

# Salt and Serenity

## Apple-Cinnamon Crunch Cake with Caramel Drizzle

Makes one 6" round cake (3 layers). You will need three 6" cake pans, a 6" cardboard cake circle, candy thermometer and an offset spatula. A revolving cake decorating stand would be helpful. I highly recommend using cake strips when baking these cakes. They result in cakes that are moist and perfectly level, without cracks or crusty edges.

Apple cake recipe adapted from The Preppy Baker's Apple Spice Cake. Caramel drizzle recipe from Tessa Huff's book, *"Layered"*. The crunch recipe is from Caroline Wright's book, *"Cake Magic"*.

### **Cake:**

3 cups all-purpose flour (360 grams)  
1½ cups granulated sugar (297 grams)  
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon  
½ teaspoon ground ginger  
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
¾ cup vegetable oil  
3 large eggs  
¼ cup sour cream  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste  
3 Honeycrisp apples, peeled, cored and cut into 1/8 inch dice (about 3 cups diced apples)

### **Ginger Crunch:**

200 grams ginger snap cookies (any store-bought cookies are fine)  
30 grams pecans (¼ cup)  
35 grams malted milk powder (1/4 cup)  
2 tablespoons granulated sugar  
½ teaspoon kosher salt  
85 grams unsalted butter, melted (6 Tablespoons)

### **Cinnamon Swiss Meringue Buttercream:**

300 grams egg whites  
495 grams granulated sugar (2½ cups)  
680 grams unsalted butter (3 cups), removed from fridge 20 minutes before making buttercream, cut into 1-inch cubes  
¼ teaspoon kosher salt  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste  
1 teaspoons ground cinnamon

### **Caramel Drizzle:**

1 cup apple cider

107 grams light brown sugar (1/2 cup)

1 teaspoon corn syrup

28 grams unsalted butter (2 Tablespoons), cut into 1/4 inch dice

1. Make cake: Preheat oven to 350° F. Prepare baking pans. Spray the bottom and sides of three 6" cake pans. Line the bottom of each pan with a 6" circle of parchment paper. If using cake strips, wet cake strips and wrap them around the outside of each cake pan.
2. In a large bowl, sift or whisk together flour, sugar, spices, baking soda and salt and set aside. In a medium bowl whisk eggs. Add sour cream and vanilla, whisk for another 30 seconds. Pour liquid ingredients into the bowl with the dry ingredients. Using a sturdy wooden spoon, mix until all the dry ingredients are evenly moistened. Add diced apples and mix just until they are evenly blended into batter.
3. Divide batter evenly between the 3 cake pans. If you want your layers to be perfectly equal, weigh the batter so you can divide it exactly. Bake cakes for 35-40 minutes, until a cake tester or wooden skewer inserted into the center, comes out dry. Cool on wire rack for 20 minutes. Turn cake out of pans and allow them to cool completely on the wire rack.
4. Make Ginger Crunch: Preheat oven to 300°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside. Place gingersnap cookies and pecans in a plastic bag and use a rolling pin to roll over the bag to finely crush cookies and nuts. Place crushed cookies and nuts into a medium sized mixing bowl. Add malted milk powder, sugar and salt and mix to combine everything. Pour melted butter over the crumb mixture and stir until clumps form. Scatter clumps on baking sheet in a single layer. Bake for about 10-12 minutes, until fragrant and browned. Let cool completely.
5. Make Buttercream: In a medium saucepan, bring an inch or two of water to a simmer. Place egg whites and sugar in a large stainless steel mixing bowl. Place over simmering water and whisk gently until mixture registers 160°F on a candy or instant read thermometer. Immediately pour egg white mixture into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment.
6. Using the whisk attachment, mix on medium high speed until the egg whites have doubled in volume, hold medium peaks and have cooled to room temperature, about 10-12 minutes. The best way to gauge this by putting the inside of your wrist to the outside of the bowl. It's more accurate than your hands. Switch from the whisk to the paddle attachment.
7. Turn the mixer to medium low speed and slowly add butter, a few cubes at a

time, increasing the speed to medium high after each addition and beating until the butter is fully incorporated before adding more. Resist the temptation to dump all the butter in at once. Be patient. Once all the butter has been added, continue to beat on medium-high until buttercream is light and fluffy, 1-2 minutes. Stop mixer and scrape down sides and bottom of bowl. Add vanilla extract, salt and cinnamon and beat at medium speed for an additional minute. Buttercream is ready to use immediately or can be stored in an airtight container in fridge for 1 week or freezer for 3 months. Bring to room temperature before using.

8. Make caramel: Place apple cider in a medium sized saucepan and bring to a boil. Turn down heat to low and simmer until cider is reduced to ½ cup. Add brown sugar and corn syrup and increase heat to high. Continue cooking until caramel reaches 240°F on a candy thermometer. Remove from heat, stir in butter and transfer to a heatproof container and set aside while you assemble the cake.
9. Assemble cake: Place cardboard cake circle on revolving cake stand. Put a dollop of buttercream on the cardboard circle. Top with first layer of cake, bottom side down. Cover with thin layer of buttercream. Sprinkle a thin even layer of ginger crunch over the buttercream. Repeat until all 3 layers are stacked.
10. Cover sides and top of cake with a very thin layer of buttercream. This is your “crumb” layer. Some cake may peek through, that’s ok. Chill cake for 30 minutes. Spread a thick layer of buttercream on sides and top of cake. Using the clean edge of your offset spatula or a wide plastic cake smoother, smooth the sides and top of the cake.
11. Pour ½ cup of apple caramel sauce around the edge of the cake. Use your offset spatula to encourage it to drip over sides of cake. If desired, you can put any leftover buttercream into a piping bag with a star tip and pipe a border around the top and bottom of the cake.