

Carrot Cake

Makes 12 servings

1 1/4 cup vegetable oil (I like avocado oil)
2 cups sugar
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 tsp baking powder
2 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
4 eggs
1 pound carrots, peeled and grated
1 cup coarsely chopped pecans
1 cup dark raisins (optional)

FILLING:

1 cup sugar
1/4 cup flour
1 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup unsalted butter
1/4 tsp salt
1 cup chopped pecans
2 tsp vanilla

FROSTING:

4 ounces shredded coconut
1 8-ounce package cream cheese, room temperature
1 cup butter, room temperature
3 cups powdered sugar
1 tsp vanilla

Preheat oven to 325°F. Lightly oil or coat with non-stick spray 3 8"-round baking pans. Line with parchment paper.

Combine oil and sugar in bowl of stand mixer. Beat well. Sift together dry ingredients in a medium bowl. Sift half the dry ingredients into the sugar mixture; blend well. Sift

in remaining dry ingredients, alternating with eggs; mix well after each addition. Stir in carrots, pecans and, if desired, raisins. Divide batter evenly between the three pans. Bake for 50 minutes or until tester comes out clean. Remove from oven and cool on racks for 15 minutes, then remove from pans. Remove parchment carefully so that cake doesn't stick to parchment paper.

While cake is baking, make filling by combining sugar and flour in small heavy saucepan. Gradually stir in cream. Add butter and salt. Cook over very low heat, stirring frequently, until mixture comes just to a simmer (this may take 30 minutes). Let simmer 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat and cool to lukewarm. Stir in nuts and vanilla. Cool completely, ideally overnight.

To make frosting, spread coconut on sheet pan and toast at 300°F for 10-15 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool.

Combine cream cheese and butter in food processor or mixer. Add powdered sugar and vanilla and mix until perfectly smooth. Refrigerate if too soft to spread immediately.

To assemble, place one cake layer on a cake board or platter. Spread pecan filling to within 1/2" of the edge of the cake. Top with another cake layer, more filling and then the top layer (you will not need to use all of the filling but it's better to make this much as a half-recipe just doesn't cook up as well). Frost the tops and sides with the frosting. Pat toasted coconut onto the sides of the cake.

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