. And the cake has the extraordinary virtue of staying moist and delicious for up to three days at room temperature, even after you frost it.

### Plan Ahead

Bake the cake layers at least 1 day before composing the cake. This gives the syrup a chance to moisten the cake evenly and the crumb to become firm enough to make moving the layers easier. Make the 2 batches of ganache at least 6 hours before using.

### Special Equipment

A 6-quart stand mixer\* | Cake pans and cake strips | Wire racks for cooling | Cardboard rounds | A cake presentation base, at least 15 inches | Plastic drinking straws for support

\*If using a 5-quart stand mixer, divide the batters in half and make each in two batches.



### Batter

For two 6 by 2-inch pans and two 9 by 2-inch pans



	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sliced almonds, preferably unblanched	1½ cups	5.3	150
superfine sugar	2½ cups, divided	17.6	500
Valrhona Les Perles or mini semisweet chocolate chips	1¼ cups	7.5	212
Grand Marnier	1 teaspoon	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	4 teaspoons	.	.
7 large eggs, at room temperature	1¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons (11 fluid ounces)	12.2	350
about 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature	1 tablespoon (0.5 fluid ounce)	0.6	18
sour cream	2 cups, divided	17	484
pure vanilla extract	2 teaspoons	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	5½ cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	22	625
baking powder	3½ teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	1½ teaspoons	.	.
salt	2 teaspoons	.	.
orange zest, finely grated (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	5 tablespoons, loosely packed	1	30
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	5 sticks	1 pound 4 ounces	567

Special Equipment

Two 6 by 2-inch round cake pans and two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans, encircled with cake strips (for silicone strips, see [Cake Strips](#)), bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour

Batter  
For two 12 by 2-inch pans

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sliced almonds, preferably unblanched	1¾ cups	6.3	180
superfine sugar	3 cups, divided	21	600
Valrhona Les Perles or mini semisweet chocolate chips	1½ cups	9	255
Grand Marnier	1 teaspoon	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	4 teaspoons	.	.
9 large eggs, at room temperature	1¾ cups (14 fluid ounces)	15.7	450
sour cream	2½ cups, divided	21.2	600

pure vanilla extract	2½ teaspoons	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	6 2/3 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	26.5	750
baking powder	3 teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	1½ teaspoons	.	.
salt	2½ teaspoons	.	.
orange zest, finely grated (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	6 tablespoons, loosely packed	1.3	36
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	6 sticks	1 pound 8 ounces	680

Special Equipment

Two 12 by 2-inch cake pans, encircled with cake strips, bottoms coated with shortening, topped with parchment rounds, then coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set the oven racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Toast and Grind the Almonds

Spread the almonds evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 7 minutes, or until pale golden. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. Cool completely. In a food processor, process until fairly fine. Add about 2/3 cup of the sugar and process until very fine.

Coat Les Perles

In a medium bowl, toss Les Perles and Grand Marnier until they are moistened and shiny. Add the 4 teaspoons of flour and toss until evenly coated.

Mix the Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, lightly whisk the eggs (and the extra yolk for the 6 and 9-inch batter), the sour cream (½ cup for the 6 and 9-inch batter, 2/3 cup for the 12-inch batter), and the vanilla just until combined.

Make the Batters

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the ground almonds, the remaining sugar, the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and orange zest on low speed for 30 seconds. Add the butter and the remaining sour cream. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Starting on medium-low speed, gradually add the egg mixture in three parts, beating on medium speed for 20 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure.

Remove the bowl from the stand. With a large silicone spatula, scrape down the sides and fold in Les Perles. Using the silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pans and smooth the surfaces with a small offset spatula.

For the 6- and 9-inch layers, begin by spooning the batter into each 6-inch pan to fill half full (14 ounces/400 grams). Scrape the rest into each 9-inch pan, which will be two-thirds full (36.7 ounces/1,043 grams).

For the 12-inch layers, divide the batter evenly between the two pans (62.5 ounces/1,773 grams in each pan). They will be a little more than half full.

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 35 to 45 minutes for the 6-inch layers, 45 to 55 minutes for the 9-inch layers, and 50 to 60 minutes for the 12-inch layers, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the centers comes out clean and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the centers registers 200° to 205°F (93° to 96°C). The cakes should just begin to come away from the sides of the pans.

While the cakes are baking, prepare the wire racks or clean surfaces for unmolding. You will need a wire rack for each layer. Also, for each set of layers, you will need one cardboard round base of the corresponding size (6, 9, and 12 inches) for the bottom layers and, for inverting and transferring the upper layers, two flat supporting surfaces at least the diameter of the layers, such as additional cardboard rounds, baking sheets with at least one open side, or the loose bottoms of fluted tart pans. In order to prevent sticking and ensure that the upper layer will slide readily off the supporting surface, cover the surface with plastic wrap or aluminum foil that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Shortly before the cakes are finished baking, make the Grand Marnier syrup. If desired, the syrup can be made in one large batch and divided before use.

Note

You can substitute a good-quality orange oil, such as Boyajian, for the zest. (The orange oil is very intense. Replace the 5 tablespoons or the 6 tablespoons with 1 teaspoon oil.)

Grand Marnier Syrup  
Serves: 2 cups plus 2 tablespoons/17 fluid ounces/21.2 ounces/600 grams  
For the 6-inch and 9-inch layers

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sugar	1¼ cups	8.7	250
Grand Marnier (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8	230
orange juice, freshly squeezed	½ cup (4 fluid ounces)	4.3	121

Serves: 2½ cups/20 fluid ounces/25.4 ounces/720 grams  
For the 12-inch layers

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sugar	1½ cups	10.6	300
Grand Marnier (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1¼ cups (10 fluid ounces)	10	284
orange juice, freshly squeezed	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5	144

Make the Grand Marnier Syrup

In a 4-cup microwavable measure (or in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring often), heat the sugar, Grand Marnier, and orange juice until the sugar is dissolved. Do not allow it to boil. Cover it tightly to prevent evaporation. You may want to divide the syrup into separate containers to make it easier to control the amount brushed on each side of each layer. Each 6-inch layer needs a total of ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon/3 ounces/88 grams; each 9-inch layer, a total of ¾ cup/7.5 ounces/212 grams; and each 12-inch layer, a total of 1¼ cups/12.7 ounces/360 grams.

Note

For a more pronounced flavor of Grand Marnier, it's fine to increase it and decrease the orange juice proportionately.

Apply Half the Syrup

As soon as the cakes come out of the oven, place each pan on a wire rack, poke the cakes all over with a thin skewer, and brush the cakes with half the appropriate amount of syrup. Apply more toward the edges and less toward the centers. Allow the 6- and 9-inch layers to cool for 10 minutes and the 12-inch layers for 20 minutes before unmolding and brushing them with the remaining half of the syrup.

Unmold the Cakes and Apply the Remaining Syrup

Run a small metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the pans. Working with one layer of each size at a time (these will be the top layers), set the prepared supporting surface on top of the cake and invert the cake onto it. Remove the pan and poke the bottom of the cake all over with the skewer. Brush the bottom of the cake with the appropriate amount of syrup, again applying more toward the edges and less toward the center. Cool completely. If the cake had a slight dome, it will have flattened on cooling, but if necessary, reinvert the cake onto the second prepared supporting surface. Trim the cake to make it level and reinvert it so that the firm bottom crust is up, which will make it easier to frost.

Brush and trim each remaining layer, if necessary, and invert directly onto a cardboard round base of the corresponding size (6, 9, and 12 inches). Wrap the layers well with plastic wrap that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray and let them sit at room temperature for at least 1 day. If desired, after this preliminary 24 hours at room temperature, the layers can be stored for 3 to 5 days at room temperature, for 1 week refrigerated, and up to 3 months frozen.

Grand Marnier Ganache  
Serves: 6 cups plus 2 tablespoons/3½ pounds/1 kilogram 587 grams

Make 2 batches

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped	.	1.5 pounds	680

heavy cream	3 cups (24 fluid ounces)	1.5 pounds	680
unsalted butter, preferably high fat (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	16 tablespoons (2 sticks)	8	227
Grand Marnier	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2.2	61

Make the Grand Marnier Ganache

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a large glass bowl. In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

In a 4-cup microwavable measure (or in a medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring often), scald the cream (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Pulse in the butter. With the motor running, add the Grand Marnier. Press the ganache through the strainer and let it sit for 1 hour. Cover with plastic wrap and allow the mixture to cool for several hours, until it reaches frosting consistency. (There is no need to wash the food processor between batches; just wipe it out with a paper towel.)

Use the ganache to fill and frost the cake. Use one batch for the 6- and 9-inch layers and one batch for the 12-inch layers. If not using the ganache the same day, store it between 70° and 80°F/21° and 26°C so that it remains spreadable. If it becomes colder and too stiff, reheat it with a few-second bursts in the microwave or in a double boiler. Be sure to stir gently with a silicone spatula so as not to incorporate air and lighten the color. The ganache keeps for 3 days at room temperature, for 3 weeks refrigerated, and for 6 months frozen.

Compose the Cake

See the introduction beginning with [Preparing the Layers for Frosting](#) for filling, frosting, and composing a wedding cake. Place Les Perles around the base of each tier and on the sides as well. (You will need about 2/3 cup/4 ounces/113 grams of Les Perles.) Alternatively, pipe small beads of the ganache (see [Decorative Piping](#)) around the base to hide the cardboard round.

Deep Chocolate Passion Wedding Cake  
Serves: 150 servings (4 by 2 by ¾ inches)  
Baking Time: 20 to 25 minutes for the 6-inch, 25 to 35 minutes for the 9-inch, 30 to 40 minutes for the 12-inch layers

At last, a dark moist chocolate winter wonderland! This is the cake I designed for Alexandra Foote and Daniel Patterson when they married on Epiphany, January 6, 2007. It is the large version of my German chocolate cake base. I was amazed to discover that even though this cake is light, moist, and tender, it has just enough structure to be made as large as twelve inches and also to support three tiers on top. The cake's three tiers are two layers each and syruped with milk chocolate ganache, then filled and frosted with either white chocolate buttercream or dark chocolate ganache, and glazed with dark chocolate lacquer glaze. The cake component also stays moist and fresh for three days at room temperature. Once you syrup, frost, and glaze it, it can stay at room temperature for twenty-four to thirty-six hours.

For a more traditional appearance, instead of the lacquer glaze, you can adorn the cake with swirls of [White Chocolate-Vanilla Bean Buttercream](#). It is quite dramatic when the bride cuts into the ivory cake to reveal its dark chocolate interior! Another spectacular option is to use this buttercream in place of the ganache undercoat.

This cake weighs in at 17 pounds/7.7 kilograms, and the ingredients alone are very expensive, not to mention the investment of your time and skill. For the most fabulous and rewarding results, and to justify the effort, it is really worth splurging on the best-quality chocolates and cocoa.

Plan Ahead

Start the cake at least 2 days before the event. Make the ganache undercoat several hours ahead. Bake the cakes, and apply the syrup and the ganache undercoat, at least 1 day before glazing and composing the cake. This gives the syrup a chance to moisten the cake evenly and the crumb to become firm enough to make moving the layers easier. If desired, after this preliminary sitting at room temperature, they can be frozen for up to three months. Make the lacquer glaze 8 hours or up to 1 week ahead. Let the glaze set on the cakes for a minimum of 4 hours before tiering.

Special Equipment

A 6-quart stand mixer\* | An instant-read thermometer for the glaze | Cake pans and cake strips | Wire racks for cooling | Cardboard rounds | A cake presentation base, at least 15 inches | Plastic drinking straws for support

\*If using a 5-quart mixer, the batter for the two 6-inch and two 9-inch layers can be made as one batch, but the batter for the two 12-inch layers will need to be divided in half and made in two batches.



Batter

For two 6 by 2-inch pans and two 9 by 2-inch pans

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	1 1/3 cups (sifted before measuring)	3.5	100
boiling water	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.2	177
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	5.7	161
about 6 large eggs, separated, plus 3 additional whites, at room temperature:	¼ cup plus 3 tablespoons (3.5 fluid ounces)	4	112
yolks	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (9 fluid ounces)	9.5	270
whites			
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
cake flour (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1 cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus 2 tablespoons	4	112
bleached all-purpose flour (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1 cup (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	4	112
superfine sugar	2¼ cups	15.7	450
baking powder	3 teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	1½ teaspoons	.	.
salt	¼ plus 1/8 teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

Two 6 by 2-inch cake pans and two 9 by 2-inch cake pans, encircled with cake strips (for silicone strips, see [Cake Strips](#)), bottoms coated with shortening, then topped with parchment rounds. (Leave the sides uncoated to prevent the tops of the cakes from shrinking inward.)

Batter

For two 12 by 2-inch pans

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	1¾ cups (sifted before measuring)	4.7	132
boiling water	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.3	236
canola or safflower oil, at room temperature	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	7.6	215
about 8 large eggs, separated, plus 4 additional whites, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (4.5 fluid ounces)	5.3 ounces	150 grams
yolks	1½ cups (12 fluid ounces)	12.7 ounces	360 grams
whites			
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.
cake flour (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1½ cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	5.3	150
bleached all-purpose flour (see <a href="#">Note</a> )	1 1/3 cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off)	5.3	150
superfine sugar	3 cups	21.2	600
baking powder	4 teaspoons	.	.
baking soda	2 teaspoons	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.

Special Equipment

Two 12 by 2-inch cake pans, encircled with cake strips, bottoms coated with shortening, then topped with parchment rounds. (Leave the sides uncoated to prevent the tops of the cakes from shrinking inward.)

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set the oven racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Cocoa and Liquid Ingredients

In the bowl of a stand mixer, by hand, whisk the cocoa and boiling water until smooth. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and cool the mixture to room temperature, about 1 hour. To speed cooling, place it in the refrigerator. Bring it to room temperature before proceeding.

Add the oil and yolks to the mixer bowl. Attach the whisk beater. Starting on low speed, gradually raise the speed to medium. Beat for about 1 minute, or until smooth and shiny, and resembling a buttercream. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Beat in the vanilla for a few seconds.

Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flours, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.

Make the Batters

Add half of the flour mixture to the chocolate mixture. Starting on low speed, beat until the dry ingredients are moistened. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Repeat with the remaining flour mixture. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, raise the speed to medium-high and beat for 1 minute. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl. The mixture will be very thick. On low speed, add the egg whites. Gradually raise the speed to medium-high and beat for 2 minutes. The batter will now be like a thick soup. Using a silicone spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pans.

For the 6- and 9-inch layers, begin by pouring the batter into the 6-inch pans to fill one-quarter full (7 ounces/200 grams in each pan). Scrape the rest into the 9-inch pans, which should be almost one-third full (19.5 ounces/552 grams in each pan).

For the 12-inch layers, divide the batter between the two pans. They will be about one-third full (35.2 ounces/1,000 grams for each pan).

Bake the Cakes

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes for the 6-inch layers, 25 to 35 minutes for the 9-inch layers, and 30 to 40 minutes for the 12-inch layers, or until the cakes spring back when pressed lightly in the centers and a wooden toothpick inserted in the centers comes out clean. During baking, the batter will not rise until just before the last 10 minutes of baking, at which point it will rise to the top of the pans and lower just before the very end of baking.

To prevent the collapse of their delicate foam structure, while still hot, the cakes must be unmolded as soon as they are baked. Have ready a small metal spatula and wire racks that have been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

Unmold and Cool the Cakes

Immediately run a metal spatula between the sides of the pans and the cakes, pressing firmly against the sides of the pans, and invert the cakes onto the wire racks. Remove the parchment and immediately reinvert them onto a second set of wire racks to cool top side up. The cakes will be about 1½ inches high. When cool, remove the top crusts by scraping them with a serrated knife.

While the cakes are cooling, make the milk chocolate ganache syrup.

Note

You can use 100 percent bleached all-purpose flour, but the cake will be a little less tender and have a slight dip. The weight is the same, but use a total of 2 cups/8 ounces/224 grams flour and only 1½ teaspoons baking powder for the 6- and 9-inch layers, and a total of 2 2/3 cups/10.6 ounces/300 grams flour and only 2½ teaspoons baking powder for the 12-inch layers.

Milk Chocolate Ganache Syrup  
Serves: 1¾ cups plus 2 tablespoons/15 fluid ounces/18.3 ounces/520 grams  
For the 6- and 9-inch layers

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
milk chocolate, 40% to 41% cacao (or 6 ounces lower percentage milk chocolate and 3 ounces dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao), chopped	.	9	255
milk	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (9 fluid ounces)	9.6	272
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.

Serves: 2½ cups/20 fluid ounces/24.5 ounces/693 grams  
For the 12-inch layers

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
milk chocolate, 40% to 41% cacao (or 8 ounces lower percentage milk chocolate and 4 ounces dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao), chopped	.	12	340
milk	1½ cups (12 fluid ounces)	12.7	363
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.

Make the Milk Chocolate Ganache Syrup

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

In a 4-cup microwavable cup with a spout (or in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring often), scald the milk.

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the milk through the feed tube in a steady stream and process until smooth. Scrape the chocolate syrup into a bowl and stir in the vanilla. Divide the syrup for the 9- and 6-inch layers into two batches: 1¼ cups plus 2 tablespoons/11 fluid ounces/13.4 ounces/380 grams for the 9-inch layers and the remaining ½ cup/4 fluid ounces/4.9 ounces/140 grams for the 6-inch layers. Apply the hot syrup to the cakes.

Apply the Syrup

Set the cakes on sheet pans top sides up and, with a wooden skewer, poke holes all over the top. Brush half the syrup onto the cakes, applying more toward the edges. Invert one layer of each size onto a flat surface, such as a cardboard round covered tightly with plastic wrap, coated lightly

with nonstick cooking spray; you will need to slide the layer off onto the second layer of the same size. Invert each remaining layer onto a cardboard round of the same size. Poke holes all over and brush with the remaining syrup, brushing a little onto the sides of the cakes. Allow the cake layers to sit for at least 1 hour to firm up and for the syrup to penetrate before frosting.

Dark Ganache Undercoat  
Serves: 5½ cups/3 1/8 pounds/1 kilogram 417 grams

Make in 2 batches (one for the 6- and 9-inch layers and one for the 12-inch layers).

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
dark chocolate, 60% to 62% cacao, chopped .		1 pound 8 ounces	680
heavy cream	3 1/3 cups (26.6 fluid ounces)	27	765
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.

Make the Dark Ganache Undercoat

In a food processor, process the chocolate until very fine.

In a 4-cup microwavable measure (or in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring often), scald the cream (heat it to the boiling point; small bubbles will form around the periphery).

With the motor of the food processor running, pour the cream through the feed tube in a steady stream. Process for a few seconds until smooth. Pulse in the vanilla. Scrape the ganache into a glass bowl and allow it to cool for 1 hour. Cover with plastic wrap and allow the mixture to cool for several hours, until it reaches frosting consistency. (There is no need to wash the food processor between batches; just wipe it out.)

If not using the ganache the same day, store it at 70° to 80°F/21° to 26°C so that it remains spreadable. If it becomes colder and too stiff, reheat it with few-seconds bursts in the microwave or in a double boiler. Be sure to stir gently with a silicone spatula so as not to incorporate air and lighten the color. The undercoat keeps for 3 days at room temperature, for 3 weeks refrigerated, and for 6 months frozen.

Compose the Cake

Frost the cake with either the dark ganache undercoat or the [White Chocolate—Vanilla Bean Buttercream](#). You will need 12 to 14 cups. See the introduction beginning with [Preparing the Layers for Frosting](#) for filling, frosting, and composing a wedding cake.

Apply the Undercoat

The ganache undercoat needs to be as smooth and even as possible because the lacquer glaze, if using, will reveal every imperfection beneath it. When applying the ganache, first do a crumb coating or layer that on the sides doesn't go quite to the edge of the cardboard round.

Apply a thin coat to the top, starting at the edge and working toward the center. Use the ganache shortly after it is made or reheat it very briefly so that it goes on easily without compressing the center of the cake layer. Refrigerate the cake layers for about 1 hour and then apply another coat.

Use a heated straightedge knife to create a flat top and smooth sides with a slight bevel for the edge. To heat the knife, run it under hot water and shake off the excess droplets.

After frosting the layers with the ganache undercoat, refrigerate them until very firm, a minimum of 2 hours or overnight. Be sure that the refrigerator is odor free as chocolate absorbs aromas very readily. The undercoated layers can be stored for up to 5 days refrigerated and for up to 3 months frozen. If frozen, remove them to the refrigerator 12 to 24 hours before glazing.

Dark Chocolate Lacquer Glaze  
Serves: 4¼ cups/34 fluid ounces/2 pounds 10 ounces/1 kilogram 140 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
cold water	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6.2	177
powdered gelatin	2 tablespoons	0.7	20
sugar	2 cups	14	400
water	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.3	236
corn syrup	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	3	82
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	2 2/3 cups (sifted before measuring)	7	200



## Make the Dark Chocolate Lacquer Glaze

Have ready a fine-mesh strainer suspended over a medium metal bowl.

In another medium bowl, pour in the  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of cold water and sprinkle the gelatin over the top. Stir to moisten and soften the gelatin and allow it to sit for a minimum of 5 minutes. Cover tightly with plastic wrap to prevent evaporation and set aside.

In a medium heavy saucepan, whisk together the sugar and 1 cup of water over medium heat. Stir constantly with the whisk until the sugar dissolves.

Remove the pan from the heat and, with the whisk, gently stir in the corn syrup and then the cocoa until smooth, making sure to reach into the corners of the pan. The mixture will be glossy. Using a silicone spatula, stir in the heavy cream.

Return the pan to medium heat and, stirring constantly, bring the mixture to the boiling point (190°F/88°C). Bubbles will just start to form around the edges. Remove the pan from the heat and strain the mixture into the medium metal bowl. Cool slightly, for about 15 minutes. (It will take a lot longer if using a glass bowl.) An instant-read thermometer should register 122° to 140°F/50° to 60°C. With the silicone spatula, stir in the softened gelatin until dissolved completely and no longer streaky.

Strain the glaze into a 1½-quart or larger glass bowl. (Do not store in metal because it will impart an undesirable flavor.) Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for a minimum of 8 hours or up to 1 week, or freeze for up to 6 months.

## Glaze the Cake

Lay a long double layer of wide heavy-duty aluminum foil on a work surface to catch the glaze. Turn up the edges about 1 inch to keep the glaze contained. On top, set a wire rack or cake pan one size smaller than the layer being glazed.

Set the 12-inch frosted layers on the wire rack or an inverted smaller cake pan. Make sure the cake is level and, if necessary, put a wedge or spatula underneath to level it. Note: When glazing, it helps to use a ladle to catch the excess glaze for reapplying it. (This works only when the cake is elevated onto an inverted cake pan.)

Reheat the glaze in a double boiler set over hot, not simmering, water, or very carefully in a microwave with 3-second bursts, stirring gently to ensure that it doesn't overheat or incorporate any air. The glaze coats best for this cake at 82° to 85°F/27° to 29°C.

Pour the glaze in a circular motion evenly on top, allowing it to cascade over the sides to coat them completely. Start pouring in the middle, and as the glaze starts going down the sides, pour it about 1 inch from the edge to help cover the sides evenly. Any tiny bubbles, should they appear, can be pierced with a sharp needle. If any spots on the side don't get coated, it's easy to touch them up using the glaze on the aluminum foil and a small metal spatula. Allow the cake to sit for about 30 minutes until the glaze stops dripping, and then move the cake to another part of the work surface that has been lined with another piece of aluminum foil to catch any falling glaze. Use the original large foil as a funnel to pour the glaze back into the cup. Reposition the foil flat on the work surface.

Set the 9-inch frosted cake on a wire rack on top of the aluminum foil. Reheat the glaze to 82° to 85°F/27° to 29°C. Glaze the cake as you glazed the 12-inch cake. Proceed with the 6-inch cake, again reheating the glaze. You will have about 1  $\frac{1}{3}$  cups glaze left over. If you are making a sheet cake to have extra servings, use any remaining glaze to pipe or drizzle onto the serving plates. Or, freeze it in an airtight container for up to 6 months. Thawed and reheated, it pours perfectly.

Allow the cakes to sit for a minimum of 4 hours or up to 24 hours before tiering the layers one on top of the other. Use a small metal spatula to remove any chocolate glaze "legs" at the base. When set, the glaze remains soft but can be touched gently with a fingertip without leaving a mark. You can also refrigerate the glazed layers, but the glaze will dull slightly. Be sure that the refrigerator is free of odors. To revive the shine, brush lightly with a soft brush (see [Brushes](#)), or you can briefly wave a hair dryer set on low heat about 6 inches away from the cake's surface.

## Décor

To decorate the sides of the cake as shown in the photograph at the end of this recipe, you will need four boxes, 45 twigs (4.4 ounces/128 grams each), Mademoiselle de Margaux chocolate twigs, imported from France by ChefShop (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). Alternatively, you can use small gum paste flowers for the sides of the cake.

## Highlights for Success

There is enough glaze to cover the layers in "one shot" without having to touch up the sides. Should you happen to miss a spot, you can use a small metal spatula to add a small dab of glaze. This glaze is a lot more forgiving than a ganache glaze and will not show the "touch-up," nor will it wrinkle even when set.

## Double-Chocolate-Whammy Groom's Cake

Serves: 12 to 16

Baking Time: 30 to 40 minutes for the brownie; 40 to 50 minutes for the cake

This is the perfect marriage of my best and most beloved chocolate cake from The Cake Bible, The Chocolate Domingo, and my fudgiest brownie. The brownie, after baking, is chilled and then cut into pieces and folded into the chocolate cake batter. The result is an amazingly tender, full-flavored chocolate cake, with little pockets of rich chocolate and nuts distributed throughout. It creates the impression of miniature truffles enveloped in cake. It is normally impossible to suspend sizable pieces of walnuts in a chocolate cake batter, but in this cake, the walnuts cling to the brownie, and the sour cream base of the cake makes it more acidic, strengthening the structure enough to suspend the walnuts. As the proverbial icing on the cake, I like to spritz it with an atomizer filled with bourbon. (Pass the atomizer!)

