



Healthy through the **HOLIDAYS**

Chocolate Layer Cake or Cupcakes

What would a dessert cookbook be without a classic chocolate layer cake? After experimenting with various recipes for vegan chocolate cakes, I came up with my own. This cake bakes up incredibly light and moist. This was also my “goto” birthday-cake recipe when I owned my bakery, and it received raves from virtually all of the customers for whom I baked it!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Tbsp (15 ml) instant-coffee substitute, such as Dandy Blend, or 1½ tsp (7.5 ml) instant coffee
- 1 Tbsp (15 ml) pure vanilla extract
- ¾ cup (125 g) coconut sugar
- ½ tsp (2.5 ml) pure stevia powder or 1 tsp (5 ml) pure plain or vanilla stevia liquid, or to taste
- 1 ¾ cups (420 ml) unsweetened plain, vanilla, or chocolate almond or soy milk
- 1 Tbsp (15 ml) apple cider vinegar
- ⅔ cup (160 ml) sunflower or other light-tasting oil, preferably organic
- 1 ½ cups (200 g) [Ricki's All-Purpose Gluten-Free Flour Mix](#)
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) sweet rice flour
- ½ cup (70 g) sorghum flour
- ½ cup (80 g) unsweetened cocoa powder, preferably non-alkalized
- 1 tsp (5 ml) xanthan gum (use only Bob's Red Mill brand if you are concerned about a corn allergy)
- 1 ½ tsp (7.5 ml) baking powder
- ¾ tsp (3.5 ml) baking soda
- ¼ tsp (1 ml) fine sea salt



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INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Line two 8- or 9-inch(20-22.5-cm) round layer pans with parchment paper, or spray with nonstick spray; or line 18 muffin cups with paper liners, or spray with nonstick spray.

In a large bowl, whisk together the coffee substitute, vanilla, coconut sugar, stevia, milk, vinegar, and oil until the sugar appears dissolved. Sift in the all-purpose flour, sweet rice flour, sorghum flour, cocoa powder, xanthan gum, baking powder, baking soda, and salt and whisk just to blend; do not overmix.

Divide the batter evenly between the 2 pans or else scoop into the muffin cups. If making cupcakes, use a large ice cream scoop or 1/3 cup (80 ml) measuring cup to fill the muffin cups 2/3 full.

Bake for 35 to 40 minutes for cakes or 20 to 25 minutes for cupcakes, until a tester inserted in the middle comes out clean. Allow layers to cool completely before removing from the pan; allow cupcakes to cool at least 10 minutes.

To frost layers, it helps to freeze the cake for at least 2 hours before frosting; this will prevent the sides from crumbling into the frosting. Cupcakes may be frosted at room temperature with Coconut Butter Buttercream Frosting (recipe below) and drizzled with melted chocolate. May be frozen.



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Coconut-Butter Buttercream Frosting

With the same light, fluffy texture as traditional buttercream, this recipe makes perfect use of the naturally firm texture of coconut butter. When combined with the liquid ingredients, the final result is a smooth, light frosting that holds its shape at room temperature, without an overpowering coconut flavor.

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup (120 ml) coconut butter, melted, preferably organic
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) natural smooth macadamia or cashew butter, at room temperature
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) unsweetened applesauce
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) light agave nectar
- 10 to 15 drops pure plain or vanilla stevia liquid, or to taste (optional)
- 1 tsp (5 ml) pure vanilla extract
- Pinch fine sea salt
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) unsweetened coconut beverage (the kind that comes in a carton), plus up to 2 Tbsp (30 ml) more, as needed

INSTRUCTIONS

Place all ingredients in a small food processor or blender, and blend until perfectly smooth and creamy. You may need to add a touch more coconut beverage to attain spreading consistency. This frosting will firm up considerably when refrigerated, so if you think you've added too much liquid, try refrigerating for an hour first to see what happens.

If you make the frosting in advance and find it too firm to spread when you remove it from the fridge, simply place back in the processor and blend until spreadable. It will keep, covered, in the refrigerator, up to a week.



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May be frozen. Defrost, overnight, in the refrigerator, and then stir or process again before using.

Variations:

Lemon Coconut Buttercream Frosting: Add finely grated zest of 1 medium lemon, preferably organic, and 1/2 teaspoon pure lemon extract.

Caramel Buttercream Frosting: Replace the applesauce with 1/4 cup (60 ml) homemade unsweetened sweet potato puree and add 1 tablespoon (15 ml) lucuma powder.

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