

Salt and Serenity

Pastry chef Joanne Yolles created this magical cake. It first appeared in the Holiday 2014 issue of LCBO's Food & Drink Magazine.

Serves 12

Cake

½ cup unsalted butter

1¾ cups cake flour

1½ tsp. baking powder

½ tsp. baking soda

¼ tsp. Kosher salt

1 cup mashed banana, about 3 small ripe bananas

⅓ cup buttermilk, room temperature

½ cup + 2 Tbsp. sugar

2 eggs, room temperature

1 tsp pure vanilla extract

Meringue

½ cup egg whites (from about 4 eggs), room temperature

¾ cup sugar

¾ cup unsweetened, shredded coconut

1. Melt butter in a small saucepan over medium-low heat and continue cooking until the butter foams, turns golden brown, and has a nut-like fragrance. Transfer the butter, including the specks at the bottom of the pan, to a small bowl and chill until solid, about 2 hours.
2. Set the oven rack in the middle position and preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Line the bottom of a 10x10 inch square or a 9x13-inch rectangular cake pan or baking dish with parchment paper and set aside. It helps if you lightly coat the bottom of the pan with cooking spray first to help paper adhere to pan.
3. Sift together the cake flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In another bowl, combine the mashed banana and buttermilk; set both aside.
4. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the chilled brown butter on medium speed. Add all the sugar in a steady stream and continue beating until light and fluffy, scraping down the sides of the bowl once or twice.

5. Lightly whisk the eggs then add them gradually to the butter mixture and beat to combine. Beat in the vanilla.
6. On low speed, add the dry ingredients alternately with the banana/buttermilk mixture, beginning and ending with the dry. Stop the mixer before the last addition of flour is fully incorporated. Remove the bowl from the mixer and finish mixing with a rubber spatula. Spread the batter into the baking dish and set aside while preparing the coconut meringue.
7. Place the egg whites in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Begin mixing on medium speed until foamy. Increase the speed to medium-high and continue beating to soft peaks. Add the sugar in a slow stream, and continue beating until the whites form stiff shiny peaks. Remove the bowl from the mixer and fold in the coconut.
8. Spread the meringue in an even layer over the cake batter and bake in the middle of the oven until the meringue is light golden brown and firm to the touch, about 30-35 minutes. Cool the cake on a wire rack. The cake is best the day it is made. Cover any leftover cake with plastic wrap and store at room temperature.