My friend the late Rich Hecomovich of Nordic Ware designed the Stadium Pan at my request to have a pan ideal for a groom's cake and to honor

my dear cousin Marty Bush, the Giants football fanatic and consummate Thanksgiving host.



Fudgy Pudgy Brownies

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
walnut or pecan halves	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons	4	113
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	12 tablespoons (1½ sticks)	6	170
fine-quality unsweetened or 99% cacao chocolate, chopped		5	142
fine-quality white chocolate containing cocoa butter, chopped		3	85
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	3½ tablespoons (sifted before measuring)	0.5	16
sugar	1¾ cups	12.3	350
3 large eggs, at room temperature	½ cup plus 1½ tablespoons (4.7 fluid ounces)	5.3	150
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
all-purpose flour, preferably bleached	½ cup (dip and sweep)	2.5	71
salt	pinch	.	.

Special Equipment

One 8-inch square baking pan, wrapped with a cake strip, coated with shortening, lined with two pieces of crisscrossed parchment (bottom and sides), attached to each other by a thin coating of shortening, then coated lightly with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F/160°C (300°F/150°C if using a Pyrex or dark pan).

Toast and Chop the Nuts

Spread the nuts evenly on a baking sheet and bake for about 10 minutes, to enhance their flavor. Stir once or twice to ensure even toasting and avoid overbrowning. If using walnuts, turn them out onto a clean dish towel and rub them in the towel to remove as much skin as possible. Using a chef's knife, chop the walnuts or pecans in four batches so that they are no larger than ¼ inch. Discard any skin. Note: To avoid creating excess nut dust (aka nut flour), do not use the food processor.

Melt the Butter and Chocolates

In a double boiler over hot, not simmering, water, melt the butter, unsweetened chocolate, white chocolate, and cocoa, stirring often. Scrape the melted chocolate mixture into a large mixing bowl.

Make the Batter

Whisk the sugar into the melted chocolate mixture until incorporated. Whisk in the eggs and vanilla until the mixture becomes thick and glossy. Add the flour and salt and stir only until the flour is moistened fully. Stir in the nuts. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface evenly with an offset spatula.

Bake the Brownie

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until the batter has set up to 1 inch from the edge and a toothpick inserted 1 inch from the edge comes out almost clean. An instant-read thermometer inserted in the center will register 190°F/88°C.

Cool and Unmold the Brownie

Let the brownie cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a small metal spatula between the pan and the parchment to ensure that no batter has leaked through and stuck to the sides. Invert the brownie onto a wire rack lined with plastic wrap and lift off the pan. Carefully peel off the parchment and reinvert the brownie onto another rack. Cool completely. Wrap well in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour before cutting the brownie into ¼- to ½-inch pieces. (You can make the brownie up to 3 days ahead and refrigerate or freeze it.)

Batter

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
unsweetened (alkalized) cocoa powder	½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (sifted before measuring)	1.5	42
sour cream	2/3 cup	5.6	160
2 large eggs, at room temperature	¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
pure vanilla extract	1½ teaspoons	.	.
bleached all-purpose flour	1¼ cups (sifted into the cup and leveled off) plus 2 tablespoons	5.5	156
superfine sugar	1 cup	7	200
baking powder	¾ teaspoon	.	.
baking soda	¼ teaspoon	.	.
salt	½ teaspoon	.	.
unsalted butter (65° to 75°F/19° to 23°C)	14 tablespoons (1¾ sticks)	7	200
bourbon, such as Maker's Mark (optional)	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	58

Special Equipment

Nordic Ware Stadium Pan, or any 10- to 12-cup tube pan, coated with baking spray with flour

Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.

Mix the Cocoa and Liquid Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk the cocoa, sour cream, eggs, and vanilla just until the consistency of slightly lumpy muffin batter.

## Mix the Dry Ingredients

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt on low speed for 30 seconds.

## Make the Batter

Add the butter and half the cocoa mixture to the dry ingredients. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Raise the speed to medium and beat for 1½ minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. With the mixer off between additions, add the remaining cocoa mixture in two parts, starting on medium-low speed and gradually raising the speed to medium. Beat for 30 seconds after each addition.

With a silicone spatula, fold in the brownie pieces until evenly mixed. Scrape enough of the batter into the prepared pan to cover the bottom and, with the spatula, press it down so that it fills all the depressions in the pan. Add the remaining batter just about to the top of the 10-cup pan and smooth the surface evenly with a small offset spatula.

## Bake the Cake

Bake for 40 to 50 minutes, or until the cake springs back when pressed lightly.

## Cool and Unmold the Cake

Let the pan cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Brush with half the bourbon, if desired. Invert the cake onto a serving plate and brush with the remaining bourbon. Cool completely. If desired, shortly before serving, pour some bourbon into an atomizer and spritz the cake.

## Wedding Cupcakes

Cupcakes make excellent wedding cakes because they solve the problem of having to cut a large cake toward the end of the event, when people are getting ready to depart. Granted, the cupcakes are more work to prepare and need to be baked in batches, unless you have enough pans for about three dozen cupcakes, have oven space, and have an extra set of hands to dispense the batter into the molds so that it doesn't sit and lose its leavening power.

If you have the setup required for larger scale baking, you can increase the cupcake recipes in the Baby Cakes chapter by three times and the batter will work in a six-quart stand mixer. The [Yellow Butter Cupcakes](#) and [Chocolate Butter Cupcakes](#) batter will make four dozen (5 1/3 dozen in Sili-Cups); the [White Velvet Butter Cupcakes](#) batter and the [Designer Chocolate Baby Grands](#) batter will make three and a half dozen (4 dozen in Sili-Cups). The Baby Grands are also perfect for outdoor warm-weather weddings.

Parrish Magic Line (see [Equipment Sources](#)) makes adorable mini-layer-cake pans that are perfect for making a tiny two-tiered wedding cake replica to serve two people.



## Buttercream Frostings

For frosting the cupcakes, I suggest these basic mix-and-match toppings found in the Baby Cakes chapter:

[Golden Neoclassic Buttercream](#), with variations

[Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting](#)

[Chocolate—Egg White Buttercream](#)

You will need 2 to 3 tablespoons of buttercream for each cupcake, so if you multiply the buttercream yields by four, you will have a generous amount (about 9 cups).

#### Toppings for Warm-Weather Outdoor Wedding Cupcakes

It is best to avoid buttercreams for temperatures at 90°F/30°C and above as they will soften and be unappealing. The following are delicious and beautiful nonbuttercream toppings that can withstand higher temperatures.

[Classic Lemon Curd](#), sprinkled with white chocolate mini chips that will soften in the heat and blend perfectly against the curd

[Lekvar](#)

[Lacquer Glaze](#)

#### Cupcake Surprise

A delightful alternative to topping the cupcakes with buttercream or other toppings is to fill them instead. Simply use a melon baller to scoop out a "plug" of cake from the top center, fill the cavity, and, if desired, use the top of the cut cake to seal the hole. Use a disposable pastry bag or plastic squeeze bottle to insert the filling.

## Special Effects and Techniques

### Storing and Frosting a Cake

#### Storing a Cake

Cool cakes until they are no longer warm to the touch before storing them in order to prevent sogginess. However, a cake that has been brushed with syrup can be stored while still warm. If a cake is still warm when buttercream is applied, the buttercream will melt.

To refrigerate or freeze cake layers, wrap them airtight so that they don't lose moisture or absorb odors from the refrigerator or freezer. Wrap the cake first in plastic wrap, preferably one that is designed for freezing, and then place it in a heavy-duty plastic freezer storage bag, pressing out as much air as possible before sealing the bag. A drinking straw works well for sucking out the air.

If you want to freeze a cake that has been decorated and frosted with buttercream, place it in the freezer until the buttercream is frozen to a very firm consistency before wrapping it with the plastic wrap. This helps to avoid crushing any decorations.

#### Defrosting a Cake

Remove unfrosted cakes from the freezer and thaw them without unwrapping, either overnight in the refrigerator or at room temperature. You can refresh them after thawing by placing them on a baking sheet in a 350°F/175°C oven for 5 minutes.

A frosted cake needs to be unwrapped, set in a cake carrier or under a dome, and refrigerated overnight in order to minimize condensation caused by extremes of temperature change. Butter cakes, which are softer at room temperature, should then be allowed to come to room temperature for another hour or two before serving.

#### Leveling a Cake

If the cake is a single layer, I find it most attractive with a slightly domed top. But for a two-layer cake, I like the top of each layer to be level. To level the top of a domed cake, use a serrated blade, preferably one the length of the diameter of the cake. Place the cake in the pan in which it was baked. If the cake is lower than the top of the pan, raise it slightly by placing the cake on a cardboard round or rounds before placing it in the pan. Rest the long serrated blade on the rim of the pan and run it back and forth in a sawing motion to remove the domed top and level the cake.

#### Splitting Layers

My favorite way to split a cake layer, also called torting, requires a serrated blade at least the length of the diameter of the cake. Since most of my layer cakes are 1½ inches high, I usually use a set of metal bars called retainer bars that are ¾ inch high and resemble mini railroad tracks. I place the cake between the two bars and, with the knife blade resting on the surface of the bars, I slice through the cake, creating two equal ¾-inch-high layers. Retainer bars can be purchased at cake decorating supply stores. Alternatively, metal supply shops carry brass bars of varying heights. Wood strips can also be used, but because they are lighter, they need to be taped to the work surface.

Another method that works well is to place the cake on a turntable and with one hand, hold a long serrated knife blade against the side of the cake where you estimate the middle to be. With the other hand, turn the turntable, cutting a shallow groove all around the middle of the cake. This provides a track for the knife to ride in when you are cutting through the cake. Use a firm forward and side-to-side motion when cutting, checking occasionally to ensure that the knife has remained in the groove. It is easiest to hold one hand palm downward on top of the cake while slicing in order to stabilize the cake and also to keep your fingers safe.

To separate the layers, slide a metal or cardboard round between them.

#### Supporting a Cake

To support the cake while filling or frosting it with buttercream, place it on a rigid surface such as a serving plate or cardboard round. Slip a few wide strips of wax paper or parchment under the edges of the cake to keep the rim of the serving plate clean. After the buttercream has been applied, carefully slip out the strips.

If using cardboard rounds, choose one the same size as the pan in which the cake was baked. Since cakes shrink ¼ inch all around the sides, this offers you a guide for just applying the right amount of buttercream. Begin by placing a small dab of buttercream on the middle of the cardboard round; this keeps the cake layer in place on the round. When applying the buttercream to the sides of the cake, be sure to hold the spatula at a right angle to the cake without allowing it to tilt inward.

#### Filling a Cake

A long flat metal spatula and a turntable are invaluable for creating a smooth and even layer of filling. I prefer a ¼-inch-thick filling between two cake layers. Begin by heaping the buttercream on top of the cake layer. Use the spatula to press down firmly with a short, sweeping back-and-forth motion. Avoid lifting up the spatula because it will pull the crust away from the cake. After you have covered the entire cake, take the spatula and place it halfway across the cake layer; angle the blade so that it is almost flat against the surface of the buttercream. Starting in the middle of the layer, press lightly and rotate the turntable one full turn. Smooth or remove any excess from the sides.

Before placing the second layer on top of the frosted layer, put the frosted cake layer in the freezer or refrigerator for about 20 minutes to firm up the buttercream. When firm, the filling will remain an even thickness and also will enable the top layer to slide if it needs a slight adjustment. To support the upper layer while setting it on top of the filling, I use the removable bottom disk of a nonstick tart pan, the loose bottom of a cake pan, or a transfer disk.

#### Crumb Coating a Cake

A crumb coating seals in any crumbs on the sides of the cake and prevents them from getting into the frosting and detracting from the appearance of the frosted cake. If the sides of the cake are well sealed, it is not necessary to apply a crumb coating. To crumb coat a cake, brush a thin layer of warmed apple or apricot jelly, or piping gel, over the cake. Allow the jelly or gel to dry until it feels slightly sticky before you frost the cake. Alternatively, use a very thin coat of very soft frosting.

## Frosting a Cake

If the cake has been set on a cardboard round, you can support it in the palm of one hand and turn it as instructed below. Alternatively, set it on a heavy-duty turntable.

Using a long metal spatula, place a large gob of frosting on a side of the cake. Press the frosting from side to side with the spatula without lifting so that it doesn't lift away any crust. Continue all around the cake layer, allowing the frosting to rise about a quarter inch above the top. Frost the top of the cake in the same way. When the entire surface is covered, hold the spatula halfway across the cake with the blade almost flat against the frosting and, pressing lightly, rotate the turntable smoothly in one full circle.

Remove any excess frosting from the sides by holding a small metal spatula parallel to the sides and rotating again. For a very smooth effect, dip a spatula in hot water, shake or wipe off the water, and run it around the sides of the cake. Instead of having a smooth surface, you can also use a small metal spatula to make swirls in the top and sides of the frosting. A frosted cake can be kept for 1 day at cool room temperature (no higher than 70°F/21°C).

## Decorative Piping

The only time I pipe decorations on a cake these days is when I use a whipped cream topping. Although I often just spoon it onto the cake and make decorative swirls with a spatula, occasionally it's fun to pipe large stars or shells, for example. Stars are the first thing most people, including myself, learn to pipe because they are so easy. Shells are a variation on the star, and I think they are the most graceful of all festoons. Piped pearls are elegant and provide a lovely unobtrusive finish. You can make one row or two staggered rows. It's also very attractive to pipe little pearls or beads as a border.

Don't worry if each piped decoration is not identical—it's part of the charm, and besides, whipped cream is very forgiving. It's supposed to look opulent and casual.

Piped decorations are ideal for the bottom edges of a cake to hide the cardboard round.

### Stars

Tip: A star tip is open—you can see into it.

Position of the bag: 90-degree upright angle, tip a little above the surface

Method: Firmly squeeze the bag without moving it until the whipped cream or buttercream star is the desired width. Press the tip down slightly and stop squeezing completely. (If you continue to squeeze, you will get a peak on the top of the star.) Slowly and with a precise motion, lift the tip straight up and away from the star.

To increase the size of the piped star, increase the length of time you squeeze or increase the amount of pressure. If the filling starts to squiggle, use a larger tip.



### Star

### Shells

Tip: a star tip

Position of the bag: 45- to 90-degree angle, tip a little above the surface

Method: Firmly squeeze the bag, allowing the whipped cream or buttercream to fan out sideways as you lift up the tip slightly. Avoid moving the tip forward; the force of the filling will push the shell slightly forward on its own. Relax the pressure gradually as you lower the tip to the surface. This gradual tapering off forms a graceful tail. Stop squeezing completely and pull away the tip without lifting it off the surface to draw the tail to a point. The slight forward thrust of the whipped cream or buttercream will be just enough to cover the tail of the preceding shell. When viewed from the side, the shells should be gently rounded, not domed. If they are domed, you are lifting the tip too high above the surface of the cake.



Shell

Pearls or Beads

Tip: a round tip

Position of the bag: 45- to 90-degree angle, tip a little above the surface

Method: Squeeze the bag with a steady, even pressure. As the whipped cream or buttercream begins to build up, raise the tip, keeping it buried in the buttercream. When a well-rounded shape is formed, stop the pressure completely as you bring the tip to the surface. Use the edge of the tip to shave off any point, moving the tip in a clockwise motion. Points can be flattened by dipping your finger or a soft fine paintbrush into water and pressing down gently.



Bead

Crisp Meringue Kisses

Makes: two hundred ½-inch kisses, about 1½ cups

Baking Time: 1 to 1½ hours

This meringue has almost double the sugar to egg white to give it more density and stability. Replacing half the usual superfine sugar, by weight, with powdered sugar that is folded into the meringue produces the lightest possible meringue. The cocoa and bitter chocolate—speckled variations are less sweet, so they are also excellent to eat plain.

Piped as little kisses, these make an adorable edible decoration. I like to tint them pink when using them for the [Red Fruit Shortcake](#).

Remember, as always, the egg whites and all utensils must be entirely grease free, including even a trace of egg yolk, in order for them to beat to a stiff consistency.

Plan Ahead: Do not prepare in high humidity.

Makes: about 2 cups/5.7 ounces/162 grams meringue

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
2 large egg whites, at room temperature	¼ cup (2 fluid ounces)	2	60
liquid red food color (optional)	2 to 3 drops	.	.
cream of tartar	¼ teaspoon	.	.
superfine sugar	¼ cup plus 1½ teaspoons, divided	2	57
powdered sugar	½ cup (lightly spooned into the cup and leveled off)	2	57

Special Equipment



Star decorating tip (number 18 or 22) and a disposable pastry bag | Baking sheets lined with a Silpat or other nonstick liner

## Preheat the Oven

Twenty minutes or more before baking, set an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 200°F/95°C.

## Make the Meringue

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the egg whites and red food color, if using, on medium speed until foamy. With the mixer off, add the cream of tartar. Raise the speed to medium and gradually add 1 tablespoon of the superfine sugar, beating until soft peaks form when the beater is raised slowly. Raise the speed to medium-high and gradually beat in the remaining superfine sugar, continuing to beat until very stiff, glossy peaks form when the beater is raised slowly.

Sift the powdered sugar over the meringue. With a slotted skimmer or large silicone spatula, fold it in.

Insert the star tip into the pastry bag and fill it with 1 cup of the meringue. Don't be tempted to overfill the bag as the heat of your hand will soften the meringue and the shapes will become less distinct.

## Pipe the Kisses

Hold the bag straight up and down at a 90-degree angle, ¼ inch above the surface of the liner. Squeeze the bag firmly without moving it until the kiss is as wide as you desire. Push the tip down slightly and stop squeezing completely. If you continue squeezing, you will get a higher peak on top of the kiss. Slowly and precisely lift the tip straight up and away. Proceed with the remaining meringue and allow the kisses to sit uncovered at room temperature until ready to bake.

## Bake the Kisses

Bake without opening the oven door for 1 hour. The meringue should not begin to brown. To check for doneness, try one. Use a small metal offset spatula to lift it from the liner. It can still be a tiny bit sticky, but it will dry while cooling. If it is very sticky, then leave it in the oven for another 15 minutes, or until done. To prevent cracking, allow the kisses to cool slowly. Turn off the oven and prop open the oven door with a wooden spoon handle. Allow the kisses to sit for 10 minutes. Open the oven door completely and allow them to sit for another 10 minutes before removing them from the oven. When they are cool, lift the kisses from the baking sheet with your fingers or a small offset spatula. At low humidity, the kisses will keep in an airtight container for at least 6 months.

## Variations

### Coconut Meringue

Whisk ¼ cup/1.5 ounces/42.5 grams coconut cream powder (see Kalustyan's, in [Ingredients Sources](#)) into the powdered sugar until evenly blended before folding it into the meringue. Makes about 4 cups/13.2 ounces/374 grams.

### Cocoa Meringue

Whisk 2 tablespoons/almost ½ ounce/12 grams unsweetened cocoa powder into the powdered sugar until evenly blended before folding it into the meringue. A few drops of liquid red food color added to the egg white will give it a nicer shade of brown. (Do not use paste food color as it will break down the egg white foam.) Makes about 4 cups/12 ounces/343 grams.

### Chocolate-Speckled Meringue

In a food processor, process the powdered sugar and 2 ounces high-quality unsweetened or 99% cacao chocolate until powdery. Refrigerate for about 30 minutes before folding it into the meringue. (If the chocolate is cold and hard, the meringue will stay white; otherwise it will become pale tan.) Makes about 4 cups/13.5 ounces/382 grams.

## Working with Chocolate

When melting chocolate, it is always best to start by chopping the chocolate into fairly small pieces. This ensures that the chocolate melts as evenly as possible; overheating destroys some of the flavor. You can place the chocolate in a heavy-duty resealable plastic bag and whack it with a mallet or meat pounder to break it up into manageable pieces and then process it more finely in the food processor, or use an odor-free cutting board and a large sharp chef's knife held at a slight angle to shave off pieces of the chocolate.

If you have an oven with a pilot light that does not exceed 122°F/50°C, and about 2 hours of forethought, the very easiest way to melt dark chocolate is simply to place it in a pan in the oven. Milk chocolate or white chocolate, however, require frequent stirring while melting to prevent seeding.

A microwave on high power is great for melting chocolate as long as you stir the chocolate every 15 seconds. I like to use a silicone bowl reserved for this use (see [Bowls](#)), but glass is also fine. If melting chocolate together with other ingredients such as sugar, butter, or cream, it is best to use a double boiler because the chocolate will heat up much more quickly than the other ingredients. (The silicone bowl works well as the upper container.)

When melting chocolate in a double boiler, take great care that not even a drop of water splashes into the chocolate and make sure that the water is not simmering. Even a minute amount of water or steam can cause the chocolate to seize and make it unworkable. It is best to bring the water almost to a simmer, remove the pan from the heat, and place the upper container or large bowl on top, making sure the bottom doesn't touch the water.

With whatever method, remove the chocolate from the heat source when there are still a few bits of unmelted chocolate and stir to complete the melting.

Because chocolate so readily absorbs aromas, it is important to avoid using utensils and containers (including the food processor bowls and blades, cutting boards, and silicone spatulas) that have retained savory odors. In an ideal world, the baking kitchen would have its own equipment and utensils separate from the savory kitchen.

## Ganache

The Cassell's French dictionary that I've relied upon since junior high school defines ganache as "a well-padded easy chair." I suppose that's because a ganache is thought of as the epitome of comfort. It is therefore not a stretch that the word was subsequently applied to the ultimate chocolate confection and comfort food as well. Ganache, this miraculously simple blending of heavy cream and chocolate, transforms firm chocolate into a creamy mixture just right to deliver immediate chocolate impact without your having to wait until the chocolate begins to melt as you would when eating a chocolate bar. And as the chocolate in the ganache slowly melts, a time release of flavor coats your mouth in a satiny-smooth and luxurious bath of pure delight. As if this weren't enough, butter adds velvety texture and extra flavor enhancement, while adding a little vanilla extract beyond that contained in the chocolate rounds out any possible rough edges and heightens the flavor still further.

It's hard to believe that thirty-five years ago ganache was virtually unheard of in this country. Back then, when I wanted to make a dark chocolate frosting, I tried using brown food color, which turned almost black as it sat for a few hours and turned everyone's tongues black as well. Then I went to Switzerland, and my chocolate life has never been the same since. There I discovered chocolate truffles and the wonderful word that sounds just like it feels to eat it: ganache.

When I returned to America, I started off making ganache in the traditional way by heating together cream and chocolate in a saucepan. Once, however, when the ganache became slightly overheated, the cocoa butter left the chocolate and rose to the surface, where it refused to reincorporate into the mixture. (This can also happen if ganache is stirred during the time it is cooling between 75° and 85°F/24° and 29°C.) This incident inspired me to use the food processor to grate the chocolate and to heat the cream to the boiling point to melt it. It seemed like a good idea because chocolate loses flavor when heated much past 122°F/50°C, but cream should be scalded (brought to the boiling point) to increase its shelf life. The speed of the processor's metal blades integrates the hot cream into the chocolate perfectly, forming a smooth shiny cream with a finished temperature of 122°F/50°C. Any small bubbles that form disappear when the ganache is applied to the cake. When using the food processor, always be sure to stir in any cream that gets caught under the processor blades. Note: If the cream has not been heated adequately, or for chocolates that may not be well manufactured, tiny specks may appear. In these cases, pass the ganache through a fine-mesh strainer. It will be slightly lighter in color. If using ganache as the finishing adornment, you may opt to strain it to ensure the smoothest, shiniest possible appearance.

I've never found a better way to make ganache. When I make a ganache glaze, however, I want it to be perfectly bubble free, so I use the food processor to grate the chocolate and then I transfer the chocolate to a bowl and pour hot cream over it. Then I cover the bowl and allow the chocolate to melt before stirring very gently with a silicone spatula.

An alternative way to make ganache is by melting the chocolate either in the microwave or double boiler as described above, heating the cream, and then gently stirring the two ingredients together with either a whisk or a silicone spatula so as not to incorporate air and lighten the mixture in color and texture. Combined in this way, the ideal temperature for each component is 115°F/46°C (warm to the touch). The resulting ganache will be less smooth, dark, and shiny unless it is pressed through a strainer; straining will also shorten the time it takes to set by as much as two hours.

### Ganache Proportions

Classic ganache is made with an equal weight chocolate and heavy cream or crème fraîche, which lends the ganache a slightly tangy quality. The resulting consistency is fine with a low-percentage chocolate, but if using a 60 percent or higher cacao chocolate, I prefer to increase the amount of cream so that when the ganache sets on the cake, it doesn't pull away or separate from the cake when I serve it. Use the following guideline based on 8 ounces/227 grams chocolate.

For 60% to 62% cacao chocolate, I use 9 ounces/255 grams cream (1 cup plus 1½ tablespoons).

For 63% to 64% cacao chocolate, I use 10 ounces/283 grams cream (about 1¼ cups).

For 66% cacao chocolate, I use 11 ounces/312 grams cream (about 1 1/3 cups).

For 70% cacao chocolate, I use 12 ounces/340 grams cream (about 1½ cups).

If you are adding butter, use high-fat butter, preferably cultured, for the best flavor and texture. I like to add up to a third the weight of the chocolate in butter and up to ½ teaspoon liqueur per ounce of chocolate. So, for 6 ounces/170 grams chocolate, I add 1 to 2 ounces/28 to 56 grams (2 to 4 tablespoons) butter and 1 tablespoon liqueur.

