

PUMPKIN SPICE LATTE CAKE

Ingredients:

3 cups all-purpose flour
1 tbsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
2 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. ginger
1 tsp. allspice
1 tsp. espresso powder or instant coffee
2 cups granulated sugar
½ tsp. salt
1½ sticks unsalted butter [Do not soften in the microwave. I recommend to cut into ½ inch slices onto waxed paper on the countertop, leaving out only 5 to 6 minutes, you do not want it to be too soft. If it does get too soft refrigerate for a few minutes.]
4 large eggs
¼ cup vegetable oil
1 can (15 oz.) pumpkin purée (not pumpkin pie filling)
2 cups re-hydrated cranberries (See below)
½ cup milk
1 tsp. vanilla extract
10 oz. bag of shredded carrots (Grated in food processor into rice-size pieces)
1-1½ cups pecans (roasted on baking sheet in 350-400° oven for 5 min.). Roughly chopped after cooled.

For the Cranberries:

2 cups dried cranberries (soaked and drained; see recipe below)
1 oz. Grand Marnier
1 oz. vanilla extract
2 cups boiling or very hot water

For the Spiced Cream Cheese Frosting:

1½ cups (3 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
2 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese (no need to soften to room temp)
2 tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. (1g) nutmeg
1 tsp. ground ginger *sift if clumpy
1 tsp. allspice
1 tsp. espresso powder (optional but well worth it)
8 cups (2 lbs.) confectioner's sugar, sifted (add more as needed)
2 tsp. vanilla extract

¼ tsp orange blossom water or Fiori di Sicilia (optional)

1 cup roasted pecans, coarsely chopped (if not piping onto cake or cupcakes)

Directions:

Boil water in microwave. Add cranberries to hot water. Add Grand Marnier and vanilla. Let soak for a few hours or overnight. Soaking overnight is best. Drain and set aside. Spread out over paper towels to absorb leftover moisture. [Add some flour in a bowl with the cranberries and roll them around to coat. This will prevent them from sinking to bottom of batter once they're incorporated.]

(This recipe uses the reverse creaming method.) Preheat oven to 350°. Grease & flour three 8-inch pans. I put a sheet of parchment on the bottom of each pan and also grease and flour the parchment paper as well.

Place pecan halves on baking sheet and bake in oven at 400° for 5 min. Remove and let cool. Roughly chop and set aside. [Add 1 tbsp. of flour in a bowl with the pecans and toss them around to coat. This will prevent them from sinking to bottom of batter as well.]

In your mixing bowl add the dry ingredients (flour and the next nine ingredients through the salt). With the mixer on low speed, mix the dry ingredients for 30 seconds so all will be well blended. Add the pieces of butter a few slices at a time. Mix until the dry ingredients are moistened by the butter and look like coarse sand. If you pinch some of the mixture between your fingers it will stick together. Scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl.

In another bowl combine eggs, oil, pumpkin, carrots, milk and vanilla (wet mixture). Whisk until well blended, set aside.

Method is important in this recipe so with the mixer on LOW speed, SLOWLY add approximately ½ of the wet mixture to the dry ingredients. Increase to medium speed for 1½ min. Scrape bottom and sides of the bowl. Add the remaining wet mixture in 2 pourings, beating for 20 seconds after each addition.

Pour evenly into your 3 prepared pans. Bake at 350° for 30-35 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool in pans 25-30 min. Remove cakes from pans. Wrap each layer separately in plastic wrap and put in refrigerator for at least an hour or two. Overnight is best. If not enough time, at least let the cake cool completely before frosting the cake. Very cold cakes take frosting much better and damage to the cake is minimal the colder the layers are.

To Prepare the Frosting:

Using your mixer with paddle attachment, beat the butter and cream cheese until well blended, light and fluffy (about 4-5 minutes at medium to medium-high speed). Add the vanilla and spices. With the mixer on low speed gradually add the confectioners' sugar and mix until it is a good piping consistency. I find it best to add about 1-2 cups at a time. Remember to go slowly so as not to create clouds of powdered sugar. If you have a clean hand towel or large paper towel, cover your bowl before turning on your mixer after adding powdered sugar. Place layer one on your cake round and put frosting evenly across the layer about ¼"-½" high. Place second layer evenly on top of first layer and repeat frosting for next two layers. Evenly spread frosting across top and around all sides of the cake until you are happy with the result. Decorate as you wish. You are the king/queen of your baking!

Once completed, place in refrigerator to chill for at least 1-2 hours. Leave at room temperature for 25-30 minutes before cutting. I usually place the cake on a cake stand before cutting.

Note: If you would like to make cupcakes instead of cake, use ice cream scoop to place batter into cupcake liners until each liner is almost full. Bake at 350° for 18-18½ min. Let cool for at least an hour or more. Frost as desired. Makes between 24-27 cupcakes.