

# DAVID LEBOVITZ

## Devil's Food Cake

8 servings

Adapted from [The Simple Art of Perfect Baking](#) by Flo Braker

The original recipe called for cake flour. Her original amount was **2 cups (200g) sifted cake flour**, which means you sift the flour first, then measure it, if using cups. Or sift it right into the measuring cup, and level it off with a knife. Or just go by weight. You can approximate cake flour by measuring out 2 cups (200g) of flour, then replacing 1/4 cup (40g) of it with an equal amount of cornstarch and sifting them together a few times.

The recipe originally was baked in an 11- x 17-inch (27cm x 43cm) rectangular pan, although I baked it in two 8-inch (20cm) rounds, to layer. If you bake it in a rectangular pan, the baking time will be about 40 minutes.

It's important that the butter in the frosting be *very* soft before mixing it with the chocolate. It's the middle of winter here in Paris, and my kitchen is on the cold side, so I didn't get it to exactly the right consistency and saw a few specks of butter when I spread on the frosting. Note that this recipe uses raw eggs in the frosting. You can use pasteurized eggs if you're avoiding raw eggs, or use my [chocolate ganache frosting recipe](#) instead.

### For the cake:

2 cups (200g) sifted cake or all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup (50g) unsweetened [Dutch-process cocoa powder](#)

(Plus additional flour or cocoa powder for dusting the cake pans)

1/2 cup (125ml) lukewarm water

1/2 cup (125ml) buttermilk (or plain yogurt thinned with a little milk or water)

1/2 cup (125ml) water

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

4 ounces (115g) unsalted butter, at room temperature

1 cup (200g) granulated sugar

1 cup packed (200g) light brown sugar

2 large eggs, at room temperature

**For the frosting:**

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed, softened at room temperature or slightly warmer, if possible (see Note at end of recipe)

4 ounces (115g) unsweetened chocolate, chopped

1 cup (100) powdered sugar

2 tablespoons hot water

2 large eggs, at room temperature

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

To make the cake:

1. Position the rack to the middle or lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. Butter the bottom and sides of two 8-inch cake pans. Dust each with a little flour or cocoa powder, then tap out the excess. Line the bottoms with two circles of parchment paper.
3. Sift the flour, baking soda, and salt together in a small bowl. Set aside.
4. Put the cocoa powder in a small mixing bowl and whisk in 1/2 cup (125ml) of lukewarm water until it's well combined.
5. In a measuring cup (or small bowl), mix together the buttermilk, 1/2 cup (125ml) water, and vanilla.
6. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, or by hand in a medium-size mixing bowl with a silicone spatula, beat the butter on medium speed until it's smooth, about 30-45 seconds. Add the granulated sugar and light brown sugar and mix on low speed until they're combined, then increase the speed of the mixer to medium-high and beat until the mixture is light and fluffy; it'll take about 5-6 minutes to get there. Stop the mixer midway during mixing to scrape down the sides, to make sure everything is getting incorporated.
7. In a small bowl, mix together the eggs with a fork. Reduce the mixer speed to medium speed, then dribble the eggs into the butter slowly, as if you were adding oil to make mayonnaise. If the mixture looks curdled at any time, stop adding the eggs and turn the mixture to high speed to re-emulsify it. Then finish adding the eggs.
8. Continue mixing at medium speed until the batter is light and fluffy, about 1 minute. Stop the mixer and add the cooled cocoa powder mixture, then mix until it's incorporated.

9. Remove the bowl from the mixer and use a spatula to stir in one-quarter of the dry ingredients, then add one-third of the buttermilk mixture. As Flo says here: *“Repeat this procedure, alternating dry and liquid ingredients, ending with the flour. With each addition, scrape the sides of the bowl, and continue mixing until smooth, never adding liquid if any flour is visible.”*
10. Divide the batter into the prepared cake pans. Use a spatula to (as Flo says, again) *“spread the batter, working from the center outward and creating a slightly raised ridge around the outer rim.”*
11. Bake the cakes until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, between 22 and 24 minutes. Let the cakes cool on a wire rack, then run a knife around the inside edges of the pan to release them from the pans. Working with one cake at a time, set a cooling rack on top of the cake and flip both over to release the cake from the pan. Peel off the parchment paper and repeat with the other cake. Let cakes cool completely before frosting.

To make the frosting:

1. Put the softened, room-temperature butter in a medium-size mixing bowl.
2. Place the chocolate in a medium-size heatproof mixing bowl that’s absolutely dry. Set the bowl over a saucepan partially filled with water, one that will fit the bowl snugly on top. Warm the chocolate over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until it’s melted. While the chocolate is melting, have a sifter or mesh strainer ready.
3. Remove the bowl of chocolate from the saucepan. Place the powdered sugar in the sifter or mesh strainer and sift the sugar over the melted chocolate without stirring. Add the 2 tablespoons of hot water, then gently stir to combine. Add the eggs one at a time, stirring in the first egg completely before adding the second one, then stir in the vanilla. Don’t beat the eggs in too vigorously as you don’t want to aerate the chocolate; you just want to incorporate the eggs.
4. Add about one-quarter of the melted chocolate to the softened butter and stir it in with a silicone spatula until it’s incorporated. Add the rest of the melted chocolate and stir until smooth. If there are stubborn bits of butter, mash them against the side of the bowl with the spatula to mix and meld them with the chocolate.
5. To frost the cake, put one layer of the cake on a serving platter. Spread 1/2 cup (100g) of the frosting over the top of it. Set the second layer of cake on top of the frosting. Spread the remaining frosting over the sides and top of the cake.

**Storage:** Store the cake at room temperature, under a cake dome or an inverted bowl, for 2-3 days.