Ganache takes from 3 to 7 hours to cool, depending on the quantity and the temperature of the room. It should be left uncovered for about an hour to allow the heat to escape. Then it should be covered to prevent evaporation and left undisturbed to set. It's fine to stir gently two or three times during the first 30 minutes while the temperature is still above 85°F/29°C to equalize the temperature. (Rapid cooling would not give the cocoa butter a chance to form small stable crystals that melt gradually when eaten.) When firm enough, press a piece of plastic wrap directly on the entire surface to keep the edges from drying.

If you need to use the ganache before it is thickened adequately, whisking it for a few seconds will do the trick but also lightens it in color.

With the correct proportions, ganache will stay spreadable at room temperature for several days. Store it covered in a glass bowl or other glass container so that it does not pick up a metallic taste. It can be held at room temperature for up to 3 days. If you plan to store the ganache for longer, you can refrigerate it for up to 2 weeks or freeze it for up to 6 months after it has set. If frozen, remove it to the refrigerator overnight. Soften it by allowing it to sit at room temperature for several hours. If necessary, you can set it in an oven with no pilot light but with the oven light turned on and it will soften in about 2 hours. Alternatively, you can scoop out chunks with a large spoon and soften them in the microwave with 5-second bursts, stirring very gently to equalize the temperature, or in a double boiler. Remove the ganache from the heat when it is partially melted and stir very gently.

### Swirled Frosting

My favorite way to apply ganache or chocolate frosting to a layer cake is in opulent swirls, both on the sides and top of the cake. The swirls make the cake look both delicious and approachable. Start by applying a smooth, thin layer of frosting to the sides and top of the cake to seal in any crumbs. Then add a thicker layer and, with a small metal spatula, make circular swirls all over.

### Spikes

Perky little peaks of frosting require a thicker layer of frosting than usual so that there is enough to pull out into peaks. Use a small metal spatula to lift the frosting away from the cake in short, sharp movements.

### Chocolate Snowflakes

Fine flurries of chocolate dissolve and melt instantly on the tongue like snowflakes. They are lovely in appearance and add extra chocolate impact. When grated, dark chocolate makes pale brown flakes. To make thick flakes, a chocolate block or bar needs to be as hard as possible, so store it in a cool room or wrap it tightly and refrigerate it briefly. Use a good-quality melon baller with sharp edges to scrape the chocolate, making short, light strokes that do not cut too deeply into the block.

Allow the flakes to fall onto a small cool baking sheet because they will melt if you touch them with your fingers. Place the sheet inside a large plastic bag and shake the flakes into the bag without touching them. They keep in the refrigerator or at cool room temperature. Use a large metal spoon to lift them out and onto the cake.

### Chocolate Curls

Chocolate needs to be moderately soft in order to curl without breaking or flattening. A small block of chocolate can be softened by placing it under a lamp or in a microwave using 3-second bursts on high power. It usually takes a few tries to get the chocolate soft enough without oversoftening it, but once this point is reached, it will hold for at least 10 minutes, giving you enough time to make lots of beautiful curls.

I find the best utensil with which to make the curls is a sharp vegetable peeler. Hold it against the upper edge of the chocolate block and dig in the upper edge of the cutter, pulling it toward you. Increase pressure to form thicker, more open curls. Decrease pressure to make tighter curls. Until the chocolate is sufficiently warmed, it will splinter. When it becomes too warm, it will come off the block in strips that will not curl. But if the strips are not too soft, you can use your fingers to shape the curls. Keep your fingers cool by periodically dipping them in ice water and drying them well.

### Marzipan Candles

The magic of these edible candles is the edible sliced almond wicks that not only bear the shape of a flame, they also can be lit with a match because of the oil contained in the almonds.

It's also attractive to make the flames out of marzipan, tinting them with red food color.

Candles can be made any size or color, twisted just like wax candles, and even brushed with edible gold or petal dust (see [Gold](#)). If the candle is large, however, push a plastic drinking straw up through its center for support. That way it can remain upright and straight. Shape by rolling marzipan into a log.

To color it, you can knead powdered or paste food color into the marzipan, or unsweetened cocoa powder, which cuts some of the sweetness and adds a lovely flavor. If using food color, it helps to knead it into the marzipan on a piece of plastic wrap, using the plastic wrap to press it in without staining your fingers. Food-safe latex or vinyl gloves also work well.

For 7 ounces/200 grams marzipan, use about 1 tablespoon/6 grams cocoa, or to taste. This makes a candle big enough to put in the center of a cake baked in a fluted tube pan. It will be about 4 inches tall, 2 inches in diameter at the bottom, and about 1½ inches in diameter at the top. If making a marzipan flame, shape it to be about 1½ inches high.

Marzipan candles can be air-dried for several days if they are intended only for decoration, but if you are planning to eat them, keep them well wrapped and refrigerated until shortly before presenting the cake or brush them with melted cocoa butter to prevent crusting. They can stay at room temperature for 2 days.

To serve the candle, use a sharp thin knife to cut thin slices lengthwise through the candle.

### Dazzling Lemon and Orange Peel Roses

Citrus peel roses are fun and easy to make. The only slightly painstaking part is removing the peel in one long piece. Work slowly and carefully and you will be rewarded with a magical adornment. Orange peel is thicker than lemon peel and holds its shape better. Lemon peel requires more gentle heating to attain a firm texture. Choose oranges and lemons that have thick skin.

With a very sharp paring knife, start by cutting a round section across the base of the fruit but not all the way through. Be sure to keep it attached to the rest of the peel. Carefully cut around the fruit to remove the peel in a single strip, taking a layer of the white pith as well. Stop before you get to the other end and use this section to cut a few small strips about 1 inch in length to use for the centers of the roses.

You will need enough sugar syrup to cover the peel. To make sugar syrup, bring 1 cup sugar and 1 cup water to a boil, stirring until dissolved. The exact amount of syrup depends on the size of the pan and the number of roses you plan to make.

If using orange peel, add it to simmering syrup, pushing it down gently with a silicone spatula to coat it, and allow it to poach uncovered at a bare simmer for 30 minutes. Remove it from the syrup to paper towels and let it sit for a minute, or until cool enough to handle.

If using lemon peel, add it to simmering syrup, pushing it down gently with a silicone spatula to coat it. Cover the pan and remove it from the heat. Allow the peel to sit for 8 to 12 hours before removing it from the syrup to paper towels.

Starting at the straight end of the strip, curl each strip loosely around itself to form a rose. The coiled strip will sit on the little round base at the end of the strip. When dry, the peel will draw in slightly, resulting in less space between the "petals." Curl the shorter strips into little cones for the centers.

Allow the roses and center cones to dry for about 1 hour on a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Insert the little cones pointed ends down into the center of each rose and, with a small artist's paintbrush reserved for use with food, coat all sides of the peel with corn syrup. After about 1 hour, apply a second coat, and after another hour, apply a third coat. Allow the orange peel roses to dry completely. This can take several days. Then store them in a covered container. The lemon peel edges curl inward as they dry, resembling the points of rose petals in full bloom. Set them in a covered container after they have curved in just a little. Place the lemon peel roses on the cake up to 12 hours before serving. The orange and lemon peel roses will keep for months, but they will require a touchup of corn syrup to restore their beautiful

glisten. If making more than one week ahead, store the lemon peel roses in the refrigerator.



Cutting



Curling

### Crystallized Flowers and Leaves

Small edible flowers (see [Flowers](#)), such as roses, lilacs, pansies, and wild violets (not African), and leaves such as the rose geranium and mint leaf, can be made into beautifully shimmering decorations to garnish cakes. When you make them yourself, each petal remains separate and sparkling. Firm-petaled flowers such as roses are the easiest to work with. Sugared rose petals of varying hues are stunning scattered around the base of a serving plate. All that's needed is a little egg white, superfine sugar and petal dust or powdered food color, and a small artist's paintbrush reserved for use with food. Petal dust, available in cake decorating supply stores, comes in many subtle hues. Paste food color also works well. For example, Wilton (see [Ingredients Sources](#)) makes a grape paste color the perfect hue for lilacs and a violet paste color the perfect hue for violets. For red roses, it's exciting to use powdered or paste red food color as it intensifies and preserves the flower's natural color. After drying, most flowers will last for years, with the exception of lilacs, which tend to brown around the edges after a few months.

### Crystallize the Flowers and Leaves

Place superfine sugar in a small bowl and stir in the powdered food color, starting with a small amount. Pour an egg white into another small bowl and beat it lightly with a whisk or fork. If using roses, peel off any outer petals that are not in perfect shape. If the roses are too tightly closed, tease open the petals by blowing on them and probing them gently with the blunt end of a wooden skewer.

Dip the flowers facedown into the egg white. Use an artist's paintbrush to remove all but a thin coating, making sure that the underside of the petals is coated, too. Hold the flower over the sugar bowl and, with a small spoon, spoon the sugar over the flower's petals to coat them evenly on all sides.

### Dry the Crystallized Flowers and Leaves

Large multi-petaled flowers such as roses can take up to 4 days to dry, while mint leaves can dry in just a few hours. Most flowers with softer petals, such as violets, keep their shape best when suspended upside down until partially dry and set. This works well for rose geranium leaves, too. Use a clamp-type clip to grasp the stem and hang it by the loops of the clamp. When it is partially dry, transfer the flower to a wire rack that has been coated lightly with nonstick cooking spray to dry completely. For roses, what works best is to cover the top of a bowl tightly with a piece of aluminum foil, preferably nonstick heavy duty, and punch small holes in the foil to hold the flowers upright. When the petals are dry enough to hold their shape on their own, transfer the flowers to lightly greased racks to dry completely. Cut off all but about 2 inches of stem, which can be used to insert into the cake. Most crystallized flowers will keep indefinitely in an airtight container in low humidity, away from direct sunlight.

### Highlights for Success

Superfine sugar, available in one-pound boxes in supermarkets, also referred to as bar sugar, or castor sugar, coats the most evenly. Processing fine granulated sugar dulls the sugar crystals and results in less sparkle.

If too much food coloring was added, simply add more sugar to tone it down.

It works best to sprinkle the sugar on the flower because dipping the flower into the sugar could cause the sugar to clump both in the sugar bowl

and on the flower.

Troubleshooting

Assuming you are working with a reliable recipe, if something goes wrong with a cake, the first thing to consider is the ingredients—the way in which they were weighed or measured and their temperature. Keep in mind that any substitution of ingredients is almost sure to have an impact on the way the cake turns out. Next is oven temperature. Another consideration is altitude.

High Altitude

Changes in the way cakes bake usually begin at altitudes over 3,000 feet/914 meters due to the decrease in air pressure. This lower air pressure causes water to boil at a lower temperature, resulting in more evaporation during baking and drier cakes. If the batter is drier, it will not have the ability to gelatinize the starch fully, a step that is necessary to set the structure. The structure is compromised further by decreased air pressure: The cakes rise too much, the structure can't support the rise, and the cakes collapse.

Decreasing the sugar helps to make more liquid available for gelatinizing the starch. I also recommend decreasing the leavening slightly and increasing the liquid slightly. It may also be necessary to increase the number of eggs to add more structure. For a butter cake that uses very little baking powder and a high level of butter, such as a pound cake, decreasing the butter will help to strengthen the cake's structure.

At elevations above 3,500 feet/1,067 meters, increasing the oven temperature by 25°F/15°C will help to set the structure more quickly.

As each cake recipe varies, guidelines can be given, but the proof truly is in the pudding. To start, I recommend two books: The Chocolate Snowball: And Other Fabulous Pastries from Deer Valley Resort, by head baker Letty Halloran Flatt, who has been baking at high altitude for many years, and Pie in the Sky: Successful Baking at High Altitudes, by baking authority Susan G. Purdy, who baked at different elevations over a period of time. (You can visit her Web site at [www.highaltitudebaking.com](http://www.highaltitudebaking.com).) In addition, the USDA lists the following recommendations for high-altitude adjustments:

Ingredient adjustment	3,000 feet/914 meters	5,000 feet/1,524 meters	7,000 feet/2,134 meters
decrease baking powder per teaspoon used	1/8 teaspoon	1/8 to ¼ teaspoon	¼ teaspoon
increase liquid per cup used	1 to 2 tablespoons	2 to 4 tablespoons	3 to 4 tablespoons

General Mills, in studies performed more than forty years ago, recommended increasing flour by 2.5 percent at 3,500 feet/1,067 meters and gradually increasing to 10 percent at 8,000 feet/2,438 meters.

Sponge-type cakes are affected by high altitude in much the same way as butter cakes. For a sponge-type cake that does not contain baking powder, it is advisable to decrease the sugar. This helps to speed coagulation of the egg proteins that stabilize or set the cake and interferes less with gelatinization of the starch. You can also add a little more flour to strengthen the structure. At over 3,500 feet/1,067 meters, the oven temperature should be increased to 375°F/190°C.



## Ingredients and Basic Recipes

The supreme magic of cake baking is the metamorphosis of relatively ordinary ingredients into exquisitely textured and flavorful visions of delight. A well-crafted recipe is essential, following the instructions advisable, but the quality of the ingredients makes the difference between good and sublime.

This section has two purposes. The first is to introduce you to my favorite ingredients and guide you to their availability. The second is to share the information I have acquired through the years of researching and working with these ingredients for a better understanding of my choices and also to enable you to experiment on your own should you so choose. There are a few products because of their incomparable quality and they are available only through food service distributors. However, most of them can be purchased in reasonably small quantities for home use.

For all ingredients in this book, weights are given in both the metric and avoirdupois (ounces/pounds) systems. Grams generally have been rounded off to the nearest whole number without decimal points, the ounces to the nearest decimal point. Either system works, but do not expect the mathematics to correlate exactly. I prefer weighing to measuring for its superior speed and precision, but if you choose measuring, it's important to have the right technique.

There is no doubt about it: Weighing is faster, easier, and neater than measuring. But measuring by volume is fine as long as you do it carefully and accurately. The way I have presented the volume measures is the way in which I would measure them. Instead of writing 6 tablespoons sugar, I express it as  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup plus 2 tablespoons because that is the more convenient approach. Also, the fewer measures used, the less room for error. Occasionally, for small amounts of dry ingredients such as baking powder or baking soda, I will call for 3 teaspoons instead of 1 tablespoon because of the inaccuracy of most measuring spoons. But for sticky ingredients, I prefer giving the largest measuring spoon required because some of the ingredient always remains in the spoon, throwing off the final quantity if several spoonfuls are required.

For those who measure instead of weigh, the "dip and sweep" method of measuring refers to dipping the measuring cup into a bin containing an ingredient such as flour and sweeping off the excess on the top with a long flat metal spatula or knife. Flours should be stirred lightly before measuring, except for Wondra flour, which doesn't tend to settle.

"Lightly spooned into the cup" refers to spooning the ingredient into a cup and then sweeping off the excess with a long flat metal spatula or knife. This method yields less of the ingredient than the dip-and-sweep method.

"Sifted" means that the flour is pushed through either a sifter or strainer into a cup that is sitting on a counter or other flat surface. The cup is never touched or (perish the thought) shaken. Only the handle is held when the excess is swept off with a spatula or knife. Sifting yields the least amount of flour. (Incidentally, "dusted" means to sprinkle lightly.)

All dry ingredients should be measured in a cup designed for solids. Liquid ingredients, including golden and corn syrups, should be measured in a liquid measure with a spout. There is a difference in volume between liquid and solid measuring cups (see [Liquid Measures](#) and [Solid Measuring Cups](#)).

What follows is a list of my most-used ingredients in order of their importance.

### Flour

Flour is the single most important ingredient in cake baking. The type of flour used, particularly its protein content and whether it is bleached or unbleached, is critical to the outcome. There are essentially three types of flour I use in this book. The two that I use most often are bleached cake flour and bleached all-purpose flour. Bleaching is critical for cakes made with unmelted butter because it roughens the surface of the flour grains, helping them to keep the butter in suspension and improving gelatinization. If unbleached flour is used, the cakes will dip in the center soon after removal from the oven and some of the butter will have settled on the bottom of the cake, resulting in an unpleasant flavor and texture. (For alternatives to bleaching, see ["Kate Flour"](#).)

Cake and bleached all-purpose flour can be used interchangeably for most of the recipes as long as the weight is the same. If you are measuring by volume, refer to [Some Useful Substitutions for Emergencies](#). Cake flour results in a more tender crumb, but if you desire extra tenderness and you have only bleached all-purpose flour, you will need to use the suggested amount of cornstarch in place of some of the all-purpose flour. In some instances, such as with the [Golden Lemon Almond Cake](#), I like the higher protein of the all-purpose flour so that the cake has enough structure and slices without falling apart.

If you are using a national brand of bleached all-purpose flour, the volume will be less than that of cake flour because it has a higher protein and is heavier so you need less of it. If, however, you are using regional brands, especially from the South, such as White Lily, the protein will be very similar to cake flour and you can use the same volume.

The third flour I use for many of the sponge cakes is Wondra flour, created by General Mills Gold Medal. It is produced by a patented process called agglomeration, which enables the flour particles to dissolve instantly in liquid, yielding a tender crumb. I decided one day to try it for angel food cake, thinking that it would blend more easily into the beaten whites, deflating them less. While this worked perfectly, to my astonishment the cake was also amazingly tender. So I went on to try it in every possible cake.

I wasn't happy with the texture it gave to butter layer-type cakes, but almost across the board it turned out to be the ideal flour for sponge cakes such as génoise and biscuit (other than chocolate ones, which acquired a less desirable flavor). The slight decrease of  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in height of sponge cakes baked in 9 by 2-inch cake pans was more than compensated for by the exquisite tenderness, airiness of texture, and superior flavor. The flavor improvement was so substantial that when my husband, Elliott, was subjected to a blind taste test, he didn't even want to finish eating the cake I created with cake flour.

### Approximate Percentage of Protein Content of Flours

Swans Down or Soft as Silk cake flour	8 percent protein
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King Arthur Queen Guinevere cake flour	8 percent protein
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White Lily bleached all-purpose flour	9 percent protein
Wondra flour	9.8 percent protein
Pillsbury or Gold Medal bleached all-purpose flour	about 11 percent protein (regional brands of bleached all-purpose flour may be significantly lower)

Cakes made with Wondra and baked in sheet pans lose about one-eighth inch in height, so I have stayed with cake flour or a combination of cake flour and cornstarch, especially where the cake will be rolled, as it gives the rolled cake a much more attractive appearance. If you plan to replace cake flour or all-purpose with Wondra, the substitution is equal with weight. For volume, see [Ingredient Equivalencies and Substitutions](#).

Measure Wondra flour either by sprinkling it directly out of the canister (which is a bit slow) or spooning it lightly into the measuring cup and leveling it off. The weight is the same with both methods.

Store flour tightly covered and away from heat so that it doesn't absorb moisture or dry out. Well-stored bleached flour will keep for several years. Unbleached flour has a one-year shelf life at room temperature and several years if frozen.

### "Kate Flour"

This is special information created for home bakers who do not have access to bleached flour. Kate Coldrick ([www.amerrierworld.wordpress.com](http://www.amerrierworld.wordpress.com)), who lives in the United Kingdom, has done research and discovered that some flour companies in the United Kingdom produce a heat-treated flour available only to the food service industry. Determined to have access to this flour for the home baker, after extensive experiments she has come up with a technique using a microwave for treating commonly available flour so that it performs as successfully in cakes as bleached flour. Home bakers around the world are now able to make cakes from this and other American cookbooks without needing American bleached flour. We are all indebted to Kate for her perseverance. Following is an explanation of the process.

Bleaching flour is a chemical process that accelerates the natural processes of aging. The oxidation of carotenoid pigments in the flour, which turns the flour from ivory to white, is one of the effects. More significant, however, is that the resulting alteration of the protein molecules effectively denatures their gluten-forming capability and, together with changes to the surface of the starch granules, promotes gelatinization of the starch during baking. This is important because the ability of the flour to gelatinize is critical to the ultimate texture of the cake.

The effects of aging on flour can also be accelerated by physical rather than chemical means. Since chemical reactions are affected by temperature, an alternative treatment to bleaching is controlled heating of the flour.

A heat-treated flour can then be used as a viable substitute for chlorinated flour. A simple form of heat treatment can be achieved at home by using a microwave. The aim is to heat the flour until it reaches a temperature that is high enough to affect the protein, starch, and subsequent gelatinization potential of the flour sufficiently. Kate has found that the best results are obtained when the flour is heated to 130°C/266°F, stirring every 10 seconds to prevent burning. This heat-treated or "Kate Flour" can be used in recipes that call for bleached all-purpose flour, or it can be mixed with corn flour/cornstarch at a ratio of seven to one to lower the overall protein content of the flour to that of cake flour.

You will need to experiment with the flours available to you. As a general guideline for making cake flour, try to find a finely milled flour with a low amount of protein per one hundred grams. However, a higher protein flour milled predominantly from soft wheats is preferable to a lower-protein flour milled from a mixture of hard and soft wheats. Similarly, a higher-protein flour that is finely milled tends to give better results than a lower-protein but more coarsely milled flour. A paler, whiter flour is also likely to be preferable to one that is darker because light coloring signifies the lower ash content typical of soft flours. Kate has achieved the best results with Italian 00 grade flour, a flour that is finely milled from soft wheats.

The following simple procedure can be used to metamorphose unbleached flour into Kate Flour:

- Weigh out 280 grams/10 ounces of the flour called for and place it on a microwavable plate (the flour gets very hot, so for safety's sake it is best not to attempt to microwave more flour than this at one time).
- Spread out the flour on the plate to have a bed of 18 to 20 millimeters<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inch deep.
- Microwave the flour on high power for about 10 minutes, making sure to stir every 10 seconds to equalize the temperature and prevent browning. After the first 3 minutes check the temperature with an instant-read thermometer. Break up any lumps with a fork and continue microwaving and stirring every 10 seconds, until the thermometer registers at least 130°C/266°F. (It is difficult to predict the overall microwaving times as these vary greatly depending on the power of your microwave and the type of flour you are using. However, Kate found that flours needed to be treated for between 10 and 13 minutes on average when using a microwave power of 750 to 800 watts.)
- Allow the flour to cool to room temperature. Sift it and discard any residue.

If desired, for a slightly higher rise and softer texture, add ¼ teaspoon xanthan gum and whisk it in to incorporate it evenly.

If you live in a dry environment, to restore moisture removed during the heat treatment, return the flour to the microwave, or place it in an enclosed container, and set a 1-quart bowl of hot water next to it. Let it sit for 5 minutes, change the water, and let it sit for another 5 minutes. Store the flour in an airtight container.

Make more batches as needed. This flour can be used in recipes calling for bleached all-purpose flour (averaging 11 percent protein).

To lower the protein content of the flour in order to use it as cake flour (assuming you are using flour with a 9 percent or higher protein content), substitute 2 tablespoons per cup of this flour with 2 tablespoons of corn flour/cornstarch. The most accurate way to do this is by weight. Remove one-eighth of this weight and replace it with an equal weight of corn flour/cornstarch. Place both parts of the Kate Flour in a large bowl and whisk to combine thoroughly.

The amount of corn flour/cornstarch can be adjusted depending on the protein content of the flour you are using and the degree of tenderness you

desire in the cake. Lower protein results in more tenderness. Too low a protein content and the cake will dip in the center; too high, and the cake will dome.

Sugar

A cake can be baked without flour, but without sweetness it no longer qualifies as dessert. It is sugar that sweetens every cake in this book. The four types of sugar I have used for these recipes are superfine cane sugar, turbinado sugar, light brown sugar, and dark brown sugar. Refined superfine sugar results in the finest texture and most neutral flavor, adding sweetness that balances and accentuates other ingredients. Granulated cane sugar can be substituted for superfine sugar. In some recipes I specify turbinado, or raw sugar, for the extra flavor it offers because of its slightly higher amount of molasses. For components such as crumb toppings, I use part light brown sugar for still more intensity.

When it comes to light brown and dark brown sugars, I adore the flavor of Muscovado from the tropical island of Mauritius off the coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean. The special flavor of the sugar is said to be derived from sugar cane grown in the volcanic ash. Billington's is one brand that is imported from England and available in fine groceries, gourmet and health food stores, and from India Tree (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). Its light brown sugar contains 3.5 percent molasses and the dark brown contains 6.5 percent molasses.

Equal volume of either type of brown sugar has the same sugar content as refined white sugar, but brown sugar must be measured by packing it firmly into the cup. Dark brown sugar weighs the most because of its added molasses. Molasses also adds moisture to the sugar. Brown sugar contains 2.1 percent water, while plain white sucrose contains only 0.5 percent.

Meringue and dacquoise are usually made with refined sugar, but they can be made with turbinado sugar as long as you allow the sugar to sit in the egg white for a minimum of 30 minutes to dissolve fully before beating. Even Italian meringue can be made with turbinado sugar syrup. And if an interfering agent, such as pineapple juice, is used for caramel, turbinado also works beautifully, though it lowers the temperature of the finished stages of the caramel, as is noted in the recipes.

Store brown sugar in an airtight container, such as a canning jar, to keep it from losing moisture and solidifying. If the sugar should solidify, make a small shallow cup from a piece of aluminum foil and set it on top of the sugar in the container. Tear a paper towel in half, wet it, and squeeze out most of the water. Set the towel on top of the foil, not touching the sugar. Cover the container tightly and, within several hours, the sugar will have drawn the moisture from the paper towel and become soft and loose again.

If you run out of brown sugar and have white sugar and molasses on hand, it's easy to make your own (see [Ingredient Equivalencies and Substitutions](#)).

Sugar Syrups

A small amount of simple syrup brushed onto butter cake layers does wonders to keep the cake fresh when served a day or two after baking. One tablespoon per top and bottom of a cake layer baked in a 9 by 2-inch cake pan is just right to keep the cake moist without its becoming soggy or overly sweet. Poke the top of the cake layer all over with a thin skewer to enable the syrup to penetrate through the top crust when it is brushed on.

