

Big Lemony Birthday Cake with Chocolate Buttercream Frosting

from Urban Sacred Garden



A few months ago my friend Jen and I hosted a book group for *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* by Aimee Bender. In this particular book group the hosts choose food that is complementary to the book. In our case, the title and cover of the book said it all – we needed a three layer lemon cake with chocolate frosting. This cake was HUGE. So, I wouldn't recommend this recipe if you have a small crowd. But it was absolutely, lusciously, lemony deliciousness.

Yield: 1 Very Large Cake, Feeds about 15-20 People

INGREDIENTS

FOR CAKE:

6 Cups Cake Flour + Extra to Flour Pans
3 Tsp Baking Powder
2 1/2 Tsp Baking Soda
1 Tsp Salt
Zest of 2 Lemons
3 Sticks (1 1/2 Cups) Butter, Room Temperature
3 Cups Sugar
3 Tsp Vanilla Extract
3 Tsp Lemon Extract
6 Eggs, Room Temperature

DIRECTIONS

FOR CAKE:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter three 9-inch round cake pans and lightly dust each with a little flour.
2. Sift together Flour, Baking Powder, Baking Soda and Salt in a large bowl. Whisk Lemon Zest into Flour mixture.
3. In a large bowl, with an electric mixer thoroughly beat together Butter and Sugar on medium speed until light, creamy and fluffy. Add Vanilla and Lemon Extracts and beat in. Add Eggs 2 at a time, combining thoroughly each time and scraping down the sides of the bowl between additions. Mix in Buttermilk and Lemon Juice on low speed until just combined. Mixture may look slightly lumpy.
4. Add dry Flour mixture to the wet mixture in four batches, mixing until just combined for each addition.

3 Cups Buttermilk

Juice 1 Lemon

FOR ICING:

8 oz. Unsweetened Baker's Chocolate, chopped
6 Cups Confectioners' (Powdered) Sugar
2 Sticks (1 Cup) Salted Butter, Room Temperature
9 Tbsp 2% Milk + Extra to Thin Icing if Needed, Room Temperature
3 Tsp Vanilla Extract
Decorations and Sprinkles of Choice

5. Once batter is complete, pour into the prepared cake pans in 3 even batches. Take each pan and tap it firmly on the counter to expel air bubbles trapped in the batter.
6. Place pans in the oven and bake for about 40 minutes until tops of cakes are a rich golden color and a knife inserted into the center of the dough comes out clean. Since you have 3 cakes baking, depending on your oven, some may need to come out of the oven before the others. Just don't let any burn! If your oven tends to cook unevenly in spots you may want to rotate the pans halfway through the baking process.
7. Remove all cakes from oven, allow to cool for 10 minutes in the pan. Loosen the cake from the pan edges with a butter knife and flip cake out onto a wire rack, plate or cutting board to cool completely.

FOR ICING:

8. Melt chocolate in a microwave safe bowl (preferably not plastic) in 20-30 second intervals, stirring thoroughly between each session. Repeat until chocolate is completely melted but not hot, scalding or burnt.
9. In a large bowl with an electric mixer combine the Confectioners' Sugar, Butter, 9 Tbsp of Milk and Vanilla and beat on low speed until combined, about 1 minute. (Note: When I first put the ingredients in the bowl I usually mash it up and combine it a bit with a spatula, this helps moisten the Sugar and keep it from powder coating your kitchen!) Stop the mixer after 1 minute, scrape down the sides, and mix on Medium High speed for about 2 minutes to combine thoroughly.
10. Reduce speed to low, add the melted Chocolate and mix until combined. Increase speed to medium high and beat for 1 more minute.
11. Add more milk as needed to the frosting, 1 Tbsp at a time, if it is too dry. It should be creamy, but hold a peak.

ICING THE CAKE:

12. Make sure your cake is completely cooled. On your serving platter of choice, layer the cake, creating a thick (about 1/4-inch) layer of icing between each cake round. Keep a bowl of hot water handy to clean your knife between icing, or keep a slow hot water steam running from the sink.
13. With a warm knife with a smooth edge, create a first, rough layer of chocolate icing. Fill in any deep holes and gaps between the layers, making it as even as possible. Smooth a layer over the entire cake, covering it completely with a thin, rough (but as even as possible) layer. This is your "crumb layer" of icing. Place the iced cake in the refrigerator and allow it to sit for about 20 minutes so the initial layer of icing firms-up.
14. Remove the cake from the refrigerator. Add milk into your icing to re-thin it if needed, as it may have dried out a little while the first layer of icing was setting. Ice the cake with a second clean layer, keeping it as smooth as possible. Keep your knife warm and clean to help keep the icing process smooth. Add sprinkles to the icing on the top of the cake while it is still wet and fresh (if you let it firm up, the sprinkles will bounce right off).
15. Make any finishing touches and clean-ups. Serve with Ice Cream, Birthday Candles and lots of Joy!