

Quick Yogurt Citrus Cake

This brilliantly uncomplicated cake is perfect when you want a simple, moist cake to go with fresh fruit. Whether you choose lemon, lime or orange is up to you, even if the citrus you have in the fridge makes the decision for you.

Makes one 9-inch (23 cm) round or square cake

Serves 12

Prep Time: Under 10 minutes

Cook Time: 35 minutes

1 cup (200 g) granulated sugar
Zest of 1 lemon, 1 lime or 1 orange
½ cup (125 mL) plain regular yogurt (not Greek)
⅓ cup (80 mL) extra-virgin olive oil
3 large eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
¼ tsp almond extract (optional)
1 cup (150 g) all-purpose flour
½ cup (60 g) ground almonds
2 tsp baking powder
½ tsp fine salt

1. **Preheat the oven** to 350°F (180°C). Grease a 9-inch (23 cm) round or square pan and line the bottom with parchment paper.

2. **Whisk the sugar and citrus zest** together in a large mixing bowl.

Note: When a cake is this simple, little steps like taking the time to draw out the citrus oils from the zest by whisking it into the sugar really make a difference. The citrus flavour will be more pronounced and even throughout the cake.

3. **Add the wet ingredients.** Whisk in the kefir (or yogurt), olive oil, eggs, vanilla extract and almond extract, if using, until combined.

Note: Using extra-virgin olive oil gives this cake a lovely depth of flavour. You can use vegetable oil if you'd prefer a milder cake, but I think the olive oil is much tastier.

4. **Add the flour, almonds, baking powder and salt** and whisk again until just combined with no lumps visible.

5. **Bake the cake.** Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 30 to 35 minutes, until a tester inserted in the centre of the cake comes out clean. Cool in the pan on a rack for 20 minutes, then tip out onto the rack to cool completely.

The cake will keep, well wrapped in plastic, at room temperature for up to 3 days.

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Frosted Cupcake Tops

Cupcake tops are for frosting lovers. They are essentially cake cookies that are scooped onto a baking tray and baked. You get the same surface area for decorating as a regular cupcake but with less cake to manage and eat.

Makes 2½ dozen cupcake tops

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 12 to 15 minutes

2 cups (300 g) all-purpose flour

¾ cup (150 g) granulated sugar

2 tsp baking powder

½ tsp fine salt

½ cup (115 g) unsalted butter, room temperature, cut in pieces

½ cup (125 mL) full-fat sour cream

2 Tbsp (30 mL) 1% or 2% milk

2 large eggs, room temperature

2 tsp vanilla extract

1 **double** recipe Chocolate or Vanilla Cupcake Frosting (recipe follows)

Sprinkles, for decorating

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F (160°C) and line two baking trays with parchment paper.
2. Sift the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt together in a large bowl or in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Add the butter and, using electric beaters or the mixer at medium-low speed, cut in the butter until the mixture has a fine crumbly texture and no pieces of butter are visible.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk the sour cream, milk, eggs and vanilla together. Add these wet ingredients all at once to the larger bowl and mix at low speed until combined, then increase the speed to medium and beat for 90 seconds, until the batter becomes lighter in colour and has structure.
4. Use a medium ice cream scoop to drop scoopfuls of batter onto the trays, leaving 2 inches (5 cm) between them. Level each scoopful before dropping it on the tray, and drop them straight down (not at an angle) so they bake up evenly. Bake the cupcake tops for 12 to 15 minutes, until they lift up easily from the tray and colour on the bottom a little.
5. Let the cupcake tops cool on the trays before frosting. Unfrosted, the cupcake tops can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for a day, or frozen for up to 3 months. Frosted cupcake tops will keep in a sealed container in the fridge for up to 2 days, but freezing is not recommended.

Notes

For lemon cupcake tops, add the finely grated zest of one lemon to the flour mixture after sifting and replace the milk with 2 Tbsp (30 mL) fresh lemon juice.

For chocolate cupcake tops, replace ½ cup (75 g) of the all-purpose flour with ½ cup (60 g) cocoa powder.



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Vanilla & Chocolate Cupcake Frostings

This vanilla frosting is sometimes referred to as an American buttercream, and its fluffy sweetness is the expected topping on a classic cupcake. The chocolate frosting is fluffy and light.

Makes enough frosting for 12 cupcakes

Prep Time: Under 10 minutes

Vanilla Frosting

1 cup (225 g) unsalted butter, room temperature (see note)

4 cups (520 g) icing sugar (certified vegan, if needed)

¼ tsp fine salt

2 Tbsp (30 mL) 2% milk (see note)

2 tsp vanilla extract

Chocolate Frosting

1 cup (225 g) unsalted butter, room temperature (see note)

3½ cups (455 g) icing sugar (certified vegan, if needed)

½ cup (60 g) Dutch process cocoa powder, sifted

¼ tsp fine salt

3 Tbsp (45 mL) 2% milk (see note)

2 tsp vanilla extract

1. For Vanilla Frosting, using electric beaters or a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter at high speed for 2 minutes, until fluffy. Add half of the icing sugar and beat, starting at low speed and then increasing to high, stopping to scrape the bowl once or twice. Add the remaining icing sugar and salt, and beat again at low speed and then increase to high, scraping the bowl once or twice. Add the milk and vanilla and beat at low speed and then increase to high. Beat for 3 to 4 minutes until fluffy and light and to build structure so your frosting will hold its shape.

2. For Chocolate Frosting, follow the recipe above, and add the cocoa powder at the same time as the salt.

2. Use the frosting immediately, or chill in an airtight container for up to 4 days or freeze for up to 3 months. Let chilled frosting come to room temperature and rewhip it at high speed for 3 minutes before using.

Notes

I don't bother sifting the icing sugar for these frostings because it is whipped for long enough to break up any small lumps. That said, cocoa powder lumps are a little more stubborn, so I always sift my cocoa powder.

For a vegan frosting, replace the butter with a good-quality dairy-free butter (omit the salt in the recipe if using salted dairy-free butter). Avoid dairy-free margarines, which can cause the frosting to split or become grainy. You can also use 1 cup (225 g) virgin coconut oil, but melt ¼ cup (60 g) of it and beat it with ¾ cup (175 g) solid coconut oil as you begin to add the icing sugar. Use oat milk or almond milk in place of the 2% milk.

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