Simple Syrup

Makes: ½ cup/4 fluid ounces/4.7 ounces/135 grams

	Volume	Ounce	Gram
sugar	3 tablespoons	1.2	37
water	½ cup minus 1 tablespoon (3.5 fluid ounces)	3.5	100
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Simple Syrup

In a small saucepan, stir together the sugar and water until all the sugar is moistened. Bring the mixture to a rolling boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and cool completely. Transfer it to a heatproof glass measure and stir in the vanilla. Add water to equal ½ cup of syrup. Cover and refrigerate for up to 1 month.

Concentrated Sugar Syrups

When making a sugar syrup for Italian meringue or classic buttercream, for example, the sugar is concentrated to produce a supersaturated solution from a saturated one. A saturated sugar solution contains the maximum amount of sugar possible at room temperature without its precipitating out into crystals. A supersaturated sugar solution contains more sugar than the water can dissolve at room temperature. Heating the solution enables the sugar to dissolve. Cold water is capable of holding double its weight in sugar, but by heating it, more sugar can dissolve in the same amount of water. A sugar solution begins with sugar, partially dissolved in at least one-third its weight of cold water. It is stirred continuously until boiling, at which time all the sugar is dissolved. If sugar crystals remain on the sides of the pan, wash down the sides with a wet pastry brush. The solution is now considered supersaturated and, to avoid crystallization, must not be stirred.

As the water evaporates, the temperature of the solution rises and the density increases. Concentration of the syrup depends on the amount of water left after evaporation. The temperature of the syrup indicates the concentration. As long as there is a lot of water in the syrup, the temperature does not rise much above the boiling point of the water. But when most of the water has boiled away, the temperature can now rise dramatically, passing through various stages and eventually rising to the temperature of melted sugar (320°F/160°C) when all the water is gone.

Concentration can also be measured by density using a saccharometer or Baumé weight scale. A Baumé scale is graduated from 0° to 44° and corresponds in a direct relationship to the degrees Fahrenheit or Celsius. The degree of evaporation can also be measured by consistency, by dropping a small amount of the syrup into ice water.



Supersaturated solutions are highly unstable and recrystallization can occur from agitation or even just by standing unless the solution was properly heated in the first place. The use of an "interfering agent" (so called because it interferes with crystallization), such as invert sugar (a little more than one-fourth the weight of the granulated sugar), butter, cream of tartar, or citric acid helps keep the solution stable by interfering with the crystalline structure formation. This is useful when the solution will be used in a way that will involve repeatedly dipping into it, such as for making spun sugar (see [Spun Sugar](#)).

As melted sugar reaches higher temperatures, many chemical changes begin to occur. The sugar cannot start to caramelize until all the water is evaporated. As it starts to caramelize, its sweetening power decreases. At this point, when all the water has evaporated, stirring will not cause the sugar to crystallize. The addition of a significant amount of an ingredient such as nuts, however, can lower the temperature considerably, and this will cause crystallization to occur instantly if no interfering agent was used.

Caramel is extremely difficult to make in humid weather because sugar is highly hygroscopic ("attracts water"). The moisture in the air will make the caramel sticky.

A half cup of sugar makes ¼ cup of liquid caramel (plus the residue that clings to the pot). If hardened and then pulverized, it returns to its original volume of ½ cup.

When sugar syrup has been prepared in advance, it is sometimes necessary to check the exact quantity of sugar and water it contains. It is important to know that the Baumé reading in a cold solution measures slightly higher than does the same solution when hot.

Another variant that affects density reading is altitude. Because water boils at a lower temperature as altitude increases (there is less air pressure weighing on the water to prevent it from changing from liquid into vapor), there will be a different temperature for the same concentration of sugar syrup at different altitudes. For each increase of five hundred feet in elevation, syrup should be cooked to a temperature 1°F lower than the temperature called for at sea level. If readings are taken in Celsius, for each nine hundred feet of elevation, cook the syrup to a temperature 1°C lower than what is called for at sea level. These adjustments should be made up to 320°F/160°C, the melting point of sugar at all altitudes.

Note that partially refined sugar caramelizes at a lower temperature. If you are not using a thermometer for caramel, use a clean clear or light-colored silicone spatula to determine the color. (Any sugar remaining on the spatula will cause crystallization.) Take care that the caramel does not become too dark as it will be bitter.

## Molasses

Molasses is refined from the concentrated juice of sugar cane and contains 24 percent water. I prefer Grandma's "unsulphured" mild flavor molasses for my recipes; its intensity doesn't overpower the other flavors.

## Refiner's Syrup

This delicious by-product of sugar refining, with lilting overtones of butterscotch and vanilla, contains 15 to 18 percent water. When, after many boilings, cane sugar syrup ceases to yield crystals, it is filtered and concentrated into this golden-colored syrup. Lyle's, a British company, packages it as Lyle's Golden Syrup. It can be used interchangeably with light corn syrup.

## Corn Syrup

This syrup is primarily glucose with fructose added to prevent crystallization. It contains about 24 percent water, but it can be used interchangeably with refiner's syrup.

## Eggs

All my recipes use USDA-grade large eggs, which means that twelve eggs in the shell should weigh a minimum of 24 ounces/680 grams and a maximum of 30 ounces/850 grams. However, this does not mean that each egg is the same size. Also, the ratio of white to yolk in an egg can vary to such a degree that a recipe calling for 6 yolks may actually need as many as 10. It is therefore advisable to weigh or measure the yolks and whites. Since cakes are so dependent on eggs for their structure, I find it safer to weigh or measure even when I know I'm using large eggs. It is important to note that the weights given for eggs on the recipe charts are always without the shells.

## Storing Eggs

Store eggs in a covered container, bottom (larger) sides up for maximum freshness.

Egg whites keep in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.

Unbroken yolks, covered with water, or sprayed with nonstick cooking spray to prevent drying, will keep in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Egg whites freeze perfectly and keep for at least 1 year. Store them in small containers as they should not be refrozen after thawing. It is also possible to freeze yolks. Stir in ½ teaspoon sugar per yolk to keep them from becoming sticky after they are defrosted. (Remember to subtract this amount of sugar from any recipe in which you are using them.)

Cakes made with all egg yolks are more tender and require slightly less leavening than cakes made with whole eggs (¼ teaspoon less baking powder for every 3 yolks). Yolks are more flavorful, result in a more golden crumb, and also cause the crust to brown more quickly. Cakes made with all egg whites are softer but slightly stronger in structure and require slightly more leavening than those made with whole eggs. A whole egg can be replaced by 2 egg yolks or 1½ egg whites.

## Egg Safety for Raw or Partially Cooked Eggs

Food safety experts agree that the risk of salmonella in raw or partially cooked eggs is highest for young children, the elderly, pregnant women, and those whose immune systems are impaired.

To prevent salmonella in preparations calling for uncooked or lightly cooked eggs, the American Egg Board (see [Ingredients Sources](#)) recommends pasteurized eggs in the shell (available in some markets; "pasteurized" will be marked on the carton) and pasteurized egg whites

("Whippin' Whites" are available in many supermarkets). They contain minute quantities of triethyl citrate to improve whipping (cream of tartar can still be added for stability). Pasteurized, organic kosher egg whites, with no additives, can be ordered from Eggology (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). They keep refrigerated for up to 4 months and more than a year if frozen.

## Butter

For cake baking, it is best to choose grade A or AA butter as it contains about 81 percent fat and 15.5 percent water. Lower grades often contain more water, which will have a detrimental effect in the cake batter and will not work well at all in mousseline buttercream. Plugrá butter, Organic Valley European-Style Cultured Butter, Vermont Butter & Cheese Company's Cultured Butter, or French butter have less water so they stay pliant even when cold. They are ideal for buttercreams but will throw off the balance of fat and liquid in a cake.

I prefer unsalted butter because it makes it easier for the baker to control the amount of salt added to the cake and because of its fresher flavor. I recommend a top-quality butter such as Organic Valley's cultured, Hotel Bar, or Land O'Lakes. The flavor of cultured butter is particularly delicious in buttercreams. Weigh butter because a 4-ounce stick of butter when unwrapped often weighs only 3.86 ounces. The European standard for minimum butterfat content is 83 percent. Organic Valley's European-Style Cultured Butter is 84 percent; Vermont Butter & Cheese Company's Cultured Butter is 86 percent fat, the highest butterfat of all American brands. Butter that is cultured has a higher acidity, which makes it softer. This is a desirable quality when butter is chilled.

Butter freezes well for several months with no perceptible difference in flavor or performance. As butter is quick to absorb other aromas or odors, if freezing it, wrap it well in plastic wrap and place it in a resealable plastic freezer storage bag.

## Clarified Butter and Browned Butter (Beurre Noisette)

Several recipes in this book call for beurre noisette, or clarified butter that has browned to the color of noisettes (French for "hazelnuts"). Beurre noisette offers a richer, more delicious flavor than melted or clarified butter. Clarified or browned butter will keep covered for months in the refrigerator, or just about indefinitely if frozen. It is the milk solids that can cause butter to become rancid relatively quickly. I always make extra clarified butter to have on hand. (The solids are excellent for adding flavor to bread dough.) Clarified or browned butter will be only 75 percent the volume or weight of whole butter. For example, if you need 3 tablespoons of clarified or browned butter, start with 4 tablespoons of butter. If using a cheesecloth-lined strainer, start with about 1 tablespoon more than that as the cheesecloth absorbs some of the butter.

When butter is clarified, its water evaporates and most of the milk solids drop to the bottom. The milk solids cannot begin to brown until all the water has evaporated. Butter that has a lower water content is ideal for clarifying because it sputters less. If sputtering does occur, cover the pot with aluminum foil and punch a hole in the top to allow steam to escape and keep the foil from popping off from the steam pressure. If the butter is frozen, allow it to defrost completely before clarifying in order to prevent burning.

To clarify butter: Melt the butter in a heavy saucepan over medium-low heat. When the butter looks clear, cook, watching carefully without stirring, until the solids begin to brown, about 20 minutes for 1 pound of butter. Move aside any foam that forms in order to check the progress of the solids. If the butter sputters during cooking, you can cover the pan with a splash guard or inverted strainer if it fits over the top of the pan. When the bubbling noise quiets, all the water has evaporated so the butter can burn easily. Strain the butter immediately through a fine-mesh strainer or cheesecloth-lined strainer.

To make beurre noisette: Allow the solids to turn deep brown. You can stir at this point in order to disperse the flavor of the browned solids throughout the butter. Strain the butter immediately through a fine-mesh strainer or cheesecloth-lined strainer.

Clarified butter weighs a little less than whole butter because whole butter still contains water and milk solids which, for the same volume, weigh more than fat. One cup of whole butter weighs 8 ounces/227 grams; 1 cup of clarified butter weighs 6.8 ounces/195 grams.

## Milk

When milk is called for in a recipe, use whole milk to obtain the ideal texture in the cake.

## Cultured Buttermilk

Buttermilk offers a delicious, slightly tangy flavor to a cake. It is produced by treating skim or part-skim milk with a culture of lactic acid bacteria. The powdered form of buttermilk lacks the full flavor of the liquid version.

## Heavy Cream

Heavy cream, also referred to as heavy whipping cream, contains 56.6 percent water and 36 to 40 percent fat (averaging 36 percent). Whipping cream has only 30 percent fat. The higher the butterfat and the colder the cream, the easier it is to whip and the more stable the whipped cream. Pasteurized cream, which is not heated to as high a temperature as ultra-pasteurized, is more flavorful and more stable. Ultra-pasteurized cream usually has various additives to enable it to whip adequately.

Though heavy cream will not whip when it has been frozen, frozen heavy cream can be used for making ganache. If the heavy cream available to you is difficult to beat and separates easily, you can increase the stability with cornstarch, cream cheese, or gelatin (see [Stabilized Whipped Cream](#)).

## Commercial Stabilizers

Cobasan is a "miracle" product from Germany that stabilizes whipped cream. A tiny quantity added before whipping the cream emulsifies the fat so effectively that the whipped cream can hold up for as long as 6 hours at room temperature. It does not work with ultra-pasteurized cream as the higher heat from this process alters the fat molecules. Cobasan is available from Albert Uster Imports (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). It seems to have an indefinite shelf life—mine is more than twenty years old.

There are stabilizers that also work with ultra-pasteurized cream: Sanifax, available from PatisFrance (see [Ingredients Sources](#)), is another excellent stabilizer from Germany. "Whip It," from Oetker in Canada, is available to consumers at some supermarkets and in specialty stores. It is a powder consisting of dextrose, modified food starch, and tricalcium phosphate. It makes the whipped cream a little less airy, adds a slightly ivory color, and gives it a slight sweetness.

Stabilized Whipped Cream

The ideal cream to purchase when whipping cream is heavy cream with a high butterfat content (not whipping cream). Most heavy cream is about 36 percent butterfat, but bakeries often have access to 40 percent butterfat cream that has not been ultra-pasteurized. Cream will whip most readily and have the best flavor if it has not been ultra-pasteurized.

All cream whips best if it is as cold as possible, so it helps to refrigerate the mixing bowl or mixer bowl and the mixer's beaters along with the cream. If you are whipping 1½ cups or less of cream, a handheld mixer works better than a stand mixer.

Cornstarch

The cornstarch-stabilized version is the lightest in texture and an excellent choice if the whipped cream will be refrigerated until shortly before serving; it will not hold up well at room temperature.

Cream Cheese

Cream cheese is also an excellent stabilizer if the whipped cream will be refrigerated until shortly before serving time; it should not be held at room temperature. It results in a subtle mellow flavor and slightly denser texture. I like to add some crème fraîche or sour cream for tang.

Gelatin

If whipped cream has to stand at cool room temperature for several hours, use the gelatin version (see [Gelatin-Stabilized Whipped Cream](#)), which produces the most stable whipped cream. It will hold at a room temperature of up to about 75°F/23°C for as long as 8 hours. It is a little more dense than the cornstarch version, but it is not quite as dense as the cream cheese one.

Crème Fraîche

Crème fraîche is made by treating heavy cream with a culture of lactic acid bacteria, which thickens it. It contains much less liquid than sour cream and has a more subtle taste with a delicious tang. There are excellent commercial qualities available, such as the Vermont Butter & Cheese Company's brand, or make your own (see [Crème Fraîche](#)), which is also delicious, especially if you are using cream that has not been ultra-pasteurized.

Cornstarch-Stabilized Whipped Cream  
Makes: 2 cups/8.3 ounces/244 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
powdered sugar	2 tablespoons	0.5	14
cornstarch	1 teaspoon	.	.
heavy cream	1 cup (8 fluid ounces), divided	8.2	232
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Cornstarch-Stabilized Whipped Cream

In a small saucepan, combine the powdered sugar and cornstarch. Gradually stir in ¼ cup of the cream. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring constantly, and simmer for a few seconds just until thickened. Scrape the mixture into a small bowl and allow it to cool just to room temperature. Stir in the vanilla.

In a chilled mixing bowl, beat the remaining cream just until traces of the beater marks begin to appear. Add the cooled cornstarch mixture in a steady stream, whipping constantly. Whip just until stiff peaks form when the beater is turned off and raised.

Cream Cheese-Stabilized Whipped Cream  
Makes: about 2½ cups/1 pound/454 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
cream cheese (60° to 70°F/15° to 21°C)	.	3	85
sugar	3 tablespoons	1.3	37.5
heavy cream	¾ cup (6 fluid ounces)	6	174
crème fraîche	¾ cup	6	174
pure vanilla extract	1 teaspoon	.	.

Make the Cream Cheese-Stabilized Whipped Cream

In the chilled bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk beater, beat the cream cheese and sugar on medium speed until fluffy. Starting on low speed, gradually beat in the cream. Raise the speed to medium and whip until the mixture mounds softly when dropped from a spoon. Add the crème fraîche and continue beating until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised. Beat in the vanilla.

Gelatin-Stabilized Whipped Cream  
Makes: 2 cups/8.5 ounces/244 gramsx

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
powdered sugar	2 tablespoons	0.5	14
powdered gelatin	1 teaspoon	.	.
heavy cream	1 cup (8 fluid ounces), divided	8.2	232
pure vanilla extract	½ teaspoon	.	.

Make the Gelatin-Stabilized Whipped Cream

In a small saucepan, combine the powdered sugar and gelatin. Gradually stir in ¼ cup of the cream. Bring the mixture just to a boil, stirring constantly. It will thicken slightly. Scrape the mixture into a small bowl and allow it to cool just to room temperature. Stir in the vanilla.

In a chilled mixing bowl, whip the remaining cream just until traces of the beater marks begin to show. Add the cooled gelatin mixture in a steady stream, beating constantly. Whip just until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised.

Crème Fraîche  
Makes: 1 cup/8.5 ounces/244 grams

	Volume	Ounce Gram	
heavy cream, preferably not ultra-pasteurized	1 cup (8 fluid ounces)	8.2	232
buttermilk, preferably full fat	1 tablespoon	0.5	15
superfine sugar	1 tablespoon	0.5	12

Make the Crème Fraîche

In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, stir together the cream and buttermilk. Place the jar in a warm spot, such as the top of the refrigerator or near the range, and allow the mixture to sit undisturbed until thickened but still pourable, 12 to 14 hours, or as long as 36 hours for cream that is ultra-pasteurized. The crème fraîche will continue to thicken on chilling and will keep for about 3 weeks refrigerated. When ready to whip, add the sugar and whisk lightly until soft peaks form when the whisk is raised. You can also use a handheld beater on low speed.

Sweetened Condensed Milk

Developed by Gail Borden in 1856, this delicious thick concentrate is made by evaporating 60 percent of the water in whole milk and adding 44 to 45 percent sugar to act as a preservative. In an unopened can, it can be stored in a cool dry place for up to 15 months. (If stored for long periods near heat, the milk may be thick and caramel colored, but the cooking quality will not be affected. Simply stir it briskly before pouring.) After opening, store condensed milk covered in its original container in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.

Evaporated Milk

Evaporated milk is much less concentrated than condensed milk and it cannot be interchanged in recipes calling for sweetened condensed milk. It is made by evaporating enough water from whole or skim milk, under vacuum, to reduce the volume by half. No sugar is added. After opening, store evaporated milk covered in its original container in the refrigerator for no more than 5 days.

Sour Cream

Sour cream contains 18 to 20 percent fat and is soured by the addition of lactic acid. In recipes, it can be replaced with whole-milk yogurt, which has about 10 percent fat, without a significant difference in texture, but lower-fat sour cream or yogurt will yield a less tender cake and may give the cake a less delicious flavor. Crème fraîche contains about 39 percent fat, so it is not interchangeable with sour cream, except where specified.

Cream Cheese

Regular cream cheese contains 37.7 percent fat and 51 percent water. For my recipes, be sure to use a whole-milk variety, preferably Philadelphia brand, and not a reduced-fat or nonfat variety. Unopened, a package can be frozen for up to a year.

## Whipped Cream Cheese

Whipped cream cheese contains 27.9 percent fat and 60.8 percent water. Unopened, it can also be frozen for about 6 months.

## Mascarpone

This rich, creamy, slightly tangy cream cheese is mildly acidulated by lactic fermentation and then whipped to a thickened consistency. With about 55 percent fat, it is an indispensable component of the beloved [Tiramisù](#). I find the flavor of the imported mascarpone most delicious. Any left over can be frozen for up to about 6 months.

## Leavening

### Baking Powder

Baking powders are mixtures of dry acid or acid salts and baking soda, with starch or flour added to standardize and help stabilize the mixtures. I use Rumford baking powder, an all-phosphate product containing calcium acid phosphate that is found in most supermarkets or health food stores. It lacks the bitter aftertaste associated with SAS baking powders, which contain sodium aluminum sulfate. (The supposed advantage of SAS powders is that they release a little more carbon dioxide during the baking stage than during the mixing stage, but I find I can interchange equal volume and weight of either type of baking powder.)

"Double-acting" means baking powders will react, or liberate carbon dioxide, partially from moisture during the mixing stage and partially when exposed to heat during the baking stage. It is important, therefore, to store baking powder in an airtight container to avoid humidity. There is also a substantial loss of strength in baking powder after about a year. Date the top or bottom of the can when you first buy it. To test if it is still active, sprinkle a little over hot water. If it fizzes actively, you can still use it.

### Baking Soda

Also known as sodium bicarbonate, baking soda has an indefinite shelf life if it is not exposed to moisture or humidity. If it clumps, it is hard to measure and must be sifted first.

## Yeast

My preference is to use instant yeast because of its reliability and because it can be added directly to flour without needing to be "proofed." This eliminates the possibility of killing the yeast by using water that is too hot. (Note: Yeast will die if subjected to ice-cold water.) It is fine to whisk the yeast into the flour before adding the water, but the yeast can also be soaked (hydrated) in warm water (at least three times its volume) for 10 minutes. If the yeast has been frozen, allow it to come to room temperature before adding the water. Instant yeast is nationally available in supermarkets under brand names such as Fleischmann's Bread Machine Yeast or RapidRise, Red Star's Quick-Rise, Red Star's Instant Active Dry, Saf Instant, and Saf Perfect Rise Gourmet.

If unopened, instant yeast will last at room temperature for up to 2 years. Once opened, it is best to store it in the freezer. If you buy it in bulk, remove a small amount for regular use and freeze both the larger and smaller amount to ensure maximum shelf life, which is at least 1 year.

Though it is necessary to soak (hydrate) active dry yeast, it is not necessary to "proof" it. Proofing is done as reassurance that the yeast is still active. It is necessary to add a small amount of sugar to the water in order to have the yeast foam and demonstrate that it is alive and active. It is equally unnecessary but acceptable to soak instant yeast. You will need at least four times the weight of the yeast in water or three times the volume.

To proof 1 teaspoon of dry yeast: Dissolve about ¼ teaspoon sugar in 1 to 3 tablespoons water warmed only to hot bath temperature, 110°F/43°C. Sprinkle the yeast on top and stir to dissolve. Set it in a warm spot for 10 to 20 minutes. As the yeast activates, it will rise to the surface and will have a crown of bubbles.

## Salt

I use fine sea salt for all my baking because it is not iodized. Iodized salt can give an unpleasant taste to a cake. Also, fine sea salt is easier to measure if you are not weighing it, and it integrates more readily into batter than does a coarse salt. Salt is very difficult to measure accurately for two reasons: Measuring spoons vary from brand to brand, and salt is extremely hygroscopic. It will readily grab water from the air and will increase its weight slightly. Using the same scale and the same salt, I have found 1 teaspoon to vary between 5.2 grams and 6.6 grams. When you find the level of salt that you prefer, for the most consistent results it is best always to use the same measuring spoon if you are not weighing the salt. But either by weight or volume, in very humid conditions, it may be desirable to add a little extra salt; conversely, in very dry conditions, a little less.

## Cream of Tartar

Also known as potassium acid tartrate, this by-product of the wine industry has an indefinite shelf life. Use 1 teaspoon cream of tartar per 1 cup egg whites (1/8 teaspoon per egg white), and it stabilizes the egg whites so that it becomes impossible to dry them out by overbeating. Cream of tartar is also an effective interfering agent in sugar syrups for making caramel, to inhibit crystallization. I also add a little to the water when baking a cake in a water bath; it keeps the aluminum pans from discoloring.

## Chocolate

The complexities and charms of chocolate are infinite and constantly changing based on many factors, not least of all its vintage or harvest. The fermentation, choice of beans, roasting, and blending of the beans, as well as processing, particularly the amount of conching, all have an impact on the final product. Needless to say, that product will vary from batch to batch. Storage and age of the chocolate will also influence flavor. The chocolate world has changed dramatically in the past 20 years. What used to be the most extra bittersweet available was 61 percent cacao; now, it has been eclipsed by 70 percent and even higher-cacao chocolates. And the terms "semisweet" or "bittersweet" no longer have any real meaning. As in the wine world, some companies are producing single-origin chocolates made from one variety of bean that may even be harvested in the "wild." Manufacturers sometimes indicate the vintage year on the bar.

There are now many wonderful chocolates available, and your choice will influence the flavor and texture of your cake, filling, buttercream, or



ganache. The chocolates listed in the chart that follows are the ones that my tester, Woody, and I used to test the recipes in this book and are my personal preferences. But it's fun to experiment with other chocolates and determine your own favorites. What tastes good to you in the bar will also be pleasing in the buttercream, ganache, or cake.

The percentage of chocolate liquor or cacao mass, listed on some bars as just the percentage of cacao, which is how I will refer to it, indicates the amount of cocoa solids and cocoa butter in the chocolate. The rest of the chocolate is mostly sugar. The percentage of cacao in the chocolate, however, does not necessarily indicate its degree of bitterness: Quality of flavor comes more from the variety of beans used and the methods of production. But the percentage of cacao in bittersweet, semisweet, or milk chocolate does determine consistency. The higher the cacao percentage, the more cocoa solids and cocoa butter, which are solid at room temperature. This will make a cake crumb or frosting more firm as well as more chocolaty. By merely exchanging the same quantity or weight of chocolate in a recipe with a chocolate of a different cacao percentage, you may be either adding more cacao and less sugar, or using less cacao and more sugar.

Most of my chocolate cakes use cocoa powder (see [Cocoa Powder](#)), but those that call for dark chocolate, such as the [Baby Chocolate Oblivions](#) or the [Marble Velvet Cake](#), have their best texture when the recommended cacao percentage is followed. Ganache consistency, however, is easy to adjust, so if you find a chocolate you adore that has a cacao percentage that differs from the recommended one, simply alter the amount of cream in the recipe, as indicated in [Ganache Proportions](#).

Standards for chocolate established by the U.S. government, according to the Code of Federal Regulations, specify, among other things, the type of fat and percentage of chocolate liquor that must be contained in the chocolate. Real chocolate must contain no fat other than cocoa butter (with the exception of 5 percent dairy butter to aid emulsification, which does not have to appear on the label).

