1 EASY RECIPE, 4 GREAT CAKES

Customize our butter cake: Pick your flavor (chocolate, strawberry, choco-nutter, or lemon) and start baking

BY AMY MACHNAK | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANNABELLE BREAKEY

Easy recipe: Best butter cake

Simple, yummy, and extremely versatile, this cake could be your new dessert standby.

MAKES Two 8-in. cake layers, serving 16
TIME 40 minutes, plus 45 minutes to cool

- 2¼ cups cake flour
- 2½ tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1¼ cups sugar
- About ½ cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- ⅔ cup milk

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Sift flour, baking powder, and salt into a medium bowl; set aside. In the bowl of a stand mixer, beat sugar and ½ cup butter until creamy. Crack eggs into a small dish (do not beat) and add vanilla. Add eggs to the butter mixture 1 at a time, scraping down the inside of the bowl as needed. Beat in flour mixture and milk in alternating batches, starting and ending with the flour and making sure each addition is fully incorporated before adding the next.

2. Butter and flour 2 round 8-in. cake pans. Divide batter evenly between pans.

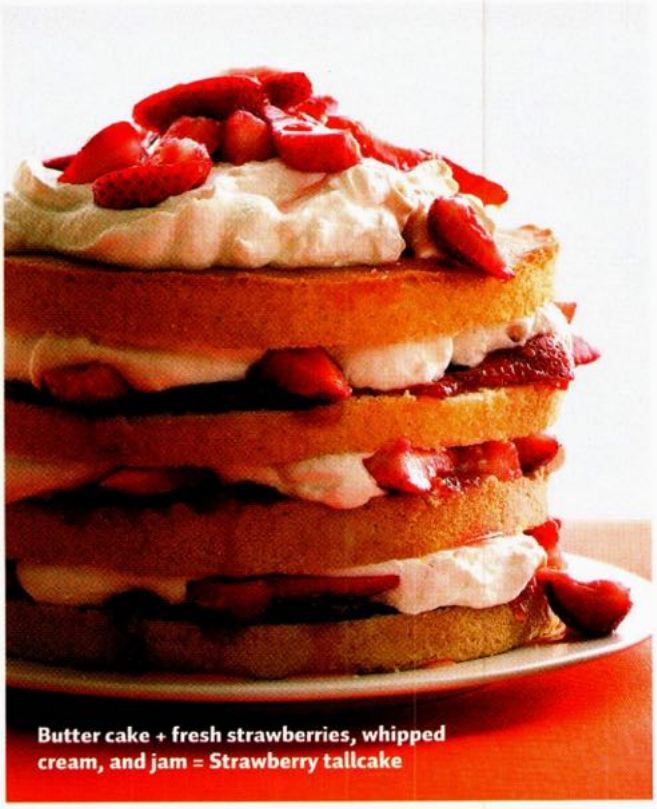
3. Bake until golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the center of each cake comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes.

4. Cool cakes 5 minutes. Invert onto a rack, remove pans, and let cool to room temperature, at least 40 minutes.

Make ahead: Up to 2 days, wrapped in plastic wrap and chilled.

PER SERVING 203 CAL., 31% (62 CAL.) FROM FAT; 2.9 G PROTEIN; 6.9 G FAT (4 G SAT.); 32 G CARBO (0.4 G FIBER); 237 MG SODIUM; 43 MG CHOL.

Butter cake + fudge frosting = Fudge butter cake



Butter cake + fresh strawberries, whipped cream, and jam = Strawberry tallcake

Fudge butter cake

MAKES One 8-in. cake, serving 16
TIME 30 minutes

A classic birthday cake, with a tender crumb and a luscious chocolaty frosting. All you need are the candles.

Fudge frosting

5 oz. unsweetened chocolate, chopped
8 tbsp. butter, at room temperature
About 3 cups powdered sugar, sifted
6 tbsp. milk

Cake

Best Butter Cake (see recipe, at left)

1. Make frosting: Melt chocolate in the top of a double boiler over simmering water. Let cool to room temperature, 10 minutes. Add butter and beat on high speed with an electric mixer until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add 3 cups powdered sugar and the milk; beat until smooth. Add more powdered sugar if frosting seems too thin.

2. Assemble cake: Dollop 1 tbsp. frosting onto the center of a cake stand (to hold cake in place). Place 1 cake layer on stand. Spread with about ¾ cup frosting. Top with second layer. Starting with the top, then working down the sides, frost cake with remaining frosting.

PER SERVING 391 CAL., 41% (162 CAL.) FROM FAT; 4 G PROTEIN; 18 G FAT (11 G SAT.); 58 G CARBO (1.7 G FIBER); 300 MG SODIUM; 60 MG CHOL.

