

# Salt and Serenity

## KK's Coconut Cake with Coconut Caramel Filling

Serves 12

The recipe for the coconut caramel filling (known as Kaya) recipe comes from pastry chef Anna Olsen. The cake recipe comes from my sister Bonnie and her daughter KK. The American vanilla buttercream comes from the talented Nila over at the toughcookie.com.

Prepare the coconut caramel filling at least one day ahead of baking the cake.

### Coconut Caramel Filling (Kaya):

1 cup coconut milk, whisked until smooth (not light coconut milk)

5 whole eggs

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup granulated sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup coconut palm sugar

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon Kosher salt

2 pandan leaves, tied into a knot

### Cake:

3  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon baking powder

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. salt

1 cup butter, at room temperature

2 cups granulated sugar

2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste

4 eggs

1 cup plain Greek yogurt

1 cup sweetened, shredded coconut

### American Vanilla Buttercream

160 grams (1 cup plus 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons) unsalted butter, room temperature

440 grams (3  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups plus 1 teaspoon) icing sugar

1 Tablespoon vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt

6 Tablespoons 35% cream

A few drops fresh lemon juice

1 cup sweetened coconut chips, lightly toasted (to decorate top of cake)

1. **Make the coconut caramel filling:** Open can of coconut milk, and whisk well until smooth. Measure out 1 cup to use in the recipe and freeze the remainder for another time.
2. In a large mixing bowl, whisk eggs. Add granulated and coconut palm sugar, coconut milk, and salt and whisk well.

3. Place the bowl over a pot of simmering water. Add pandan leaves and whisk occasionally for about 20 minutes. Remove pandan leaves and whisk constantly for an additional 20-30 minutes. The mixture will thicken and get darker in colour. You want to cook the mixture to a temperature of 160°F, checking with an instant read thermometer.
4. Use a fine mesh strainer to strain filling into a bowl. This is just in case some of the eggs scrambled!! Cover surface of filling directly with plastic wrap. Let come to room temperature before chilling. It takes at least 6 hours to set.
5. **Make the cake:** Grease and flour 3 nine-inch cake pans. Preheat oven to 350°F. Whisk together flour, baking powder and salt and set aside.
6. In the bowl of an electric mixer, fitted with the paddle attachment, cream together the butter and sugar on medium speed for about 5 minutes. Add vanilla and mix well. Add eggs, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Add yogurt and mix well. Add flour mixture and mix until all the flour is incorporated. Mix in coconut.
7. Divide batter evenly among 3 cake pans. Bake in oven for 30-40 minutes, until cake is done.
8. Remove cake from oven, let cool in pans for 30 minutes, then turn out onto a cooling rack and let cool completely.
9. **Make Buttercream:** Place butter in bowl of electric mixer fitted with paddle attachment and beat butter until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add icing sugar, vanilla, cream and salt. Using a rubber spatula or a spoon, smush all the ingredients together until incorporated, then mix with a mixer until smooth, fluffy and creamy, and the buttercream has lightened in color, about 3-5 minutes. Taste buttercream and, if desired, add a few drops of lemon juice. It will not make the buttercream taste lemony. It just brightens up all the flavours.
10. Place one layer of cake on serving platter. Cut 4 small strips of waxed paper and slide them under each side of the cake to keep platter clean while icing. Spread about half of the coconut caramel filling into the first layer, leaving a 1 inch boarder around the edge. Pipe a boarder of American buttercream around the coconut caramel filling. This will act as a dam and prevent the filling from oozing out. Repeat with the second cake layer. Top with the final layer. Ice the sides and then top of the cake with the frosting. Sprinkle toasted coconut chips over top of cake. Remove waxed paper strips and refrigerate until serving time.