### Semisweet, Bittersweet, or Dark Chocolate

Chocolate with a cacao percentage between 60 and 63 percent is what I use most often in my recipes. I refer to all chocolate other than unsweetened, milk chocolate, or white chocolate as dark chocolate and specify the percentage of cacao recommended. Although U.S. government standards require a minimum of 35 percent cacao (a total of 27 percent cocoa butter) for dark chocolate, most high-quality dark chocolate contains more than 50 percent cacao. If the percentage of cacao is not indicated on the wrapper of a dark chocolate, it is most likely around 53 percent.

There are two other ingredients present in small quantities in most dark chocolate: vanilla and lecithin, a highly effective emulsifier derived from soybeans, used to stabilize chocolate. The addition of lecithin reduces the amount of cocoa butter required to cover the cocoa particles and frees the cocoa butter to act as a floating medium for these particles. It also makes melted chocolate less thick and more fluid. Only a very small quantity of lecithin is necessary to accomplish this—about 1 gram of lecithin per kilogram for white chocolate and slightly more for dark chocolate.

Lecithin is used in most of the finest quality chocolate. As lecithin is not kosher for Passover, a Swiss company, Maestrani (see Taam-Tov Foods, in [Ingredients Sources](#)), exports an excellent chocolate containing no lecithin. The dark chocolate is pareve, meaning it contains no dairy products (see Taam-Tov Foods, in [Ingredients Sources](#)). Some other fine chocolates, such as Scharffen Berger, are produced under kashruth supervision. Write to the manufacturer or distributor for a letter of certification if you want to use a chocolate in kosher baking. For 100 percent organic chocolate (except for the minute lecithin component), choose Green & Black's. Cluizel chocolate is produced without lecithin due to Michèl Cluizel's strong philosophical stand against genetically modified products (it is not possible to distinguish definitively which lecithin is produced by genetic modification).

### Pure Chocolate

Pure chocolate, also referred to as bitter, baking, or unsweetened chocolate, contains only chocolate liquor, also called cacao (cocoa solids and cocoa butter), and flavorings. Depending on the variety of the cacao bean used, 50 to 58 percent (53 percent is the average) of the chocolate liquor is cocoa butter. Most of the remainder is the cocoa solids. (This is the same amount present in chocolate nibs, the name for cacao beans after the pod is removed and before processing.) It may contain flavorings such as vanilla or vanillin (synthesized vanilla). This is why Scharffen Berger, for example, labels its bitter chocolate as 99 percent cacao.

### Milk Chocolate

Milk chocolate contains pure chocolate liquor, milk solids, vanilla or vanillin, sugar, lecithin, and extra cocoa butter. U.S. government standards for milk chocolate require a minimum of 10 percent cacao (including a total of 29 to 33 percent cocoa butter) plus 12 percent whole-milk solids, but high-quality milk chocolate usually contains between 34 and 45 percent and can even be as high as 53 percent cacao. Milk chocolate produced in Switzerland must have 30 percent cocoa solids plus cocoa butter.

Milk chocolate does not have as long a shelf life as dark chocolate because the milk solids eventually become rancid (though more slowly than in white chocolate, due to the protective presence of cocoa solids). When melting milk chocolate, it is essential to stir often to prevent seeding due to the milk solids.

### White Chocolate

Until recently, white chocolate was not considered chocolate because it contains no cocoa solids, which are brown. Lesser-quality varieties contained palm kernel oil, so, in fact, they contained no chocolate component whatsoever. White chocolate, which is now recognized as real white chocolate, contains cocoa butter, milk solids, vanilla or vanillin, sugar, and lecithin. U.S. government standards require a minimum of 20 percent cocoa butter and 14 percent milk solids. High-quality white chocolate, however, contains about 30 to 35 percent cocoa butter, 21 to 27 percent milk solids, and 38 to 44 percent sugar. White chocolate can have no fat other than the cocoa butter that gives it its lovely deep ivory color and luxurious texture. Green & Black's white chocolate also contains the delicious little seeds of vanilla bean.

When added to cake batter (see [Chocolate-Covered Strawberry Cake](#)), the cocoa butter, milk solids, and lecithin in white chocolate contribute a higher rise, more velvety texture, and more moisture, resulting in a longer shelf life.

Melted white chocolate sets faster than dark chocolate, but it is softer at room temperature. Its shelf life is much shorter than dark chocolate's because of the presence of milk solids and absence of cacao solids. When melting white chocolate, it is essential to stir often to prevent seeding due to the milk solids.

### Unsweetened or Bitter Chocolate

Scharffen Berger	99% cacao
Valrhona Cacao Pâte Extra	100% cacao
Dark Chocolate	
Amedei Toscano	63% cacao
Amedei Toscano	66% cacao
Cluizel	60% cacao (no lecithin)
Felchlin Maracaibo	65% cacao
Felchlin Arriba	72% cacao
Lindt Excellence	70% cacao
Peter's Commander	48% cacao
Peter's Gibraltar	60% cacao*
Scharffen Berger Semisweet	62% cacao
Valrhona Le Noir Gastronomie (aka Extra Bitter when sold in bulk)	61% cacao
Valrhona Manjari	64% cacao
Valrhona Palmira Fino Criollo	64% cacao
Milk Chocolate	
Cluizel	42% cacao
Felchlin Ambra Surfine	38% cacao
Felchlin Accra	42% cacao
Green & Black's	34% cacao
Lindt	42% cacao
Scharffen Berger	41% cacao
Valrhona Le Lacté and Jivara Lait	40% cacao
White Chocolate	
Green & Black's (with Madagascar vanilla seeds)	30% cocoa butter, 27% milk solids
Valrhona Ivoire	35% cocoa butter, 21.5% milk solids



\*For recipes calling for 52% cacao chocolate, you can mix 2 parts Commander to 1 part Gibraltar.

## Chocolate Accessories

**Nibs** Nibs are the actual cacao beans after they are hulled from the pod, roasted, and cracked into little uneven bits. They add a delightful texture but can be perceived as excessively bitter. I like to caramelize them to temper this bitterness before adding them to a recipe, such as [Chocolate Ingots](#).

**Semisweet bits or chips** These ubiquitous chocolate morsels usually contain 42.5 percent cacao unless otherwise stated (and a total of 29 percent cocoa butter). (See Chocosphere, in [Ingredients Sources](#).)

**Valrhona Les Perles** These can be used in place of chocolate bits or chips and are less sweet, containing 55 percent cacao (and a total of 29 percent cocoa butter).

**Chocolate Rolled Fondant** An excellent chocolate rolled fondant called Pettinice is produced by Bakels of New Zealand (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). It is slightly sweeter than my homemade version, but it is more flexible and can be used to drape over and encase a cake without its cracking at the edges (see Pastry Chef Central, in [Ingredients Sources](#)).

## Cocoa Powder

Unsweetened cocoa powder is pulverized pure chocolate liquor with three-quarters of its cocoa butter removed. Most European cocoa powder is Dutch processed, which means that the cocoa powder has been treated with a mild alkali to mellow its flavor by neutralizing acidity and make it more soluble. The term "alkalized" may appear on the container, but a darker colored powder is a good indication that alkalization has taken place. Most alkalized cocoa contains 22 to 25 percent cocoa butter, while nonalkalized cocoa may contain only 10 to 21 percent cocoa butter. I prefer the flavor of alkalized cocoa.

Cocoa powder offers a richer, stronger chocolate flavor to cakes made with flour than does bar chocolate (unless it is the primary ingredient, as it is in the [Baby Chocolate Oblivions](#)). Fewer cocoa solids are necessary to achieve the same flavor intensity, but it is usually desirable to dissolve cocoa powder in very hot water to unlock its full flavor.

It is not necessary to sift cocoa powder that will be dissolved in water. In recipes such as the chocolate [Lacquer Glaze](#) or the [Chocolate Rolled Fondant](#), it is advisable to process or sift the cocoa powder if it is lumpy so it will incorporate more evenly. Also, if measuring rather than weighing cocoa powder, if you sift it first and then spoon it lightly into the cup or spoon and level it off, you will get a more accurate and consistent measure.

My favorite Dutch-processed cocoa powder is Green & Black's. Second to that is Droste. Both contain 20 to 22 percent cocoa butter and are alkalized, which I prefer. The flavor is a result both of the type of cacao beans used and the degree of roasting. Darker roasting produces a milder-flavored cocoa powder.

## Cocoa Dusting Powder

This terrific product, called Coco-Dust, is imported from Italy by Cacao Noel, a respected French brand (see Pastry Chef Central, in [Ingredients Sources](#)). It has a combination of sugars, starches, and 22 to 24 percent cocoa powder, and its heavier structure is able to withstand moisture when sprinkled on hot or cold wet ingredients such as you find in [Tiramisù](#).

## Cocoa Butter

The quality of cocoa butter is directly related to the quality of the bean from which it was derived and the process by which it was separated from the chocolate liquor. ChefShop (see [Ingredients Sources](#)) carries an excellent Belgian cocoa butter in convenient-to-use granules.

When working with cocoa butter, keep in mind that it is solid at room temperature and has a low melting point, just below body temperature. In the industry this is referred to as a "sharp melting point," which means that it changes quickly from solid to liquid, unlike butter, where the change is far more gradual. Adding cocoa butter to mixtures will make them firmer, but it will also offer more of a melt-in-the-mouth sensation.

Always store cocoa butter in an airtight container so that it doesn't pick up other aromas. It will keep for several years refrigerated.

## Storing Chocolate

The best way to store chocolate or cocoa is to keep it well wrapped in an airtight container at a temperature of 60° to 75°F/15 to 23°C, with less than 50 percent relative humidity. Chocolate is quick to absorb odors and must not be exposed to dampness. Under these conditions, dark chocolate should keep well for at least 2 years. I have experienced chocolate stored in ideal conditions for several years and it seems to age like a fine wine, becoming more mellow and subtle. Milk chocolate keeps, even in optimum conditions, for only a little over a year, and white chocolate, for about a year.

## Nuts

Most nuts have a fat content of between 54.2 and 72.1 percent. Freshly shelled nuts have the best flavor, but shelled canned varieties are excellent and a lot more convenient. All nuts are prone to rancidity, but higher-fat nuts such as walnuts, pecans, and macadamia nuts are more prone to spoilage than others. Always taste nuts before using them: Rancidity will ruin the flavor of a dessert, and it's often not possible to detect this by smelling. Nuts keep well for several years if stored airtight in the freezer. I use either resealable plastic freezer storage bags, expelling all the excess air, or glass canning jars, filling the empty head space with wadded up plastic wrap before freezing.

## Almonds

Almonds, which contain 54.2 percent fat, are the first-ranking nut crop in America and are grown mostly in California. American almond paste usually contains only almonds and 25 to 35 percent sugar. Marzipan is usually made with almonds, powdered sugar, and corn syrup, though the most delicious and silky varieties are made with bitter almonds and finely crystallized poured fondant. My favorites are the Lubek marzipan from Germany and the BIA marzipan from Sicily (available at Whole Foods; also available at Dean & DeLuca, see [Ingredients Sources](#)). If using marzipan to make candles (see [Marzipan Candles](#)), the Odense supermarket variety is perfectly acceptable.

## Walnuts

Walnuts, the second-ranking nut crop, are grown in California, and they are also grown and appreciated all over the world. Because of their high fat content—they contain 64 percent fat—they are also quite prone to rancidity and should be stored frozen. The very best walnuts I've ever tasted are from the Perigord region of France, where, logically the best walnut oil is produced. I once spent a stormy day in the beautiful home of Josette and Pierre Chouard, talking about life while shelling walnuts for a tart. It took hours with an antique nutcracker. Those walnuts were the best I ever tasted, and the process of preparing them induced such a feeling of supreme well-being as I will never forget. We ate the huge tart for dessert for the next three nights, and we were extraordinarily happy. Roasting walnuts improves their flavor and has the added advantage of being able to remove the bitter skins easily—200 grams nuts have 9 grams skins (4.5 percent).

## Pecans

Pecans, which contain 71.2 percent fat, are a native American nut, ranking third in production after almonds and walnuts. They contain the most antioxidants of all nuts. The majority of pecans is grown in Georgia and Texas. Due to their high fat content, pecans are quite prone to rancidity and should be stored frozen. If using fresh pecans, 1½ pounds/680 grams in the shell will yield 13½ ounces/383 grams shelled. Good mail-order sources for fresh pecans, both shelled and unshelled, are San Saba and Sunnyland Farms, in Texas, and Pearson Farm, in Georgia (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

## Pistachios

Pistachios, which contain 53.7 percent fat, are a beautiful and delicious nut, but the salted variety should not be used for dessert recipes. Wonderfully flavorful, bright green pistachios from Sicily can be ordered shelled and unsalted from Keenan Farms, Kalustyan's, and SOS Chefs. My favorite pistachio nuts come from Iran and are also carried by SOS Chefs and Kalustyan's (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

To Blanch: Place the pistachios in boiling water for about 1 minute. Drain them and remove the peels by pinching each one gently and discard. Allow them to dry on paper towels for about 3 hours.

PatisFrance produces an excellent blanched pistachio flour for the food service industry. You can use it in place of the almonds in the [Gold Ingots](#) for an extra-special treat.

## Macadamia Nuts

Macadamia nuts have a slightly waxy, crunchy texture and unique mellow flavor. Because of their exceptionally high fat content (72.1 percent), they are particularly prone to rancidity and should be stored frozen. (If unsalted macadamia nuts are difficult to find, they can be ordered directly from Hawaii from the Mauna Loa Macadamia Nut Corp. (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

## Toasting and Grinding Nuts

Lightly toasting nuts at 350°F/175°C for about 7 minutes greatly enhances their flavor. (At 375°F/190°C they will take about 5 minutes.) It is particularly desirable to toast walnuts because the skins are very bitter and toasting loosens most of them. If you toast 7 ounces/200 grams of walnuts, about 0.3 ounce/9 grams of skin will come off when you rub them lightly in paper towels or break up or chop them. Pick out the nut pieces and discard the skin. Toast walnuts and pecans just to the point where their color is a shade darker than the freshly shelled nut. They should not be allowed to brown because they will become bitter.

Frozen or refrigerated nuts must be brought to room temperature before grinding in order to keep them from exuding their oil. A tablespoon or two of cornstarch, flour, powdered or granulated sugar—borrowed from the rest of the recipe—will help absorb oil and prevent ground nuts from clumping.

A small food processor seems to work best for grinding nuts evenly. The Mouli or Zyliss hand grinders also do a fine job.

To produce the most even ground almonds, use the sliced variety. For 1 cup of ground almonds, you will need 1¼ cups sliced almonds. If using whole nuts, first pass them through the grating disk of the food processor. Then insert the metal blade and pulse until the nuts are finely chopped.

## Nonstick Cooking Spray

This product is mostly oil and lecithin and is ideal for keeping cakes from sticking to the wire cooling rack. I prefer Pam to other nonstick vegetable spray products because it has virtually no odor. It is composed of lecithin, a natural emulsifying agent derived from soybeans, and a minute amount of soybean oil.

## Baking Spray

This odor-free spray, widely available as Baker's Joy (see [Ingredients Sources](#)) is a combination of flour and oil and is used for spraying on baking pans. It is faster and neater than greasing and flouring.

## Extracts, Oils, and Essences

### Vanilla Extract

Pure vanilla extract is essential for two reasons: It adds an indescribably intoxicating aroma and flavor to cakes, buttercreams, and other toppings; at the same time, it enhances their intrinsic flavors. There are many glorious pure vanilla extracts. The most widely available top-quality vanillas are produced by Nielsen-Massey (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). I particularly like their Tahitian vanilla. My favorite is produced by Eurovanille and is imported by Crossings; it is also carried by SOS Chefs (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). In the United States, it is not technically considered an extract because it is distilled in glucose instead of alcohol. Glucose serves to retain vanilla's flavor better during baking as it is far less volatile. Another top-choice vanilla extract is the Mexican vanilla carried by the Vanilla Queen (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

The recipes in this book that call for vanilla extract refer to pure vanilla extract. Vanilla "flavor" is not an acceptable substitute. Though easy and convenient to use, vanilla extract should be dispensed judiciously; unlike the vanilla bean, used in excess, vanilla extract will impart a bitter edge.

Nielsen-Massey recommends storing vanilla extract at room temperature in a cool, dark area away from direct heat. They say that refrigeration is

fine, but since flavoring material precipitates out when chilled, the bottle must be shaken before use.

## Vanilla Bean

There is some confusion as to the use of the words "vanilla bean" because when the seeds (sometimes referred to as grains) contained in the pod are used in a product, they are often referred to as vanilla beans (for example, in ice cream or crème brûlée), even though only the seeds are used and not necessarily any of the bean's pod. A vanilla bean is actually the pod and seeds. The average vanilla bean contains sixty thousand seeds.

The seeds contained inside the vanilla bean pod add a subtle depth of flavor and unique sweet quality to baked goods. I find it most effective to scrape the seeds into the sugar in the recipe and process them together. Then I allow the pod to steep in any liquid used in the recipe. After removing it, I rinse the pod and dry it in a very low oven or near a hot burner. When it is dry, I bury it in sugar. I use the resulting vanilla sugar in recipes, replacing about 8 percent of the sugar.

Vanilla beans vary widely in quality. The best beans come from Tahiti, Madagascar, and Mexico. Tahitian beans, my personal favorite, are about twice the size of the others, with a floral quality so aromatic that I use one-half a bean in a recipe specifying one bean. To replace vanilla beans in a recipe with extract, the rule of thumb is this: a 2-inch piece of bean (1-inch piece, if Tahitian) equals 1 teaspoon of extract. Vanilla beans are carried by Nielsen-Massey, SOS Chefs, and the Vanilla Queen (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). Suppliers caution against refrigerating vanilla beans because the beans can mold. However, I find that if stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator, they keep perfectly for several years, and they freeze well, keeping their moisture if wrapped airtight. Some chefs like to store their vanilla beans immersed in vanilla extract. This is more practical if you are using the vanilla for baking in quantity.

If a white substance appears on the vanilla beans, it is probably flavorful vanillin crystals that migrate to the surface rather than mold. To determine which it is, simply touch your finger to the bean. If what you touch is mold, it will not disappear; if it is vanillin crystals, after a few seconds they will vanish.

## Coffee Extract

A good-quality coffee extract offers the most rounded, pure coffee flavor possible. Nielsen-Massey (see [Ingredients Sources](#)) produces an excellent one. Coffee extract will keep in a cool, dark place for 1 year, and longer if refrigerated.

## Oils

Boyajian orange, tangerine, lemon, and lime oils, squeezed from the rind of the fresh fruit, have a perfectly pure flavor without bitterness and are great for adding extra intensity to cakes and frostings. They can also be used in place of zest as their quality is often superior; however, they don't contribute the little flecks of bright color of the zest. By weight, fruit oils are equal to about ten times the amount of zest. By volume, they are equal to sixteen times the volume of loosely packed zest (see [Ingredient Equivalencies and Substitutions](#)). These oils are available at gourmet stores such as Dean & DeLuca and Williams-Sonoma (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). Exquisite steam-distilled French fruit essences such as wild strawberry, passion fruit, and apricot are available in tiny bottles from La Cuisine (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). They are expensive but well worth the price. Perfumer Mandy Aftel calls these finely tuned essences that she produces "essential oils" (see Aftel, in [Ingredients Sources](#)). A few drops go a long way, so start with just one drop at a time. I adore her coffee, bitter orange, blood orange, and lemon essential oils. Her vanilla essential oil caused me practically to pass out with pleasure on first scent. Mandy recommends storing the citrus oils refrigerated for up to 4 months and says the other essences will keep indefinitely at room temperature.

## Lecithin

Liquid lecithin, available in health food stores, is a soy derivative (but it is also found in egg yolks) and acts as an emulsifier in butter cake batter. It makes cakes slightly higher and more moist and adds a subtle, sweet aftertaste, but it also slightly dulls the assertive buttery flavor. I recommend using it if you are making a butter layer cake 3 to 4 days in advance of serving. To the eggs, add ½ teaspoon per 2 to 2½ cups flour/7 to 8.7 ounces/200 to 250 grams. Be sure to store the lecithin in the refrigerator as it is highly prone to rancidity; if it has an off smell, don't use it.

## Citrus Fruit

Different varieties of citrus fruit vary greatly in the amount of juice and zest they will yield, so the amounts listed in the chart that follows are estimates. Consider them as helpful guidelines for how many fruits to buy. It's always a good idea to get a few more than you think you will use. I buy the largest ones available for their zest and the heaviest ones for their juice.

## Oranges

Valencia oranges, also referred to as juice oranges, yield more juice than navel oranges, but navel oranges are a better choice for zest because of their thick, rough skin. The bitter Seville oranges have the most acidity and intensity of all oranges. They are ideal for making orange curd, but the peel, which has a horrible taste unless it is heavily sugared as for marmalade, should be discarded. These oranges are very thick skinned but also very juicy. Their juice freezes well. They are available from January through March.

## Lemons

Meyer lemons from California have the most mellow flavor, but many people prefer the intensity of the more commonly available lemons.

## Zest

Zest is the colored portion of only the citrus peel or rind that is grated. The white portion, or pith, should be avoided as it is quite bitter. Fruit should be zested before squeezing, which is why it's listed in the ingredients lists slightly out of order from where it's added to the recipe. Be sure to wash the fruit in soap and hot water and rinse it well or it will add a bitter taste to the recipe. If a recipe calls for finely grated zest, after grating it with a Microplane grater, use a chef's knife to chop it to a fine consistency, or process it with some of the sugar in the recipe.

## Approximate Yield of Juice and Zest for an Orange and Lemon

One Orange

One Lemon

Juice	¼ to ½ cup	Juice	3 to 4 tablespoons
Zest	2 to 3 tablespoons	Zest	1¼ teaspoons to 2 teaspoons

## Candied Lemon and Orange Peel

If you think you don't like candied fruit, try the extraordinary varieties available from Italy, Switzerland, and France (see ChefShop, in [Ingredients Sources](#)). I prefer to avoid citron and use only the orange and lemon peel.

## Lemon Curd

Commercial lemon curd varies widely in quality. Tiptree brand, available in most supermarkets, is very close to and sometimes better than homemade because it is prepared by hand in small batches. Its exceptional quality is also due to the flavorful Spanish lemons used in its preparation.

## Passion Fruit

This aromatic fruit is available year round from Florida, California, and New Zealand. Store it at room temperature until slightly dimpled, then store it in the shell in an airtight freezer bag in the refrigerator for up to a week or in the freezer for up to a year. One passion fruit equals 1½ tablespoons of puree. Although no one having indulged in the fruit would question the appropriateness of the name, the term "passion fruit" actually came from Catholic missionaries in Brazil who, upon seeing passion fruit vines in flower around Easter, were reminded of the passion of Christ and the crucifixion.

## Purees

These intense concentrations of fruit and pulp make fabulous additions to buttercreams or as delectable decoration when dabbed on in small dollops. An excellent frozen passion puree is carried by Albert Uster Imports, SOS Chefs, and an equally excellent double-concentrated version is available from Perfect Purée and Kalustyan's (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). They carry a wide variety of other purees as well, including ginger, which can be frozen for as long as a year. Boiron purees are also top quality and are available through L'Épicerie (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

## Preserves

Across the board, American Spoon Food (see [Ingredients Sources](#)) has excellent preserves and butters. Their strawberry and raspberry butters are fantastic added to buttercreams. A good replacement for apricot lekvar is Solo's Apricot Filling, available in most supermarkets.

## Bananas

As bananas ripen and develop black spots, their flavor becomes much sweeter, the peel thinner, and the pulp softer. It can take more than a week to reach this point. In a banana emergency, an alternative method of ripening is to freeze bananas in the peel overnight. They can be defrosted in less than 30 minutes in a room-temperature water bath, then slit lengthwise and the pulp removed. Ripening bananas naturally, however, produces a sweeter flavor. Any extra banana pulp can be frozen for several months.

When buying bananas, keep in mind that the peel of a banana represents about 25 percent of its weight. A cup of mashed banana weighs about 8 ounces/227 grams. Baby bananas have a sweeter and more intense flavor and are fine to use for all recipes calling for bananas.

## Coconut

One average coconut weighs about 1½ pounds/680 grams and yields about 4 cups/11 ounces/310 grams of finely shredded coconut. One cup weighs about 2.6 ounces/75 grams.

To prepare a fresh coconut: With a metal skewer or screwdriver, pierce two of the eyes. Drain the milky liquid. If desired, strain the liquid and use it for cooking or drinking. With a hammer or the back of a cleaver, sharply tap the coconut about one-third of the way from the opposite end of the eyes. Continue tapping it in a circle around the coconut until it breaks open. Use a knife to divide the coconut into portions that can be lifted easily from the shells and lift out each section. Cut off the brown skin and grate the white flesh into fine flakes. If using a special coconut grater (see [Coconut Graters](#)), there is no need to remove the shell. Simply insert the head of the grater into the hollow coconut half and turn the crank.

Unsweetened, flaked coconut, softer and fresher tasting than most commercially prepared coconut, is available from specialty stores (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). Excellent-quality coconut in many textures and degrees of fineness is available in some Middle Eastern markets and Indian food stores such as Kalustyan's (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

Baker's Coconut is sweet, moist, and flavorful. Once opened, it will keep for about 1 week refrigerated in its own package or for 3 to 6 months frozen. Unopened, it will keep for about 18 months refrigerated.

Coconut cream is derived from the pressed flesh of the coconut. It is available in cans. Coconut cream powder is the dehydrated form of coconut cream. Coconut milk is obtained by diluting the liquid coconut cream with water. All three are available at Kalustyan's (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

## Gelatin

Gelatin is made from ground-up animal by-products, including hooves and bones. According to Knox, the ubiquitous maker of gelatin products, their gelatin, which comes in 7-gram/¼-ounce packages, will gel 2 cups of liquid. I find that one package of gelatin measures 2¼ teaspoons, so 1 1/8 teaspoons are needed per cup of liquid.

