

Salt and Serenity

Maple Crunch Birthday Cake

Makes one 8 inch cake, serving 10-12

Recipe adapted, in parts, from Anna Olsen and Rose Levy Berenbaum.

Cake:

300 grams (2½ cups) cake and pastry flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
170 grams (¾ cup) unsalted butter, room temperature
263 grams (1⅓ cups) granulated sugar
3 large eggs, room temperature
2 teaspoons vanilla bean paste or extract
1 cup buttermilk, room temperature

Oat Crumble:

250 grams Dad's oatmeal cookies
35 grams (¼ cup) malted milk powder
25 grams (2 tablespoons) granulated sugar
½ teaspoon kosher salt
85 grams (6 Tablespoons) unsalted butter, melted

Neoclassic Maple Buttercream:

168 grams egg yolk (from about 6 large eggs)
225 grams (1 1/8 cups) granulated sugar
246 grams (¾ cup) pure maple syrup
681 grams (1 ½ pounds) unsalted butter, room temperature, cut into 2 inch cubes
2 teaspoons maple extract
¼ teaspoon kosher salt

Optional: (for garnish)

2 cups candied pecan halves

1. **Make cake:** Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray the bottom and sides of 2 8-inch round cake pans with cooking spray. Line the bottom of each pan with a circle of parchment paper.
2. Sift flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt together into a medium sized bowl. Set aside.
3. In a stand mixer, fitted with the paddle attachment, cream together butter and sugar, on medium high speed, for 3-4 minutes, until lightened in colour and

fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Add vanilla bean paste and mix. Scrape down sides of mixing bowl with spatula.

4. Add the dry ingredients, alternately with the buttermilk, starting and ending with the dry ingredients and mixing well after each addition. Divide batter evenly between 2 cake pans. If like me, you care about these things, you can weigh them to ensure they are exactly even!
5. Bake cakes for 22-25 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted into the center of the cake, comes out clean. Transfer pans to wire rack to cool for 20 minutes. Carefully turn cakes out of their pans and let cool completely on rack.
6. **Make Oat Crumble:** Lower oven temperature to 300°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside. Place oatmeal cookies into food processor, fitted with stainless steel knife blade. Process until cookies are finely crumbled. Add malted milk powder, sugar and salt and pulse 3-4 times to combine everything. Pour melted butter over the crumb mixture and pulse 3-4 times 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.
7. **Make Neoclassic Maple Buttercream:** Lightly spray a 2-cup Pyrex measuring cup with cooking spray and set aside. In a stand mixer, fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the egg yolks until quite pale in colour. This will take about 5 minutes. While yolks are beating, combine sugar and maple syrup in a medium sized, heavy bottom saucepan. Clip a candy thermometer to the side of the pan. Bring sugar and syrup to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Once temperature reaches 238°F, carefully pour mixture into greased measuring cup.
8. Turn off stand mixer and pour about ¼ cup of syrup over the beaten yolks. Immediately beat at high speed for 5 seconds. Stop mixer and add another ¼ cup of the syrup. Beat at high for 5 seconds. Turn off mixer and add remaining syrup, using a rubber spatula to scrape every last drop from the measuring cup. Beat on high speed until the bottom of the mixer bowl feels completely cool, with no trace of warmth. This will take 8-10 minutes.
9. 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 maple extract and salt and beat at medium speed for an additional minute. Buttercream can be kept at room temperature for up to 6 hours, or can be stored in an airtight container in fridge for 1 week or freezer for 8 months. Bring to room temperature and beat in mixer again before using. Don't try to beat chilled

buttercream, as it will curdle.

10. **Assemble cake:** Place an 8-inch 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 thick layer of buttercream. Sprinkle a thin even layer of oat crumble over the buttercream. (You will have extra crumble. It is delicious sprinkled over your morning fruit and yogurt). Top with second cake layer, bottom side up.
11. 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 very 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.
12. Place remaining buttercream into a piping bag with a large star tip and pipe a border around the top of the cake. If using, arrange candied pecans around the bottom of the cake. There will likely be some leftover buttercream. It can be frozen and used later on apple spice cupcakes.