Strawberry tallcake

MAKES One 8-in. cake, serving 16
TIME 35 minutes

We created this elegant, elongated version of strawberry shortcake by stacking cake layers with berries and whipped cream.

Filling

4 cups quartered strawberries
6 tbsp. sugar, divided
1 tbsp. *each* finely shredded lemon zest and juice
2 cups heavy cream

Cake

6 oz. good-quality strawberry jam (9 tbsp.)
Best Butter Cake (see recipe, at far left)

1. Make filling: In a large bowl, combine strawberries, 2 tbsp. sugar, the zest, and juice. Let sit 10 minutes.

2. In a medium bowl, whisk cream with remaining 4 tbsp. sugar until it holds a stiff peak.

3. Assemble cake: Using a serrated knife, slice both cake layers in half horizontally. Set rounded tops aside to use as middle layers. Dollop 1 tbsp. whipped cream onto the center of a cake stand (to hold cake in place). Place 1 of remaining layers on stand, cut side up. Spread with about 3 tbsp. jam. Sprinkle with about one-quarter of the sweetened strawberries, along with some juice. Then dollop one-quarter of the cream over strawberries. Repeat with second and third cake layers, using the reserved rounded tops.

4. Place the remaining layer on the top of the cake, cut side down. Mound the remaining whipped cream in the center and spread to about 1 in. from the edge, then sprinkle with remaining strawberries.

PER SERVING 361 CAL., 45% (162 CAL.) FROM FAT; 3.8 G PROTEIN; 18 G FAT (11 G SAT.); 48 G CARBO (1.5 G FIBER); 253 MG SODIUM; 84 MG CHOL.

The following two recipes require a minor adjustment to the Best Butter Cake batter.

Chocolate peanut butter cake

MAKES One 9-in. cake, serving 16
TIME About 1¼ hours, plus time to make frosting

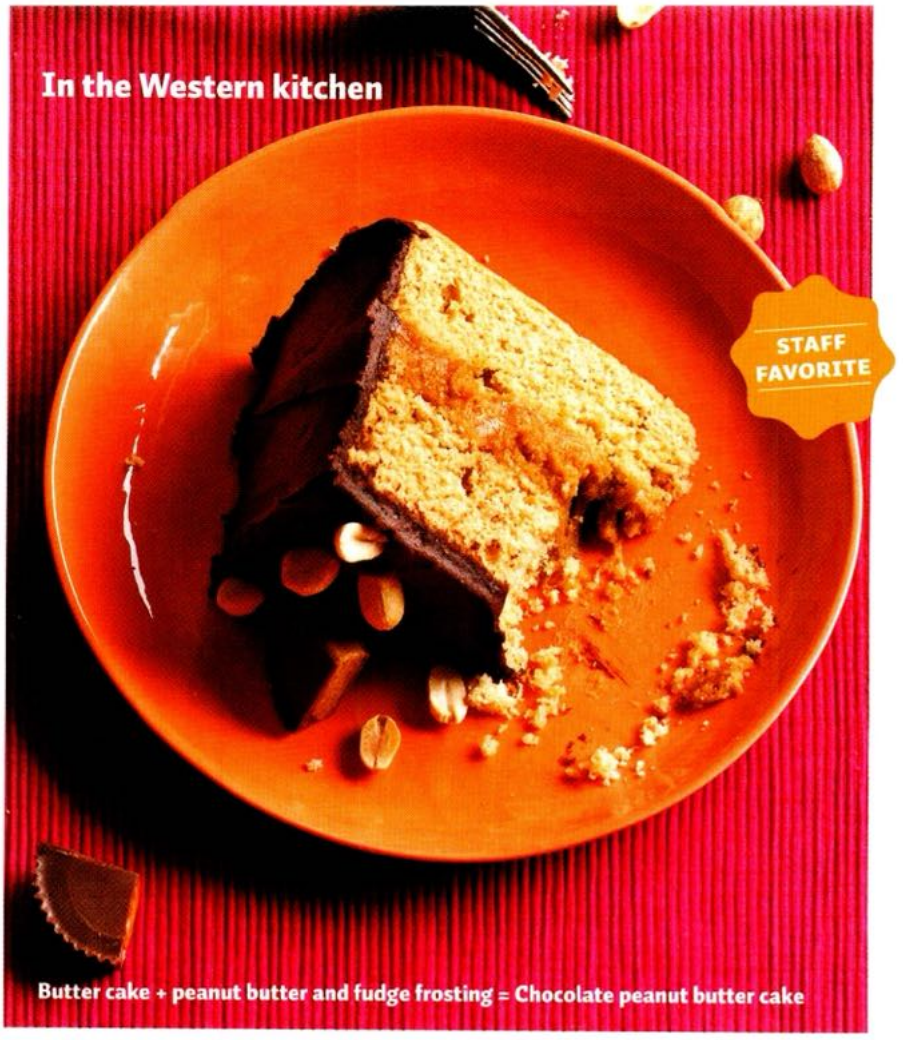
An homage to the Reese's Peanut Butter Cup, this cake is for the true peanut butter and chocolate lover.