Powdered gelatin needs to be softened in cool water for at least 5 minutes before being heated to dissolve it, which enables it to be effective as a thickening agent. According to the Lipton tea company's research department, "While it is true that extensive boiling will denature unflavored gelatin... normal use in recipes, including boiling, will not adversely affect the product."

Gelatin requires a minimum of 4 hours to thicken and will continue to thicken a mixture over a 24-hour period. Once it has reached maximum thickness, it will not thicken more, even on freezing, but freezing will not affect its thickening power. A gelatin mixture can be frozen, thawed, remelted, and refrozen several times before it loses its thickening capability. I use Grayslake powdered gelatin, available at cake decorating supply stores such as Sweet Celebrations (see [Ingredients Sources](#)), in recipes calling for gelatin. Kosher gelatin, which is made of vegetable gum, tapioca dextrin, and acids, is produced by Kojel (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

Cinnamon

There are many varieties of cinnamon available. My favorite is Korintje because it's sweet and mellow (see Penzeys Spices, in [Ingredients Sources](#)). If choosing other types, such as Vietnamese, use only two-thirds the indicated amount as they are very intense, reminiscent of cinnamon Red Hots candies.

Poppy Seeds

These tiny gray-blue seeds are delicious when fresh, but they become bitter and rancid if held too long at room temperature. Store poppy seeds in the refrigerator or freeze them. They are more perishable when ground, so for the freshest flavor it's best to grind them just before using them. Penzeys carries the "A-1" type called Holland Blue.

Beeswax

Used for making spun sugar because of its high melting point, beeswax helps keep sugar strands flexible. Beeswax is available at sculptors' supply stores, some sewing supply stores, and, of course, through apiaries.

Flowers

Fresh flowers and leaves marketed specifically for dessert making offer beautiful and sometimes even flavorful additions to cakes, but be sure to choose only those flowers that have not been sprayed and are safe for human consumption. Not all flowers are edible and some are highly poisonous. Edible flowers include apple blossoms, borage flowers, citrus blossoms (orange and lemon), day lilies (not tiger lilies, which have spots), English daisies, funcia, hibiscus, hollyhocks, honeysuckle, lilacs, nasturtiums, pansies, petunias, roses, tulips, and violets. Rose geranium leaves and mint leaves also make lovely and aromatic garnishes, especially when sugared (see [Crystallized Flowers and Leaves](#)).

Royal Icing, Gum Paste, and Crystallized Flowers

To make these exquisite cake adornments on your own takes great expertise and patience and a few special ingredients to accomplish. Fortunately, you can get such items as royal icing, gum paste, and crystallized flowers from Petal Crafts, Lucks, Pfeil & Holing, and Paris Gourmet (go to Brands and then Deco Art; see [Ingredients Sources](#)). Paris Gourmet doesn't sell to the consumer, but if you find something you like on their site, their sister site, Chocolate Crafter should carry it (see [Ingredients Sources](#)).

Gum paste flowers can be so exquisitely lifelike that it is hard to tell them from real flowers. Betty Van Nostrand is the undisputed queen of gum paste and has taught many of the people who are producing these flowers for sale.

The most breathtaking crystallized flowers of many varieties are made by Sweetfields (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). My favorites are the ones filmed with a transparent veil of gold dust; some even have a lovely flavor. They are referred to as SweetDust.

Gold

There is no cake decoration more stunning than edible gold. Twenty-three-karat gold and silver leaf, flakes, and powder are available from Edible Gold, Easy Leaf Products, and the Gilded Planet (see [Ingredients Sources](#)). When dusted on a cake glazed with a shiny chocolate frosting, such as the [Deep Chocolate Passion Wedding Cake](#) or the [Chocolate-Covered Strawberry Cake](#), it lends the appearance of a starry night. Lovely gold and other hues of luster dust are also available in cake decorating supply stores.

Water

I list water here because of the significant way in which it relates to volume and weight.

One of the beauties of the metric system is that it has terms for volume—"milliliters" and "liters"—and different terms for weight—"grams" and "kilograms." The metric system is based on water, that is, the volume value for water is equal to the weight value (100 milliliters are equal to 100 grams). Our avoirdupois system is less elegant and somewhat confusing because not only does the word "ounce" refer to both volume and weight, 1 fluid ounce of water does not equal 1 ounce in weight; it equals 1.042 ounces. So one 8-ounce (in volume) cup of water is actually equal to 8.33 ounces (in weight). Webster's American Dictionary defines water with an equation: 1 gallon equals 8.337 pounds (133.392 ounces). This divides down to 1 cup equals 8.337 ounces/236.35 grams.

The metric system is a model of logic, simplicity, and clarity, and I long for the day when it is embraced in this country.

Ingredient Equivalencies and Substitutions

Making one thing into another is never 100 percent. In a pinch, however, it is helpful to know how to come close to an original ingredient and quantity. Substituting ingredients such as granulated sugar and molasses for brown sugar comes closer to the original because that substitution is often made commercially, although I prefer using unrefined brown sugar that has the original molasses in it (see [Sugar](#)). It is not possible to give a substitution for molasses, however, because in order to have enough molasses contained by the sugar, too much sugar would need to be added.

Some Useful Substitutions for Emergencies

For	Substitute
1 cup light brown sugar	1 cup granulated sugar plus ¼ cup light molasses



1 cup dark brown sugar	1 cup granulated sugar plus ½ cup light molasses
1 pound unsalted butter	1 pound lightly salted butter (remove 1 teaspoon salt from the recipe)
1 cup whole milk	1 cup minus 1 tablespoon half-and-half (remove 1 tablespoon butter from the recipe and add 2 tablespoons water)
1 cup half-and-half	¾ cup whole milk plus ¼ cup heavy cream, or ½ cup whole milk plus ½ cup light cream
1 cup/3.5 ounces/100 grams sifted cake flour	¾ cup/3 ounces/85 grams sifted bleached all-purpose flour plus 2 tablespoons/0.5 ounce/15 grams cornstarch (or another option for cakes using leavening: ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons/3.5 ounces/100 grams sifted all-purpose flour plus 3/16 teaspoon extra baking powder)
1 cup/4 ounces/114 grams sifted bleached all-purpose flour	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons sifted cake flour (or for sponge cakes only: ¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon Wondra flour)
1 teaspoon instant yeast	1¼ teaspoons active dry yeast or 1½ teaspoons packed fresh yeast
1 teaspoon citrus oil	1/3 cup loosely packed citrus zest
1 teaspoon loosely packed citrus zest	1/16 teaspoon citrus oil

Ingredients Sources

Aftel Essential Oils

[www.aftelier.com](http://www.aftelier.com) 510-841-2111

Albert Uster Imports

[www.auiswiss.com](http://www.auiswiss.com) 800-231-8154

American Almond Food Service Products

[www.pastrycraft.com](http://www.pastrycraft.com) 800-825-6663

American Egg Board

[www.incredibleegg.org](http://www.incredibleegg.org) 847-296-7043

American Spoon Foods

[www.spoon.com](http://www.spoon.com) 800-220-5886

Bakels

[www.bakels.com](http://www.bakels.com)

Baker's Joy

[www.bakersjoy.com](http://www.bakersjoy.com) 815-372-4485

ChefShop

[www.chefshop.com](http://www.chefshop.com) 800-596-0885

Chefswarehouse

[www.chefswarehouse.com](http://www.chefswarehouse.com) 718-842-8700 ext. 20104

Chocosphere

[www.chocosphere.com](http://www.chocosphere.com) 877-992-4626

country kitchen sweetart

[www.countrykitchensa.com](http://www.countrykitchensa.com) 800-497-3927

Crossings

[www.crossingsfrenchfood.com](http://www.crossingsfrenchfood.com) 800-209-6141

Dean and DeLuca

[www.deandeluca.com](http://www.deandeluca.com) 800-221-7714

Easy Leaf Products

[www.easyleafproducts.com](http://www.easyleafproducts.com) 800-569-5323

Edible Gold

[www.ediblegold.com](http://www.ediblegold.com) 415-407-5097

Eggology

[www.eggology.com](http://www.eggology.com) 888-669-6557

Gilded Planet

[www.gildedplanet.com](http://www.gildedplanet.com) 415-407-5097

India Tree

[www.indiatree.com](http://www.indiatree.com) 800-369-4848

Kalustyan's

[www.kalustyans.com](http://www.kalustyans.com) 800-352-3451

Keenan Pistachios

[www.keenanpistachio.com](http://www.keenanpistachio.com) 559-945-1400



Kojel

[www.vipfoodsinc.com](http://www.vipfoodsinc.com) 800-83kojel, 718-821-5330

La Cuisine

[www.lacuisineus.com](http://www.lacuisineus.com) 800-521-1176

L'Épicerie

[www.lepicerie.com](http://www.lepicerie.com) 866-350-7575

Lucks Food Decorating Company

[www.lucks.com](http://www.lucks.com) 800-426-9778

Mauna Loa Macadamia Nut

[www.hersheygifts.com](http://www.hersheygifts.com) 800-454-7737

Nielsen-Massey Vanillas

[www.nielsenmassey.com](http://www.nielsenmassey.com) 800-525-7873

Paris Gourmet

[www.parisgourmet.com](http://www.parisgourmet.com),

[www.chocolatecrafter.com](http://www.chocolatecrafter.com) 800-727-8791 ext. 1

Pastry Chef Central

[www.pastrychef.com](http://www.pastrychef.com) 561-999-9483

PatisFrance (French language)

[www.patisfrance.fr](http://www.patisfrance.fr)

Pearson Farm

[www.pearsonfarm.com](http://www.pearsonfarm.com) 888-423-7374

Penzeys Spices

[www.penzeys.com](http://www.penzeys.com) 800-741-7787

Perfect Purée of Napa Valley

[www.perfectpuree.com](http://www.perfectpuree.com) 800-556-3707

Petal Crafts

[www.petalcrafts.com](http://www.petalcrafts.com) 818-249-2460

Pfeil & Holing

[www.cakedeco.com](http://www.cakedeco.com) 800-247-7955

San Saba

[www.sansabapecan.com](http://www.sansabapecan.com) 575-526-5745

SOS Chefs

[www.sos-chefs.com](http://www.sos-chefs.com) 212-505-5813

Sunnyland Farms

[www.sunnylandfarms.com](http://www.sunnylandfarms.com) 800-999-2488

Sweet Celebrations

[www.sweetc.com](http://www.sweetc.com) 800-328-6722

Sweetfields

[www.sweetfields.com](http://www.sweetfields.com) 877-987-9338

Taam-Tov foods (kosher chocolate)

718-788-8880 ext. 127

Vanilla.Company

[www.vanilla.com](http://www.vanilla.com) 800-757-7511

Vital Choice (organic nuts)

[www.vitalchoice.com](http://www.vitalchoice.com) 800-608-4825, 866-482-5887

Williams-Sonoma

[www.williamssonoma.com](http://www.williamssonoma.com) 877-812-6235

Wilton Industries

[www.wilton.com](http://www.wilton.com) 800-794-5866

Zingerman

[www.zingermans.com](http://www.zingermans.com) 888-636-8162

## Equipment

When it comes to cake baking, aside from specialty pans, very little equipment is needed. Special equipment and serving plates, however, make the pleasure of baking that much more enjoyable. My great uncle Nathan George Horwitt, designer of the Movado Museum watch dial, was an industrial designer. It was from him that I learned to appreciate the Bauhaus principle of form following function. There is little that excites me more than a tool that makes a job easier and the results nearer to perfect. For me, a well-designed tool is a work of art and deserves to be on permanent display. I have continued the family tradition by designing some special equipment under the name Rose Levy Bakeware. It is available from LaPrima Shops (see [Equipment Sources](#)).

Note that sources are listed when distributors are exclusive or the item is hard to find, but this can change. Some places will special order or direct you to the distributor if they no longer carry a given item. And, of course, the Internet is an excellent way to search for just about anything.

The Baker's Dozen Essential Pieces of Equipment for Cake Baking (listed in order of importance)

Measuring cups for liquids

Scale for large quantities or measuring cups for solids

Measuring spoons

Basic cake pans

Pan liners: Teflon sheeting, Silpat, and parchment

Cake strips for even baking

Food processor

Heavy-duty stand mixer or heavy-duty handheld mixer

Instant-read thermometer

Spatulas: small metal spatulas (straight and offset) and silicone spatulas

Fine-mesh strainers and sifters

Wire racks for cooling

Microplane grater

For all appliances such as digital thermometers and scales that are battery operated, be aware that as the battery wears, accuracy decreases.

## Liquid Measures

The most-accurate and well-marked heatproof plastic and glass measuring cups I have found are made by POURfect and Anchor Hocking (see [Equipment Sources](#)). A cup of water, read below the bottom of the meniscus (the curved upper surface), should weigh close to 8.3 ounces/236 grams to be acceptable. If using a metric cup, this is equal to 236 milliliters (as milliliters are based on the weight of water). The standard metric cup is 250 milliliters, about 1 tablespoon more than the standard U.S. cup.

The plastic POURfect beakers are designed to pour without dripping. They are heat resistant up to 190°F/88°C. The glass cups by Anchor Hocking are ideal for pouring hot sugar syrups and caramel. I use my 1-cup measures the most, but the 2-cup and 4-cup measures are often useful as well. When measuring sticky substances such as syrups and molasses, spray the cup (or measuring spoon, for smaller amounts) with nonstick cooking spray before using. A mini measure is perfectly accurate for measuring small amounts of liquid. It measures from 1 teaspoon up to 6 teaspoons (2 tablespoons).

## Scales

I am a major proponent of weighing ingredients rather than measuring for baking. In fact, I once wrote an article on its virtues for the Los Angeles Times entitled "Weigh to Bake." Most recently I updated it and published it on my blog. I am updating it yet again here because it is so central to successful and enjoyable baking. I can't imagine life without a countertop scale to weigh ingredients! If I wrote books or recipes just for myself, I wouldn't even include cup measures. While I'm going out on a limb, I might as well admit that given my druthers, I would use only the metric system. It's so much easier, faster, and more reliable. Can you imagine how crazy-making it is to create and proof all the ingredients charts in my books that list each ingredient in volume, ounces, and grams? But I've got to cater to those resistant to weighing because as far as I'm concerned, it's better to bake by volume than not to bake at all. And baking makes me happy, so I want to share it with everyone.

Bakers are born, not made. We are exacting people who delight in submitting ourselves to rules and formulas if it means achieving repeatable perfection. The rewards of this discipline go beyond providing absolute sensory pleasure. There is also a feeling of magic and alchemy that comes from starting with ingredients that don't remotely resemble the delicious magnificence of the final result.

I've been championing the use of scales for baking for years, but now I have a new and persuasive argument that just might tip the balance. Two of the most important ingredients used in baking have changed in their packaging over the past few years, impairing accuracy of baking results. At first I thought it was a fluke, but when I mentioned it to other bakers and chefs, they also were puzzled but aware of it.

I've been finding more and more often that when I unwrap a stick of butter and weigh it, instead of getting the 4.0 ounces listed on the label, it weighs only around 3.86 ounces. I just don't get it. There used to be laws and fines that encouraged manufacturers to go a little over the mark rather than risk going under (in more ways than one).

The unnatural change in egg yolks, however, presents a real mystery of nature. I first noticed something weird when I was baking at a friend's house in the French countryside. I was making a lemon custard tart and instead of the six yolks I would normally use I had to use about ten to equal

the same weight. Each "large" egg in the shell weighed the standard 2 ounces/56 grams, but the yolk inside was tiny. Happily, most French households have kitchen scales so it was no problem weighing it. Several years later, I noticed the same thing happening in the United States. Now, as you know, the yolk is primarily the living embryonic organism and the egg white is its extra food. Could this new imbalance be a metaphor for the trend toward excessive food, starting even this early in the development of life? I remember thinking at the time, "Poor little yolk—what happened to you?" And then yolk after yolk appeared in the same sad size.

Another curious thing I've learned about eggs is that the law dictates that a dozen large eggs in the shell weigh in at a total of 24 ounces, but there can be significant variance in the weight of each individual egg as long as the total adds up.

Before you start thinking that the problem is me, I should add that several of my scales are very high-caliber laboratory scales that I calibrate on a regular basis.

Recipes may not suffer greatly if variations are minor in weight, but they will not be perfect either. Of course not everyone's goal is to be a perfect baker, but if you're reading this book I will bet that you are interested in investigating the possibilities of perfecting your baking. So here are some more of my pro-scale arguments:

Any lover of baking ultimately will adore using scales once he or she is past the fear of what sometimes, at first, is perceived as a foreign object (except when standing on it). Weighing ingredients is not only reassuring, it is much faster than measuring and results in far less cleanup. Consider how much easier it is to weigh cocoa than to sift it and then measure it, and I wouldn't dream of trying to figure out how tightly to pack brown sugar into a cup when I can weigh it in a flash. Also think about how much more pleasant it is to weigh sticky corn syrup or honey. And if a recipe calls for a number of ounces of chocolate that is not the exact weight of a chocolate bar, isn't it nice to rely on the scale to determine the exact amount?

When adding syrup to cake layers, I place each layer on the scale and brush the appropriate weight on each side. I also use the scale to distribute batter evenly between two pans.

Scales that have the ability to eliminate (tare) the weight of the bowl also make it possible to add the dry ingredients to the mixing bowl, one after the other, rather than having to use separate bowls for each. Dry ingredients can then be mixed together, eliminating the need either to sift the flour or to sift the dry ingredients together.

Another benefit of weighing is the ease of decreasing or increasing recipe yields. And once in a great while, I have completed a batter or dough and suddenly wondered if I remembered to add an ingredient. When there is the slightest doubt, all I need to do is weigh the final unbaked product. If it is less than what I know is the total weight of the recipe, my suspicions are confirmed and I can add the missing ingredient.

If you have never baked by weight, borrow a scale and try it just once. I guarantee you will be an instant believer. Most bakers, including myself, prefer the metric system for its precision in weighing small quantities. There isn't any adjustment necessary if you have a metric scale and the recipes give metric amounts. If you do not have a scale with a digital readout, round off the grams to the nearest convenient number. The amount will still be quite accurate as, after all, 1 gram is only about 1/28 of an ounce.

Despite having made my case for why weighing rather than measuring is so much more desirable and enjoyable, I know some people resist partly because they don't know which scale to choose.

The three electronic scales that I have worked with for several years and that I can swear by are the Mettler laboratory scale (model number SB16001), retailing for more than \$2,000; the My Weigh (model number KD-7000); and their stunningly designed Über—retailing respectively at \$35 and \$95 (see [Equipment Sources](#)). All three scales can be used to weigh in the avoirdupois (ounces/pounds) or metric systems (grams/kilograms). When I asked the owner of My Weigh how the company could keep the scales at so affordable a price and yet maintain such high standards of quality and exacting accuracy, he said, "The prices are low because we believe in lower-margin, higher-volume sales. We also keep our costs extremely low by producing and distributing the scales ourselves." If everything in life were designed with such thoughtful integrity, it would indeed be a better world.

## Scale Specifications

The Mettler's accuracy to within 0.1 gram is sufficient to weigh something as small as a teaspoon of baking powder and its range of up to 35 pounds/16,000 grams makes it possible to weigh ingredients for a large wedding cake in one huge bowl.

The accuracy of the My Weigh KD-7000 and the Über is to within 1 gram, making it suitable for quantities larger than small amounts of baking powder. My Weigh does produce a scale accurate to 0.1 gram up to 300 grams, the MX300 (around \$30), and one accurate to 0.01 gram up to 200 grams, the i201 (around \$100). The KD-7000 weighs from 1 gram/0.1 ounce to 7,000 grams/15 pounds 7 ounces. The Über weighs from 1 gram up to 6,000 grams/13 pounds 3.5 ounces.

## Special Features on My Weigh Family of Scales

My Weigh is a company that invites consumer response and suggestions. As a result of consumer feedback, there is finally an electronic scale in a price range affordable for the home baker that can be operated by adaptor as well as battery. What is most important about it, however, is that its automatic power-off can be disabled so that it doesn't inconveniently time out when you are in the middle of weighing and get distracted for a few minutes. (Don't you just hate when that happens?)

The scales have other features: They are small and compact, not taking up much counter space. They have an adjustable-angle backlight timer with an option for how long to stay lit, a hold option for large pans that hide the display, and, of course, a tare option (which removes the weight of the bowl and the last ingredients added).

The Über's keypad is an electrostatic touch pad—the buttons register your touch without your fingers actually touching the keys. The sleek one-piece stainless steel design allows for easy cleaning. The display is a high contrast Superlight red LCD.

## Special Care for All Scales

Follow the manufacturer's directions for care, such as to avoid water and direct sunlight.

If using batteries, change them often, as accuracy decreases as the battery ages. I prefer using the A/C adaptor.

Altitude, temperature, and seasonal changes affect weight with about a 2 percent deviation; that is, the weight will be off 2 grams for every 100 grams. Every time the earth changes its rotational path (as it does each season), gravity at a specific location can change just slightly. The only way to keep scales absolutely accurate is to recalibrate often. But it is still a far more accurate and reliable system than volume measure.

## Solid Measuring Cups

Solid measures must have unbroken smooth rims in order to make it possible to level off excess ingredients. POURfect makes beautifully accurate cups in a set of nine useful sizes: 1/8, 1/4, 1/3, 1/2, 2/3, 3/4, 1, 1 1/2, 2 cup.

If not weighing flour, the most accurate way to measure it is to set the cup on a counter and to sift the flour into the cup, allowing it to mound above the rim. Then take a metal spatula or straightedge and sweep it across the rim, removing the excess flour. Never tap or shake the cup as that packs more flour into it, and the cake will be dry and heavy.

Sugar is measured by the dip and sweep method. This means that you dip the cup into the sugar bin and, without shaking or tapping it, sweep off the excess on top.

## Measuring Spoons

POURfect measuring spoons are my favorites because each one is perfectly accurate. They come in some unusual and practical sizes, starting with teaspoons— 1/64, 1/32, 1/16, 1/8, 1/4, 1/3, 1/2, 3/4, 1, and 1 1/2 (1/2 tablespoon)—and both 1 and 2 tablespoons.

## Cake Pans

The cake pans I recommend are true to size, measured from the inside, both top and bottom, so if you buy or order them by mail, you know what you're getting. If, however, you go to a store and purchase brands other than those recommended, bring along a tape measure. Pans may be marked 9 inches and actually be larger or smaller at either the bottom or the top, or both, which will affect the volume and the way the cake bakes. Many 9-inch pans are actually only 8 7/8 inches at the bottom, which results in a reduced capacity of about 1/3 cup. (This will still work for the recipes in this book.)

If you already have pans that are slightly too small, you can extend their capacity by coating the sides of the pan with shortening and lining the pan with a band of parchment that extends above the sides of the pan. Alternatively, you can fill the pans no higher than two-thirds full and bake the remainder as cupcakes.

If a pan is too small, the batter will rise above the sides, causing it to overflow and fall in the center. If the pan is too large, the sides of the pan will reflect the heat down into the cake batter, causing it to be pale, dry, and low in height.

Choose pans that are sturdy and light colored. Dark pans will result in very dark or burnt crust. If you already have dark pans, reduce the oven temperature by 25°F/15°C.

There are only a few basic pans you will need to make most of the cakes in this book. Specialty pans are fun and, where they are used in a recipe, wherever possible, I list a more commonly available alternative. The basic pans include:

Two 9 by 2-inch round cake pans

One 9 by 2½- to 3-inch loose-bottom or springform pan

One 10-cup fluted tube pan

One 10 by 4-inch (16 cups) angel food pan

One 8½ by 4½-inch (6 cups) loaf pan

One 9 by 5-inch (7 cups) loaf pan

One 13 by 9-inch (about 16 cups) baking pan (preferably straight sided)

One 17¼ by 12¼ by 1-inch half-sheet pan (measured from the top), 16 5/8 by 11 5/8 (measured from the bottom)

One or two 15 by 12-inch cookie sheets, aka baking sheets (measured from the bottom)

Two 6-cup or one 12-cup silicone or aluminum muffin pans

For the wedding cakes, two each: 6-inch, 8-inch, 9-inch, and 12-inch round baking pans

In this book, the cake pans used most for layer cakes are 9 by 2 inches because they are the most readily available, and because one pan makes a nice height for a single layer with enough height to allow it to be cut in half. For single layers, I created the recipe to mound slightly, as opposed to two layers, which need to be level in order to stack easily. (This is a function of the amount of leavening: More leavening weakens the structure and produces flatter, less domed layers.)

I find that layer cakes baked in pans that are higher than 2 inches have a coarse texture. The only exceptions in this book are [Miette's Tomboy](#), which bakes in a 6 by 3-inch pan, and the [Torta de las Tres Leches](#), which bakes in a 9 by 3-inch pan. These cakes were created by the bakers who contributed the recipes and are best baked in the recommended pans, which are commonly available. (If you purchase the loose-bottom or springform version, you can also use it for cheesecake.)

Heavy-gauge aluminum pans with a dull finish are ideal. Avoid black or glass pans, but if you already have them, bake at 25°F/15°C lower than the suggested temperature.

I prefer a nonstick surface on the inside of fluted tube pans because the cakes unmold best, allowing the designs to make perfect impressions on the cake's surface. For layer cakes, a nonstick finish is also ideal because it makes it possible to omit the parchment round, unless you are

baking chocolate cakes, which have a tendency to stick more.

## Silicone Pans

For several years, as spokesperson for Lékúé of Barcelona (see [Equipment Sources](#)), I have had the pleasure of working with silicone, the fascinating new technology in cake pans and kitchen equipment. I have learned where silicone excels and about its significant advantages, and I have also learned about those instances where metal is the better choice. One of the problems about recommending silicone pans across the board for most pans is that not all silicone is created equal, and there is quite a variance in quality among products. Also, although layer cakes baked in silicone have a lighter, more even texture and shape (although, paradoxically, a little less high layer), and have a more moist, more delicious flavor, very few manufacturers produce a true-to-size 9 by 2-inch cake pan. Most are slightly larger. This makes them ideal to use together with a loose-bottom or springform pan baked in a water bath (see [Water Baths](#)) as it keeps the water from seeping in. But the slightly larger size results in very low layers if used for a batter designed for a standard 9 by 2-inch round cake pan.

Unlike aluminum, deep fluted silicone tube pans do not conduct the heat well to the center of the cake and may require as long as 20 minutes extra baking. Ideal for producing the most velvety and moist chocolate butter cakes, they do not bake yellow cakes evenly either in color or texture.

I find that silicone pans bake most evenly when set on a wire rack to allow for air circulation with the rack set on sheet pans for ease in transferring them in and out of the oven. Once baked, the cakes need to cool completely in the pan before unmolding. However, if the pans are small, as are the ones recommended for baby cakes or madeleines, they need only slightly more time to bake and can be unmolded right away. Silicone is considered the most nonstick substance for baking pans. If silicone pans are prepared properly (interior coated with baking spray with flour) and cooled completely, they will release the cake perfectly, with no crust stuck to the pan.

It is important to keep in mind that although silicone can withstand temperatures of up to 500°F/260°C or even slightly higher, it cannot be subjected to direct heat from either a broiler or cooktop. The only other way in which it can be damaged is by cutting it.

Silicone pans have advantages in addition to ease of unmolding and the superior quality of the cakes baked in them. The pans don't dent and they're easy to store. You can scrunch them up in a drawer or suitcase, and they always will pop back to their original shape. I'm confident that this exciting technology is here to stay and will continue to evolve in interesting and useful ways for the home baker.

## Layer Cake Pans

My favorite manufacturer of sturdy straight-sided 2-inch-high nonstick cake pans is Chicago Metallic—their Professional Line (see [Equipment Sources](#)). They are dark gray in color but require the same baking temperature as lighter-colored pans. They are dishwasher safe. I also like Parrish Magic Line's (see [Equipment Sources](#)) sturdy round, square, and rectangular pans with perfectly squared corners.

## Fluted Tube Pans

In this book I use fluted tube pans often for cakes that require no frosting or adornment beyond the exquisite design of the flutings. Nordic Ware (see [Equipment Sources](#)) wins the prize for the most beautifully designed and huge variety of cast-aluminum fluted tube pans. My history with Nordic Ware goes back a long way. (Coincidentally, it was my namesake, Rose Levy, who brought owner David Dalquist the first Bundt pan in the 1940s.) The late Rich Hecomavich, who worked for the company for many years, became a dear friend to me and all bakers and educated us enthusiastically about the pans. It was at a baking show where I first met him and fell in love with the Nordic Ware Rose tube pan. Rich was responsible for designing their Stadium Pan at my request when I said I needed a more masculine fluted tube pan for a groom's cake.

Some of my favorite Nordic Ware 10-cup fluted tube pans include the Bavaria, Elegant Heart, Rose Bundt, and, of course, the classic Anniversary Bundt, which works for 10 to 15 cups due to its narrow base and wider center tube. I also love the 6-cup Bundt (perfect for a two-thirds recipe for a 10-cup pan, or a half recipe for a 12-cup pan) and the adorable two-part fluted 3D Pumpkin Pan, the equivalent of one 10-cup fluted tube pan. Any recipe that calls for a 10-cup fluted metal tube pan can also be baked in the standard 12-cup Bundt pan.

If you have one of the older-style tube pans that has a dark lining or dark exterior, be sure to lower the oven temperature by 25°F/15°C.

Kaiser (see [Equipment Sources](#)) makes a terrific 10-cup fluted commercial-weight steel tube pan (8½-inch inside diameter) that is lined with silicone and is called La Forme Perfect Bundform. It has the conductivity of metal and the nonstick properties of silicone. Its silicone lining is just thick enough for perfect unmolding and easy cleanup without altering the baking time or height of the cake. Note: Kaiser's Web site may refer to it as a 9-cup pan, but it is 10 cups. The pan still must be sprayed with baking spray with flour in order to unmold perfectly.

## Angel Food Cake Tube Pans

Be sure to purchase a two-piece angel food pan for ease in unmolding. The standard pan, which holds 16 cups, is 10 inches by 4 inches, and is carried by Wilton (see [Equipment Sources](#)) and also distributed by Allied Metal Spinning (see [Equipment Sources](#)). But over the past few years, the standard size seems to have shrunk as many other brands' pans are only 14 cups. To measure the volume of your pan, line it with a clean plastic bag to prevent leaking. If your pan is smaller than 16 cups, you may want to decrease the recipe or to fill the pan almost to the top and bake the excess batter as cupcakes.

Always completely cool the cakes upside down; the cakes will cling to the bottom of the pan and stretch downward to their full height. Once cool, the cake's structure is firm enough to prevent collapse of the delicate foam structure.

Some pans have legs designed to support the pan when it is inverted, but they don't function very well because the cooling cake needs to be suspended well above a counter or other surface to allow for the evaporation of steam. A slim-necked wine or glass soda bottle works well as a support, but the opening of some pans is not large enough so you may need to use a rack raised off the counter.

Parrish Magic Line makes a hard-to-find 6-inch (4 cups) tube pan with a removable bottom. This size is perfect for one-fourth of a recipe made in the standard 10-inch (16 cups) pan.

## Angel Food Tube Pan Sizes

6 inches by 3 inches: 4 cups

9 inches by 3 inches: 10 cups



10 inches by 4 inches: 16 cups

(See [Baby Angel Food Cake Pans](#), for mini angel food cake pans.)

## Loaf Pans

Chicago Metallic makes an excellent heavyweight bread pan with a nonstick interior that is 8½ by 4½ inches (6 cups).

For the [Cradle Cake](#), you will need a 9 by 5-inch (7 cups) loaf pan, preferably silicone.

Silicone loaf pans are great, but choose ones that have support structures or stanchions on the sides so that they don't bulge outward during baking.

## Sheet Pans

The standard half-sheet pan is 17¼ by 12¼ by 1 inch (12 cups), measured from the inside top. My favorite is a sturdy 13-gauge (#5314) made by Lincoln Wear-Ever, available at commercial kitchen supply stores (see [Equipment Sources](#)). It's fine to use one that is slightly larger or slightly smaller than standard, but the thickness of the cake will vary slightly accordingly.

## Cookie Sheets

Only two recipes in this book require cookie sheets (not the insulated variety), and in a pinch, the recipes can be baked on the inverted back of a sheet pan.

## Removable-Bottom and Springform Pans

All springform or loose-bottom pans need to be protected from water seepage when set in a water bath (see [Water Baths](#)). I prefer Parrish Magic Line's sturdy, loose-bottom 3-inch-high pans to a traditional springform. I like to use the removable bottom disks to transfer cake layers, and they are also available separately from the pan itself. Kaiser makes a beautiful nonstick 6½ by 2½-inch (6 cups) springform pan just perfect for a two-thirds size cheesecake. Wilton makes a 9 by 3-inch springform, perfect for the [Orange-Glow Chiffon Layer Cake](#).

## Baby Pans and Ramekins

### Muffin or Cupcake Pans

Traditionally, liners are used for muffins and cupcakes because they keep the small cakes fresher and make it easier to frost and transport them. Liners need to be set in a metal muffin pan or in ramekins in order to keep the cakes from spreading sideways. Silicone pans without liners give just the right support to produce the nicest domed shape. Sili-Cups are very pretty, but they are three-quarters the size of the standard muffin pan, so if a cupcake recipe makes 14 to 16 standard-size cupcakes, it will yield 19 to 21 cupcakes if using Sili-Cups. My favorite silicone pans have six or twelve cavities. Each cavity is the same capacity as that in the standard muffin pan: ½ cup/4 fluid ounces. It is a good idea to set muffin pans on a wire rack and then set the rack on a sheet pan or cookie sheet for support, so that air can circulate around them and ensure that they bake evenly—especially the middle row in the twelve-cavity pan.

A number 30 (2 inches wide) ice cream scoop is great for dispensing the batter neatly into the cups.

The most elegant and beautiful disposable muffin cups come from Qualitá Paper Products (see [Equipment Sources](#)). The small panettone paper pans, 2¾ by 2 inches (¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons/7 fluid ounces), are almost double the size of standard muffin pans. They are firm enough to stand alone (also see La Cuisine, in [Equipment Sources](#)).

### Pyrex Custard Cups and Ramekins

Similar sizes of custard cups and ramekins can be used interchangeably as long as their volume is the same. The most commonly available Pyrex (see [Equipment Sources](#)) shallow custard cups, or dessert dishes, are 6 ounces (bottom 2¾ inches, top 3½ inches, 1 7/8 inches high), and 10 ounces (bottom 3½ inches, top 4¼ inches, 1 7/8 inches high). These are interchangeable with Mary Ann or shortcake pans (at right). You can also use 6-ounce ramekins or soufflé molds that are 3 by 2 inches.

### Little Loaf Pans and Disposable Pans for Gift Giving

Chicago Metallic makes a great 2-cup mini loaf pan that is 5¾ by 3¼ inches. Qualitá Paper Products makes elegant little disposable loaf pans, and aluminum foil pans are available in supermarkets.

## Baby Angel Food Cake Pans

I call these "cherubs." My favorite is the mini angel food pan set (item number 2105-1827) by Wilton because the pans are nonstick and two parts: four 4½ by 1¾-inch pans (1¾ cups each). The Nordic Ware Bundt Angelettes are also well made and nonstick, though not two parts: six 4 by almost 2-inch pans (1¾ cups each). Since the cakes are so small, it's relatively easy to remove them from the pans by squeezing them gently away from the sides and bottom of the pans.

## Unusual Baby Pan Shapes

Nordic Ware makes some of my favorite baby specialty pans. The Sweetheart Rose pan has twelve cavities, each of which holds 1/3cup/2.6 fluid ounces, totaling 4 cups. The Mini Pineapple Pan has six cavities, each of which holds ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons/7 fluid ounces, totaling 5¼ cups. It is perfect for pineapple upside-down cakes. The Bundt Muffin pan has six cavities, each of which holds 1 cup/8 fluid ounces, totaling 6 cups.

Individual Mary Ann or shortcake pans by Chicago Metallic are shaped to produce a perfect little recess to hold the berries or other fillings on top of each cake. Each of the six containers holds 5.3 fluid ounces/ 2/3 cup. A 10-ounce Pyrex dessert dish described above could be used in its place, but then you have to create the recess with a knife. The Mary Ann pan is well worth having.

Lékué makes the ideal silicone financier or bar-shaped pan that it calls a mini cake pan. The pan has nine 3 by 1 by 1¼-inch-high (¼ cup/2



ounces) cavities. This pan is indispensable for financiers and for brownies as well, giving each an identical size and perfect shape with a fine crust on all sides.

Classic 3-ounce silicone brioche pans are ideal for making the famous molten chocolate cakes (see [Molten Chocolate Soufflé and Lava Cakes](#)).

Unusual Specialty Pans

Heart Pans

I love hearts, and Wilton makes the most beautifully shaped heart pans in varying sizes. The ones suggested for this book are 9 inches at their widest point by 8 inches in length (from the center of bowl to the point) by 2 inches high (8 cups), and 5 7/8 inches at their widest point by 5 3/8 inches in length (from the center of the bowl to the point) by 2 inches high (3 cups).

Full-Size Mary Ann, Shortcake, or Flan Pans

These pans, which have recessed centers to hold berries, fruit, or ice cream, come in several different shapes and sizes. Kaiser makes an 8-cup silicone-lined aluminum pan that is 12½ (measured from the outside edge) by 1 5/8 inches high and is called La Forme Perfect Flan Pan. Kaiser also makes 8-cup all-metal versions in heart and square shapes.

Nordic Ware makes an 11 (measured from the outside edge) by 2½-inch-deep Fancy Marianne pan with basket-weave sides in a 10-cup size.

Fluted Tart Pan with Removable Bottom

Although the standard 9 by 1-inch pan will work for [Gâteau Breton](#), for the best shape, the ideal pan is the Gobel nonstick 9 by 1 3/8-inch (9½ inches at the top) pan carried by JB Prince and La Cuisine (see [Equipment Sources](#)). The nonstick removable bottom doubles as the perfect transfer disk for moving cake layers. (Allied Metal Spinning carries nonstick disks 9, 13, and 16 inches in diameter.)

Wedding Cake Pans

Following is a list of all the standard 2-inch-high round wedding cake pans from 2 to 20 inches in diameter and their approximate volumes. Most pan manufacturers produce pans that are slightly tapered, so that the bottom of the pan is about 1/8 inch smaller in diameter than the top. The volumes here are based on slightly tapered pans, except for the 2-inch through 5-inch pans produced by Parrish Magic Line, which do not taper. Their larger pans will hold ¼ to ½ cup more than listed below. Chicago Metallic makes an untapered, true-to-size 9 by 2-inch pan that holds 9 cups of batter.

Cake Pan Sizes

2 by 2 inches	½ cup
3 by 2 inches	1 1/8 cups
4 by 2 inches	1¾ cups
5 by 2 inches	2¾ cups
6 by 2 inches	3¾ cups
7 by 2 inches	5¼ cups
8 by 2 inches	7 cups
9 by 2 inches	8 2/3 cups
10 by 2 inches	10¾ cups
11 by 2 inches	13 cups
12 by 2 inches	15½ cups
13 by 2 inches	18 cups
14 by 2 inches	21 cups
15 by 2 inches	24 cups

16 by 2 inches 27½ cups

17 by 2 inches 31 1/3 cups

18 by 2 inches 34 2/3 cups

19 by 2 inches 38 2/3 cups

20 by 2 inches 42¾ cups

Wilton makes graduated wedding cake pans in oval, heart, square, petal, and hexagon shapes. In their annual yearbook, they list the amount of batter for each size and shape. They carry all the round pans from 6 to 16 inches except for 7, 11, 13, and 15 inches.

Parrish Magic Line carries all these pans from 2 to 20 inches except for 17 and 19 inches.

Allied Metal Spinning makes all these cake pans from 3 to 24 inches in 2-, 3-, and 4-inch heights. The following are very useful sizes for easy-to-cut servings.

#### Two-Inch-High Sheet Pans

13 by 9 by 2 inches 16 cups

18 by 12 by 2 inches 29 cups

#### How to Determine Pan Size

A round cake pan is three-quarters the volume of a square cake pan of the same size. To determine the volume of a square cake pan, multiply the volume of a round cake pan of the same diameter by 1.33.

To determine the volume of an odd-shaped pan, use a measuring cup with a spout to pour water into the pan until it reaches the brim. I like to set a metal ruler on top of the pan so I know when the water is level with the top. If it's a two-piece pan, line it first with a clean plastic bag.

To determine the volume of a pan using a scale, set a sheet pan on top to contain any water that might spill, then set the pan to be measured on top. Tare out the weight of the pans. Fill the pan to be measured with water. One cup of water weighs 236.35 grams/8.3 ounces.

#### How to Prepare Different Types of Pans

##### Butter Layer Cake Pans

Encircle the pan with a cake strip (see [Cake Strips](#)). Coat the bottom of the pan with shortening. Top it with a parchment round and coat the entire interior of the pan with baking spray with flour, preferably Baker's Joy (see [Equipment Sources](#)) as it is odor free. Wipe off the rim of the pan.

##### Sponge Cake Pans

Coat the interior of the pan with baking spray with flour. Then set a parchment round in the bottom. (The round will stick to the cake, helping to remove the bottom crust from the pan; the bottom crust is necessary when brushing the cake with syrup.) Wipe off the rim of the pan. There is no need to use a cake strip as sponge cakes do not tend to dome and also any dryness at the edges will be corrected when the cake is brushed with syrup.

##### Fluted Tube Pans

Coat the interior of the pan evenly with baking spray with flour. Wipe off the rim of the pan. If the baking spray clumps, use an artist's paintbrush to even it out and prevent bubbles in the crust.

##### Sheet Pans

Coat the interior of the pan with shortening or nonstick cooking spray, and top with parchment. It helps to make a small snip into each corner to help the parchment ease around the curves. Have the long sides or the short sides extend a few inches past the edges of the pan. Coat the parchment with baking spray with flour and wipe off the rim of the pan.

#### How Much to Fill the Pan

Most of my cakes call for 2-inch-high pans. With the exception of the dark chocolate oil cake used for the [German Chocolate Cake](#), [Wedding Cupcakes](#), and [Deep Chocolate Passion Wedding Cake](#), fill the pan no less than half full and no more than just under two-thirds.

Rule of thumb for odd-size pans: Classic génoise (see [White Gold Passion Génoise](#)) uses just under half the number of eggs as the cup capacity of the pan. A butter cake uses just under one-quarter as many eggs as the cup capacity. For example: an 8 2/3-cup capacity pan uses a four-egg formula for classic génoise and a two-egg formula for a butter cake (1 whole egg equals 2 yolks or 1½ whites).

For layer cakes, keep in mind that the larger the pan, the farther the distance from the center of the pan to the sides, so the structure of the cake needs to be stronger in order to rise without collapsing. Chemical leavening (baking powder or baking soda) weakens the structure, so you will

need to decrease the leavening to strengthen the structure.

## Reusable Nonstick Pan Liners and Parchment

### Reusable Liners

Reusable liners are one of my favorite products because absolutely nothing sticks to them, making them ideal for caramel, meringues, and ladyfingers. Sometimes called super parchment or reusable parchment, they also make cleanup easy. Food service—quality Silpat, which is a combination of silicone and fiberglass, is not quite as nonstick as the Teflon-type of liners available for home use, but it is a lot more durable. It is widely available at housewares and kitchen specialty stores. All the nonstick liners can be reused countless times.

### Parchment

Parchment is available at cake-decorating supply stores and specialty stores in precut rounds and in rolls for lining the bottoms of cake pans. Lining pan bottoms with parchment enables the cake to release perfectly when unmolding and, if left uncoated, helps to remove the bottom crust easily for sponge cakes that will be brushed with syrup.

### Cake Strips

When a layer cake bakes, the heat from the oven reaches the sides of the pan first and the center of the pan last. This causes the edges of the cake to rise and set before the center, which continues to rise, creating a dome in the center and dryness around the edges. The purpose of cake strips encircling the pan is to slow down the baking at the sides of the pan so that the batter rises at the same rate as in the center and produces a more level cake.

Until recently, the cake strips I used were made of fabric that had to be moistened in order to be effective and to prevent burning; the cake strip had to be fastened with a pin. But after exploring the virtues of silicone bakeware, I realized, in a eureka sort of moment, that since it is very slow to conduct heat, silicone is the ideal substance for a cake strip. There's no need to moisten or fasten it, and it stays pristine clean. Another advantage of silicone is that during baking it expands slightly, making the strips easy to remove. This led me to create Rose's Heavenly Cake Strips, which are sold by LaPrima Shops (see [Equipment Sources](#)). They fit 9- and 10-inch round pans and 8-inch square pans. For smaller pans, use metal paper clamps to clamp off the excess length.

For larger or odd-shaped pans, you can even make your own using a strip of aluminum foil long enough to encircle the pan with a little overlap. Wet some paper towels, fold them the height of the pan, and lay them along the strip. Then fold the aluminum foil over them to encase them. Wrap the strip around the pan and secure it with a metal paper clip or clamp. Another advantage of silicone is that during baking it expands slightly making the strips easy to remove.

### Food Processors

The Cuisinart and the KitchenAid food processors (see [Equipment Sources](#)) set the standard. They are indispensable for grinding nuts and chocolate, grinding sugar to a superfine consistency, pureeing fruit, and all sorts of kitchen activities that prior to the processor took much longer to accomplish. I also value the Cuisinart Mini-Prep Plus processor for chopping small quantities of nuts or chocolate. The tiny Cuisinart Mini-Mate Plus chopper/grinder is unequaled for producing superfine citrus zest or dispersing vanilla bean seeds. (Just add a little sugar from the recipe.)

### Heavy-Duty Stand Mixers

If there were one symbol that defined baking, it would be the KitchenAid stand mixer (see [Equipment Sources](#)). It is the mini version of the Hobart, a brand found in commercial kitchens all over the world. The 5-quart Artisan is KitchenAid's most popular model, so I tested all the recipes in this book using it. The head tilts back to make scraping the bowl easy, and its adjustable beaters make it possible for them to reach as close to the bottom of the bowl as possible for thorough and even mixing. If you plan to make wedding cakes and bread, however, you will be better served by the larger and more powerful 6-quart model. It will enable you to do fewer batches, but, of course, you will need to have oven space to accommodate two 12-inch cake pans with air space all around them for even baking. An added feature is a water jacket attachment to heat or chill the bowl while beating.

The 5-quart mixer can handle any mixture that does not exceed 4 quarts, for example, an 8-egg butter cake or 7-egg génoise. The 6-quart mixer can handle any mixture that does not exceed 5 quarts, such as a 9-egg butter cake or 11-egg génoise.

The Cuisinart 7-quart mixer, with tilt-back head, is the ideal mixer if making wedding cakes, but the deep bowl also handles small amounts of batter perfectly. The electronic speed control is easy to set, and the timer with auto shutoff is a nice convenience. The motor is powerful but quiet.

For larger-scale baking, the 20-quart Hobart is an ideal size. It can also be used with a 10-quart bowl.

For smaller amounts of ingredients, such as cream for whipping, and for recipes that involve beating hot syrup into eggs or egg whites, a handheld mixer is more practical than a stand mixer. KitchenAid makes an excellent one.

Heavy-duty stand mixers offer the choice of a flat "paddle" beater or a whisk beater. The flat beater is intended for general mixing; the whisk beater will whip as much air as possible into a mixture, such as when beating egg whites or batter for sponge-type cakes.

If investing in a stand mixer, it pays to get an extra bowl and set of beaters for the many times egg whites need to be beaten after the rest of the ingredients have been mixed. As the whites require a spotlessly clean bowl and beaters, a second set comes in very handy.

### Definition of My Mixing Speeds

Start mixing on low speed and gradually raise the speed to the speed indicated in the recipe. If the volume of the ingredients is small in proportion to the mixer bowl, you will need to use higher speeds. The times listed in the recipes are for a stand mixer. The gradual increase in speed keeps the ingredients from jumping out of the bowl and is better for the gears of the mixer. The one exception to this practice is when beating hot syrup into stiffly beaten egg whites. Starting on low between each addition would overheat and deflate the whites.

### Mixing Speeds

Low numbers 2 to 4 (I use 2 on the KitchenAid and 4 on the Cuisinart.)

Medium-low numbers 3 to 5 (I use 3 on the KitchenAid and 5 on the Cuisinart.)

Medium numbers 4 to 6 (I use 4 on the KitchenAid and 6 on the Cuisinart.)

Medium-high numbers 8 to 10 (I use 8 on the KitchenAid and 10 on the Cuisinart.)

High numbers 10 to 12 (I use 10 on the KitchenAid and 12 on the Cuisinart.)

The KitchenAid pouring shield works well when adding flour, powdered sugar, and liquids that can fly out of the bowl. As an alternative, I drape a large piece of plastic wrap over the top of the mixer, including the top of the bowl. Any flour that leaps up does not cling to the plastic as it would to a cloth towel, and you can see what is happening to the mixture in the bowl. The tight-fitting lid or cover on the Cuisinart mixer also eliminates the need to cover the bowl.

## Thermometers

I produced mercury thermometers renowned for their accuracy to within a fraction of a degree for more than twenty years until the FDA banned mercury thermometers for use in the kitchen. Fortunately, technology has come up with some viable alternatives that rival the speed and repeatability of mercury: infrared digital thermometers. Infrared falls between the visible light of the electromagnetic spectrum and radio waves. Infrared thermometers capture the invisible infrared energy naturally emitted from all objects. Often referred to as "point and shoot," the infrared ray, when aimed and the trigger is pulled, instantly scans the surface temperature of an object from up to two feet away. This is a very useful tool for taking oven temperature and also the temperature of different areas in the refrigerator or room.

The FoodPro Plus, by Raytek (see [Equipment Sources](#)), has a range of 30° to 525°F/34° to 273°C with a probe for measuring internal temperature.

Most instant-read thermometers are small enough to tuck into your pocket and they are virtually indispensable for making sugar syrups, caramel, cream sauces, for melting chocolate, and for determining baked cake temperature. Two of the best are the ThermoPen 5F thermometer (see Thermoworks, in [Equipment Sources](#)) with a range of 50° to 550°F/45° to 287°C and the CDN ProAccurate pocket thermometer (see [Equipment Sources](#)) with a range of 40° to 450°F/40° to 230°C. The ThermoPen is more expensive but offers the quickest response.

## Oven Thermometers

I use a laboratory cable thermometer from Omega (model number HH22; see [Equipment Sources](#)). It is expensive, but it is far more accurate than most oven thermometers I have tested. It is designed for home use and can be used for two ovens at the same time. It is important for an oven thermometer to be read without having to open the oven because the temperature starts to drop immediately. For an oven with a window, the CDN Model DOT2 has also proven reliable.

## Spatulas

### Metal Spatulas

A small metal spatula with a narrow 4-inch blade is one of the most often used implements in my kitchen. It is perfect for leveling measuring spoons with dry ingredients, for dislodging crust from the sides of the pan, for frosting the sides of a cake, and for making swirls in frosting. Parrish Magic Line makes a slim 6 by 3-inch stainless steel metal plate called the Icing Blade, which is perfect for smoothing the sides of a frosted cake. You can also use a bench scraper.