Cake

Ingredients for Best Butter Cake (see recipe, at far left)
½ cup creamy peanut butter

Peanut butter filling

¾ cup creamy peanut butter
8 oz. cream cheese, at room temperature



Butter cake + peanut butter and fudge frosting = Chocolate peanut butter cake

1 cup powdered sugar
¼ cup milk

Assembly

Fudge frosting from Fudge Butter Cake (see recipe, on page 101)
2 Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, quartered
½ cup dry-roasted peanuts

1. Make cake: Follow method for Best Butter Cake, adding peanut butter to bowl of creamed butter and sugar in step 1 and beating to incorporate.

2. Proceed with recipe, using two 9-in. cake pans and baking until layers are golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes. Cool cakes as directed.

3. Make filling: In a medium bowl with an electric mixer, beat together peanut butter, cream cheese, powdered sugar, and milk until smooth and fluffy.

4. Assemble cake: Dollop 1 tbsp. peanut butter filling onto a cake stand (to hold cake in place). Place 1 cake layer on stand. Spread with remaining peanut butter filling. Top with second layer. Starting with the top, then working down the sides, frost cake with fudge frosting. Decorate the top edge with candy pieces and peanuts.

PER SERVING 603 CAL., 51% (306 CAL.) FROM FAT; 11 G PROTEIN; 34 G FAT (16 G SAT.); 71 G CARBO (3 G FIBER); 445 MG SODIUM; 76 MG CHOL.

Lemon meringue cake

MAKES 1 loaf cake, serving 12
TIME 2¾ hours

Our butter cake meets classic lemon meringue pie. We used a loaf pan to change the shape of the cake—a simple twist that dramatically alters the presentation.

Cake

Best Butter Cake (see recipe, on page 100), prepared through step 1
2 tbsp. finely shredded lemon zest

Lemon curd

½ cup butter
½ cup fresh lemon juice (about 3 lemons)
¾ cup sugar
8 large egg yolks

Meringue

1 cup egg whites (about 8 eggs)
1 cup sugar

1. Make cake: Stir zest into finished batter. Butter and flour a 5- by 9-in. loaf pan and pour in batter.

2. Bake 45 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool 5 minutes, then invert cake onto a rack. Remove pan and let cake cool to room temperature, at least 40 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, make lemon curd: In a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan, melt butter with lemon juice over high heat. In a medium bowl, whisk together sugar and yolks. Slowly whisk hot lemon butter into egg mixture, ½ cup at a time. Pour mixture back into saucepan and cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture is very thick, 5 to 8 minutes.

4. Transfer lemon curd to a glass or plastic container. Cover with plastic wrap, pressing it onto the top of the curd to prevent a skin from forming. Chill until cold, at least 1 hour and up to 2 days.

5. Make meringue: Whisk whites and sugar together in a medium metal bowl. Set over a saucepan of simmering water and whisk constantly until mixture is warm to the touch and sugar feels dissolved, about 2 minutes.

6. Scrape whites into the bowl of a stand mixer. Whisk on high speed until light and fluffy and the side of the bowl feels cool to the touch, about 2 minutes.

7. Assemble cake: Preheat broiler, positioning oven rack about 7 in. from the heat source. Using a serrated knife, trim brown exterior from sides and top of cake. Slice cake horizontally into 3 even layers.

8. Place 1 cake layer on a rimmed baking sheet. Spread with half the lemon curd mixture. Repeat with second layer and remaining curd. Top with last layer. Using a spatula, cover the entire cake with the meringue.

9. Broil cake just until top is golden brown, being careful not to burn it, about 1 minute. Using 2 large pancake turners (sliding 1 under each side of cake), transfer cake to a serving plate.

PER SERVING 504 CAL., 36% (180 CAL.) FROM FAT; 8 G PROTEIN; 20 G FAT (11 G SAT.); 74 G CARBO (0.6 G FIBER); 432 MG SODIUM; 220 MG CHOL. ■

WHAT'S YOUR SPIN ON OUR CAKE?
SEND US A PHOTO AND EXPLAIN HOW YOU DRESSED UP OUR BUTTER CAKE: *readerletters@sunset.com*

Butter cake + lemon curd and meringue = Lemon meringue cake