It is helpful to have a long narrow metal spatula for smoothing the top of the cake. Another must is a small offset spatula. When tiering cake layers, the offset spatula works well for slipping under the cake just before the final edge touches down on the layer underneath it. It's easier to slip out without marring the frosting than the large one used to lift the cake. Small and large offset spatulas are also handy for spreading mixtures evenly in pans or for lifting very small cakes. A broad inflexible grill spatula or pancake turner is useful for lifting frosted cake layers.

### Silicone Spatulas

Flexible, high-heat spatulas were our first introduction to the wonders of silicone. I especially like clear or light-colored ones for making caramel. The light color makes it possible to see the true color of the caramel and allows your eyes to be the thermometer. Silicone spatulas are also very efficient for scraping every last smidgen of batter from the bowl and for reaching down to the bottom of the bowl when folding mixtures together. Since they retain odors, a separate set should be reserved for baking.

## Strainers

### Lehman's Best Food Mill

This special food strainer from Lehman's (see [Equipment Sources](#)), fitted with the optional berry screen, pays for itself by extracting more puree than any other device. Unlike the average food mill, it does not allow even the tiniest raspberry seed to pass through.

Stainless steel fine-mesh strainers are indispensable for a wide range of baking-related activities. You will need a small fine-mesh one for clarifying butter and a medium-size one for [Lacquer Glaze](#), sifting cocoa and flour, and evenly dusting powdered sugar or cocoa onto cakes (simply tap the side with a spoon or use the spoon to press the powdered sugar or cocoa through the fine openings). A strainer is also needed for straining preserves, lemon curd, cream, and crème anglaise.

## Sifters

The primary purpose of sifting is to separate and aerate flour particles, enabling them to mix more uniformly with the liquid in a recipe. However, sifting does not adequately mix dry ingredients. This is best accomplished in the mixer or by using a whisk.

I prefer an electric sifter because it is so speedy (see Pastry Chef Central, in [Equipment Sources](#)). A mesh strainer with a tablespoon to press the flour through also works, but it is much slower.

## Wire Racks for Cooling

My favorite racks are the Combrichon round wire racks from France (see La Cuisine, in [Equipment Sources](#)). The wire is spaced closely together, offering ideal support for the cake. To prevent cakes from sticking to the racks, I coat them lightly with nonstick cooking spray.

## Graters

### Microplane

The now-ubiquitous Microplane is the best tool for zesting citrus fruit (grating the rind into fine zest). Its grating teeth are sharp and shallow, making it easy to remove the flavorful portion of the rind without touching the bitter pith beneath. There is also a model with deeper grating holes that works quickly and efficiently for grating chocolate.

### Coconut Graters

Coconut, freshly grated, is the best, but producing evenly grated coconut is tedious without a coconut grater, carried by such places as Kalustyan's (see [Equipment Sources](#)). It is a multibladed device with serrated teeth that fits into the hollow of the coconut and, when turned by a crank, rapidly turns coconut into a flurry of fine, perfectly grated flakes.

### Nut Graters

If not using a food processor to grind nuts, a Mouli or Zyliss hand grater, with its finest drum, works well to grind nuts to an even and fine consistency.

## Ovens

Beyond the essentials, there are many pieces of equipment that I value because they make baking more efficient and enjoyable. I didn't put ovens on my list of essentials because I consider them to be the very definition of baking. People are always asking me what my preference in ovens is, and it's getting harder to answer by the year because so many improvements are constantly taking place. However, there is some common wisdom that I can share:

It's often not safe to assume that the oven recommended by a friend will be exactly the same as one now being manufactured, even if it has the same model number.

When installing a new oven, make sure that the area where you place it is level, or your cakes won't be. Because ovens can lose their calibration, check them if it takes more or less than the recommended time to bake a cake. If a cake bakes too quickly, it will dome and crack. If it bakes too slowly, the texture will be coarse and the center may dip. Manufacturers recommend lowering the temperature 25°F/15°C when using the convection setting. I find that with countertop models, it works to use the same temperature, up to 400°F/200°C, as a conventional oven.

Cakes generally bake most evenly as close to the center of the oven as possible. This is usually accomplished by setting the oven rack in the lower third of the oven. The exception is for one-inch-high sheet pans, for which the rack should be in the middle position. Unless the oven has a turntable, turn the cake halfway around after three-quarters of the estimated baking time.

For proper air circulation, the sides of the cake pan should be no closer than one inch from the sides of the oven or from each other.

If you have an oven with sufficient internal height, set the racks just below and just above the middle position; two pans can be staggered so that one is not directly on top of the one on the rack below. About three-quarters into the estimated baking time, quickly reposition the cakes top to bottom and turn halfway around for even baking, but only if you are making a layer cake. A sponge cake will collapse if moved at this point. Baking more than one layer at a time will slightly increase the baking time.

Preheat the oven for a minimum of 20 minutes ahead of baking.

## Silicone Glove Pot Holders

Silicone gloves work best for removing cakes safely from the oven and are especially effective when removing cakes from a water bath. Their ability to grip the sides of the pan makes them ideal for unmolding cakes from hot flutes tube pans.

## Timers

Triple Timer Clock (item number 40053) is a fantastic and inexpensive timer from West Bend that you can find in housewares stores. Each of three channels times up to twenty-four hours and if, by chance, you don't hear the alert or don't turn it off, the timer starts counting the time that has elapsed since you should have (this timer is referred to as a count-up timer). I keep a little notepad by the timer so I can remember what I am timing on which channel. If you prefer a single-channel timer, the CDN little red digital timer has a persistently pleasant alert that, like a cell phone, can be turned to vibrate. The CDN Model TM25 is a stunning design and is digital (see [Equipment Sources](#)).

## Cake Testers

The best wire cake testers have thin metal wires with loops at the end and make only a small hole in a cake when you use them to test for doneness. These can be found at Parrish Magic Line (see [Equipment Sources](#)). Wooden toothpicks are fine to use for some cakes as long as you remove the cake when just a few crumbs cling to them. I recommend them over the wire testers for a few recipes that require longer baking and where you do want the toothpick to come out clean to indicate doneness.

## Whisks



I find three sizes of whisks particularly useful for baking: A small piano wire whisk, 10 inches long and 5 inches in circumference, with at least eight loops of fine wire, will reach into the corners of a saucepan, making it ideal for both preparing a smooth pastry cream and evenly mixing together dry ingredients. I recommend an enormous balloon whisk, 14½ inches in circumference (see JB Prince, in [Equipment Sources](#)), in place of a spatula, for folding one mixture into another. And, a whisk with a long handle is good for stirring mixtures over hot water.

In France, pastry chefs use a whisk to make their own spun sugar device by cutting the loops of the whisk to form a kind of metal whisk broom.

## Bowls

An assortment of glass bowls, including Pyrex custard cups or dessert dishes, is ideal both for microwaving and storing. Glass bowls are microwavable, nonreactive, and don't retain odors. When calling for general sizes of bowls in the recipes, I use the following guidelines: A small bowl is about 4 cups (1 quart) capacity. A medium bowl is about 6 cups (1½ quarts) capacity. A large bowl is about 8 quarts capacity.

For melting chocolate, the Lékué silicone La Bomba bowl (see [Equipment Sources](#)) is the absolute best because it doesn't continue heating the chocolate after it is removed from the heat. It can be used both as a double boiler and directly in the microwave. And it collapses into a flat disk for convenient storage.

POURfect (see [Equipment Sources](#)) makes my favorite plastic bowls; they are beautifully designed to work when you are adding ingredients to a mixer bowl, even with the motor running, without danger of hitting the beater, spilling a single drop of liquid, or dropping a smidgen of flour. They remind me of large white birds in flight. The bowls come in a wide range of sizes and are exceptionally light and easy to lift. They even have a small "rocker" below the teardrop-shaped spout; it latches onto the bowl to keep it from slipping or falling into the mixer bowl. If the bowls stain, pour in a 25 percent concentration of liquid bleach. It will remove the stain immediately.

## Leveling Knives

If you like to cut layer cakes in half horizontally (called torting), have a serrated blade longer than the diameter of the cake on hand. This is a difficult knife to find, but fortunately Parrish Magic Line (see [Equipment Sources](#)) carries the perfect one with a 14-inch deeply serrated blade. It also can be used to make wavy decorative lines on the surface of a frosted cake.

## Cake-Cutting Knives

A knife with deep serrations, such as a tomato knife or bread knife, does the best job of cutting a cake without compressing it. For cheesecakes, a piece of dental floss held taut cuts through the cake like a laser as long as there is no crust on the sides. Alternatively, use a sharp thin blade dipped in hot water between each slice. Remove the slice by wiggling it slightly and pulling it out without lifting it upward.

## Cardboard Rounds

Corrugated cardboard rounds (also referred to as cake circles) are invaluable for supporting cake layers. They are available in large quantities from paper supply houses such as Qualitá Paper and in small packages from cake decorating supply stores.

## Cake Transfer Disk

Nordic Ware (see [Equipment Sources](#)) makes a handy nonstick 10-inch round disk with a handle, called a cake lifter, which is designed to help transfer cakes and cake layers.

## Cake Bases

Sturdy cardboard serving boards covered with decorative foil are sturdy enough to support a tiered cake. They are available at cake decorating supply stores. You can also purchase the decorative foil in rolls if you prefer to cover your own wood base. A mirror at least 1/8 inch thick also serves as a strong and stunning cake base. In addition, Parrish Magic Line has scalloped gold and silver foil bases of many sizes. Qualitá Paper Products also has several different shapes and patterns (see [Equipment Sources](#)).

## Brushes

Silicone brushes are ideal for brushing syrup onto cakes. They are easier to clean than any other type of brush and are practically indestructible. Because the brushes retain odors, reserve a separate one for sweet baking.

A small number 9 sable artist's paintbrush is the perfect implement for brushing glaze on berries or piping gel on buttercream (as for the candles on the [Chocolate Tomato Cake with Mystery Ganache](#)).

The softest possible makeup brush, reserved for this use, is ideal for restoring the shine to [Dark Chocolate Lacquer Glaze](#).

## Slotted Skimmer

A medium or large skimmer works well to fold flour into batters because the small holes provide just the right resistance to blend in the flour with minimal deflating of the batter. For ease of use, bend back the handle slightly to decrease the angle.

## Plastic Wrap

If only I had known that the old-style Saran, known as "the original premium wrap," was going off the market and being replaced by a Saran that was no longer air- or aroma tight, I would have bought up as many cases as I had room to store, but now it's too late.

I discovered this sad news by e-mail when a desperate baker asked, "Now what do I use to store cakes airtight in the freezer?"

After canvassing all the local markets for the old-style Saran, with no luck, I tried every other wrap I could find. I knew, from working for Reynolds Metals Company many years ago, that wraps other than Saran had microscopic airholes that prevented produce from spoiling and were not intended for wrapping things airtight in the freezer. Stretch-Tite (see [Equipment Sources](#)) is currently the best plastic wrap available. It clings tightly to the bowl or whatever else I need to wrap, but it is not impermeable and therefore not suitable for freezing cakes. However, its manufacturer also produces a wrap designed for the freezer called Freeze-Tite. Not only is it significantly thicker, it is also wider (15 inches). The

manufacturer assures me that it is almost as impermeable as the old-style Saran. Now I can stop mourning.

The company also makes an excellent dispenser for Stretch-Tite called the Wrapmaster 2500, and it is available on its Web site. I love it because I use plastic wrap all day long to cover ingredients I'm preparing. Without plastic wrap or a cover, chocolate syrups and other liquids would evaporate, brown sugar would harden, and egg yolks would crust over. Being able to "chomp" off the plastic wrap with one decisive downward punch on the Wrapmaster is a lot faster and easier than anything else I've found. I feel as though it's putting punctuation on the activity!

## Storage Bags

Choose heavy-duty plastic freezer storage bags for storing cakes in the freezer. After you wrap a cake in plastic wrap, place it in the bag and expel as much air as possible before closing the bag. You can accomplish this best by inserting a small drinking straw in the opening of the bag and sucking out the air.

## Saucepans

A small 1-quart and a medium 2-quart heavyweight saucepan with a nonstick lining, such as the Anolon professional or the more durable ceramic Titanium Scanpan 2001 professional nonstick cookware from Denmark are ideal for sugar syrups, cream sauces, and reducing liquids because very little of the liquid sticks to the pan. They are available at housewares stores.

The ½-quart (2 cups) Gourmet Standard stainless steel pan (see [Equipment Sources](#)) is the perfect little saucepan for smaller amounts of clarified butter, preserves, liquids, syrup, or caramel because its small size makes it easier to immerse a thermometer in to get an accurate reading.

## Water Baths

### Ice Water Bath

When a recipe says to cool the mixture to room temperature and you want to do this quickly, an ice water bath works well, providing the mixture is stirred to equalize the temperature.

To make an ice water bath: Place about a quart of ice cubes in a large container and add enough cold water just to float them. Sprinkle a handful of coarse salt on top to lower the temperature (as if making ice cream). If the mixture to be cooled is in a glass bowl, which holds the temperature, and it should not be chilled beyond a specific point, as with mixtures containing gelatin, have ready some hot water to take the chill off the bowl when the mixture has reached the proper temperature. Setting the pan briefly on a marble or granite countertop and then on a wire rack (for air circulation) will further draw out the heat.

### Hot Water Bath (Bain-Marie)

There are many times when you need to heat something very gently over indirect rather than direct heat.

If you do not own a double boiler, or if the double boiler is too small, use a saucepan or pot with an opening slightly smaller than the diameter of the mixing bowl. (The Lékúé silicone bowl called La Bomba is ideal; see [Equipment Sources](#).) Fill the saucepan with a few inches of hot or simmering water and place the bowl on top of the saucepan. In most cases you will not want the bottom of the bowl to touch the water. Stir or fold the mixture continuously while heating.

When using a hot water bath for baking custard-type cakes, such as cheesecakes, follow the recipe for preparing the pan and use very hot tap water (about 140°F/60°C).

To prevent water marks from staining the water-bath pan, add 1 teaspoon cream of tartar to the water.

If a cake is being baked in a pan with a removable bottom or a springform pan, instead of using aluminum foil to keep the pan watertight, it works perfectly to set the pan in a slightly larger silicone pan before placing it in the water bath.

## Propane Torch

Using a miniature torch is the professional way to heat the sides of a cake pan for perfect unmolding. Heating with a hair dryer also works, but it is a little slower.

## Cake Domes and Carriers

Glass domes are airtight and display cakes attractively while keeping them moist and fresh. Nordic Ware makes a Bundt-shape plastic container perfect for storing and transporting cakes baked in fluted tube pans. William Bounds Grainware (see [Equipment Sources](#)) makes an elegant large plastic cake plate with dome that measures 13½ inches by 6½ inches. Tupperware makes excellent soft plastic cake carriers, which they call Cake Takers, for larger cakes and for cupcakes (see [Equipment Sources](#)).

## Equipment for Decorating

### Pastry Tubes and Tips

Small tubes, referred to as decorating tips, are used for small decorations. Larger tubes, referred to as pastry tubes, are used to pipe large festoons of whipped cream. In the recipes, I have suggested the diameters of the tubes and numbers for the tips where you need to use them. I did not list numbers for the tubes as they vary according to manufacturer. The numbers apply to Wilton, Ateco, and Parrish tips, available at cake decorating supply stores (see [Equipment Sources](#)). Be sure to choose seamless stainless steel tubes.

### Pastry Bags and Resealable Plastic Freezer Storage Bags

Pastry bags are useful not only for piping and decorating, but also for filling small cake pans. Disposable plastic pastry bags that can be cut to desired size are available in cake decorating supply stores and have all but replaced the traditional nylon pastry bags. I also like to use heavy-duty resealable quart- and gallon-size freezer storage bags, especially with children, because the bags are readily available and disposable, and the



top of the bag seals shut so the filling can't work its way out of the bag should your grip be too relaxed.

If using a large pastry tube, simply cut off a small semicircular piece of plastic from one corner of the bag and insert the tube through the opening. When using a small decorating tip that would otherwise work its way back into the bag, insert the nozzle portion of a coupler first. Before filling, seal off the tube opening by twisting the bag directly above the tube and pushing it into the tube to keep the filling from leaking out. Invert the bag over a wire bag holder, blender container, or large glass, fill the bag with the mixture, and close it securely.

## Turntables

For the average cake, an inexpensive plastic turntable such as a lazy Susan, sold in housewares stores and supermarkets, works as well as a professional heavyweight footed variety. To bring the level up to the desired height, place the turntable on a large inverted cake pan. When frosting and decorating large tiered cakes, use a sturdy heavyweight turntable. The turntable can be transformed into an elegant cake server by placing a large serving plate or piece of marble on top. The heavyweight turntable is available from cake decorating supply stores.

## Flower Sinkers

Little plastic vials equipped with tiny sponges to hold water are indispensable for keeping real flowers fresh, particularly if you are decorating a cake with them a day ahead of serving. The smallest ones are available from a florist or flower supply shop.

## Equipment Sources

Some Web sites will sell directly to the consumer while others may recommend a distributor near you. Because suppliers may change their inventory, it always pays to check the Internet for current product information.

Allied Metal Spinning Corp

[www.alliedmetalusa.com](http://www.alliedmetalusa.com) 800-615-2266 (wholesale only; call for distributors)

Bridge Kitchenware Corporation

[www.bridgekitchenware.com](http://www.bridgekitchenware.com) 800-274-3435

Broadway Panhandler

[www.broadwaypanhandler.com](http://www.broadwaypanhandler.com) 866-266-5927

CDN (Component Design Northwest)

[www.cdn-timeandtemp.com](http://www.cdn-timeandtemp.com) 800-338-5594

Chicago Metallic

[www.focuspg.com](http://www.focuspg.com) 800-238-2253

Country Kitchen Sweetart

[www.ccountrykitchensa.com](http://www.ccountrykitchensa.com) 260-482-4835

Cuisinart

[www.cuisinart.com](http://www.cuisinart.com) 800-726-0190

Fante's Kitchen Wares Shop

[www.fantes.com](http://www.fantes.com) 800-443-2683

Gourmet Catalog

[www.gourmetcatalog.com](http://www.gourmetcatalog.com) 800-663-8810

Gourmet Standard

[www.gourmetstandard.com](http://www.gourmetstandard.com) 866-462-1895

Grill Friends

[www.grillfriends.com](http://www.grillfriends.com)

JB Prince

[www.jbprince.com](http://www.jbprince.com) 800-473-0577

Kaiser Bakeware

[www.kaiserbakeware.com](http://www.kaiserbakeware.com) 800-966-3009

Kalustyan

[www.kalustyan.com](http://www.kalustyan.com) 800-352-3451

KitchenAid

[www.kitchenaid.com](http://www.kitchenaid.com) 800-334-6889

La Cuisine

[www.lacuisineus.com](http://www.lacuisineus.com) 800-521-1176

LaPrima Shops

[www.laprimashops.com](http://www.laprimashops.com) 800-526-2163

Lehman's

[www.lehmans.com](http://www.lehmans.com) 877-438-5346

Lékué

[www.haroldimport.com](http://www.haroldimport.com) 800-526-2163

Lincoln Wear-ever

[www.lincolnsmallwares.com](http://www.lincolnsmallwares.com) 800-374-3004

Mettler Toledo

[www.mt.com](http://www.mt.com) 800-638-8537

My Weigh

[www.myweigh.com](http://www.myweigh.com) 602-253-2214

Nordic Ware

[www.nordicware.com](http://www.nordicware.com) 877-466-7342

Omega engineering

[www.omega.com](http://www.omega.com) 800-848-4286

Parrish Magic Line

[www.parrishsmagicline.com](http://www.parrishsmagicline.com) 310-324-2253

Pastry Chef central

[www.pastrychef.com](http://www.pastrychef.com) 561-999-9483

Petal crafts

[www.petalcrafts.com](http://www.petalcrafts.com) 818-249-2460

Pyrex

[www.pyrexware.com](http://www.pyrexware.com) (prep section) 800-999-3436

POURfect

[www.pourfectbowl.com](http://www.pourfectbowl.com) 480-699-6458

Qualitá Paper Products

[www.qualitapaper.com](http://www.qualitapaper.com) 714-540-0994

Raytek Thermometers

[www.raytek.com](http://www.raytek.com) 800-227-8074, option #4

Rose Levy Bakeware

[www.realbakingwithrose.com](http://www.realbakingwithrose.com)

Sur La Table

[www.surlatable.com](http://www.surlatable.com) 800-243-0852

Steuben Glass

[www.steuben.com](http://www.steuben.com) 800-300-1531

Stretch-tite

[www.stretchtite.com](http://www.stretchtite.com) 800-343-6134

Thermoworks

[www.thermoworks.com](http://www.thermoworks.com) 800-393-6434

Tupperware

[www.tupperware.com](http://www.tupperware.com) 800-366-3800

William Bounds Grainware

[www.grainware.com](http://www.grainware.com) 800-473-0504

Williams-Sonoma

[www.williams-sonoma.com](http://www.williams-sonoma.com) 877-812-6235

Wilton Industries



## Appendix

### Recipes Using Only Egg Yolks

1 yolk equals 1 tablespoon plus ½ teaspoon/slightly more than ½ fluid ounce

#### Cakes

2 yolks/1 fluid ounce/1.3 ounces/36 grams

[Deep Chocolate Rosebuds](#)

3 yolks/1.7 fluid ounces/2 ounces/56 grams

[Apple Upside-Down Cake](#)

4 yolks/2.2 fluid ounces/2.6 ounces/74 grams

[Double Chocolate Valentine](#)

[Gâteau Breton](#)

5 yolks/3 fluid ounces/3.3 ounces/93 grams

[She Loves Me Cake](#)

6 yolks/3.5 fluid ounces/4 ounces/112 grams

[Marble Velvet Cake](#)

[Woody's Lemon Luxury Layer Cake](#)

8 yolks/4.5 fluid ounces/5.3 ounces/150 grams

[Coconut Cheesecake with Coconut Cookie Crust](#)

[Tiramisù](#)

#### Toppings and Fillings

1 yolk/0.5 fluid ounce/0.6 ounce/18 grams

[Chocolate Cream Filling](#)

3 yolks/1.7 fluid ounces/2 ounces/56 grams

[Golden Neoclassic Buttercream](#)

[Classic German Chocolate Cake Filling](#)

4 yolks/2.2 fluid ounces/2.6 ounces/74 grams

[Classic Seville Orange Curd](#)

[Chiboust Cream](#)

[Blackberry Mousse Filling](#)

7 yolks/½ cup/4 fluid ounces/4.6 ounces/130 grams

[Lemon Curd](#)

12 yolks/¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons/7 fluid ounces/ 7.7 ounces/223 grams

[Crème Anglaise](#)

### Recipes Using Only Egg Whites

1 white equals 2 tablespoons/1 fluid ounce/30 grams

#### Cakes

3 whites/3 fluid ounces/3.2 ounces/90 grams

[Heavenly Coconut Seduction Cake](#)

[White Velvet Cake with Milk Chocolate Ganache](#)

[Rose Red Velvet Cake](#)

[White Velvet Butter Cupcakes](#)

[Financier-Style Vanilla Bean Pound Cakes](#)

4 whites/½ cup/4 fluid ounces/4.2 ounces/120 grams

[Gold Ingots](#)

[Chocolate Ingots](#)

[Peanut Butter Ingots](#)

[Plum Round Ingots](#)

6 whites/6 fluid ounces/6.3 ounces/180 grams

[Chocolate-Covered Strawberry Cake](#)

[Southern \(Manhattan\) Coconut Cake with Silk Meringue Buttercream](#)

7 whites/7 fluid ounces/7.5 ounces/210 grams

[Le Succès](#)

16 whites/2 cups/16 fluid ounces/17 ounces/480 grams

[Angel Food Cake Base Recipe](#)

[Chocolate Tweed Angel Food Cake](#)

Toppings and Fillings

1 white/2 tablespoons/1 fluid ounce/1 ounce/30 grams

[Whoopie "Marshmallow Cream"](#)

2 whites

[Chocolate—Egg White Buttercream](#)

2½ whites

[Vanilla Mousseline](#)

3 whites/3 fluid ounces/3.2 ounces/90 grams

[Strawberry Mousseline](#)

4 whites/½ cup/4 fluid ounces/4.2 ounces/120 grams

[Crisp Meringue Kisses](#)

6 whites/6 fluid ounces/6.3 ounces/180 grams

[Italian Meringue Topping](#)

Quick-and-Easy Recipes

[Apple Upside-Down Cake](#)

[Plum and Blueberry Upside-Down Torte](#)

[She Loves Me Cake](#)

[White Velvet Cake with Milk Chocolate Ganache](#)

[Heavenly Coconut Seduction Cake](#)

[Whipped Cream Cake](#)

[Golden Lemon Almond Cake](#)

[Lemon Poppy Seed—Sour Cream Cake](#)

[Gâteau Breton](#)

[Sticky Toffee "Pudding"](#)

[English Gingerbread Cake](#)

[Chocolate Tomato Cake with Mystery Ganache](#)

[Double Chocolate Valentine](#)

[Chocolate Velvet Fudge Cake](#)

[Black Chocolate Party Cake](#)

[Classic Carrot Cake with Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting](#)

[Many-Splendored Quick Bread](#)

[Banana Refrigerator Cake with Dreamy Creamy White Chocolate Frosting](#)

[Chocolate Ice Cream Cake or Sandwich](#)

[Coconut Cheesecake with Coconut Cookie Crust](#)

[Sybil's Pecan Torte with Coffee Cream](#)

[Hungarian Jancsi Torta](#)

[Yellow Butter Cupcakes](#)

[Chocolate Butter Cupcakes](#)

[White Velvet Butter Cupcakes](#)

[Gold Ingots](#)

[Chocolate Ingots](#)

[Peanut Butter Ingots](#)

[Financier-Style Vanilla Bean Pound Cakes](#)

[Mini Vanilla Bean Pound Cakes](#)

[Barcelona Brownie Bars](#)

[Baby Chocolate Oblivions](#)