

Tropic Like It's Hot Cake

INGREDIENTS

For the cake

- 2 1/4 c. (335 g) all-purpose flour
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- 1/4 tsp. table salt
- 3/4 c. (170 g) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1 1/2 c. (315 g) granulated white sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 1 tbsp. vanilla extract
- 1 1/3 c. (310 ml) milk
- Yellow, green, and red food coloring
- Cooking spray

For the frosting

- 4 oz. (1/2 cup) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 8 oz. cream cheese, cold
- 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 16 oz. powdered or confectioners' sugar

For the magic

- 1 3/4 c. pink, orange, green, and yellow sprinkle explosion mix
- 1 lb. dried sweetened shredded or flaked coconut
- Food coloring: brown
- 1 paper umbrella (you can also use an old-fashioned candy stick)
- 1 paper straw
- 1 c. crushed graham crackers for the sand (about 6 full rectangles)

DIRECTIONS

BAKE THE CAKE

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C) and put the oven rack in the middle of the oven. If you are using a convection oven, set it to 325° (165°C).
2. Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl and whisk until they are really mixed together. You have to mix all the dry ingredients together first, so that there are no clumps in your batter, which will create white spots. Set aside.
3. In a separate bowl, use an electric mixer on medium speed to blend the butter and sugar together, until they become fluffy. Make sure to scrape the sides of the bowl with a spatula so it's all mixed in from the sides.
4. Add the eggs, one at a time, to the butter-sugar mixture, with the mixer on medium speed. Again, make sure to scrape the sides of the bowl. Add the vanilla to the milk and set it aside.
5. Mix about one-third of your dry ingredients into the butter-sugar-egg mixture, then blend in half of the milk, always mixing on medium speed.
6. Mix in the second third of the dry ingredients, then the remaining milk mixture.
7. Stop the mixer for a few seconds and use a spatula to push down anything sticking to the sides of the bowl as you go, then mix in the last of the flour mixture. Make sure it's all mixed in from the sides and everything is smooth. You don't want any lumps, but don't overmix it—stop the mixer as soon as the batter is smooth.
8. To bake the cake, divide the batter into three portions. Dye the portions yellow, green, and orange if you'd like. Pour the batters into one greased 6-inch (15-cm) round cake pan and two

greased 6-inch (15-cm) oven-safe glass or stainless-steel mixing bowls. First bake the bowl cakes for 12 minutes, then turn and bake for another 12 minutes. Bake the round cake for 10 minutes, then turn and bake for another 10 minutes.

9. Let the cakes cool in the pans for 5 to 10 minutes. (When they're warm, they're really fragile, and that's when they tend to break.) Then flip them over onto a baking sheet or cooling rack and let them cool completely before you frost them.

MAKE THE FROSTING

1. Use an electric mixer on medium speed to blend the butter until it is smooth. Add the cream cheese and blend it together until there are no lumps. Then add the vanilla. Stop the mixer and use a spatula to push down anything sticking to the sides of the bowl, making sure it's all mixed in from the sides and everything is smooth.
2. Mix in the powdered sugar a little bit at a time on the lowest speed—otherwise it will fly everywhere! Use the spatula to push down anything sticking to the sides of the bowl, making sure it's all mixed in from the sides and everything is smooth.
3. Use right away. Technically the frosting will last at least a week in the refrigerator, but fresh frosting is key! It tastes and feels so much better.

MAKE THE MAGIC

1. First, dye the coconut: Put the coconut in a glass or stainless-steel mixing bowl. Sprinkle on about 2 tablespoons brown food coloring and toss with your hands or a metal spoon to coat, adding color as needed until the coconut is fully dyed. (If you use your hands, wear plastic gloves, or else your hands will be dyed.)
2. Now build a three-layer coconut explosion cake! With the fully cooked cakes, build the cake using the two bowl cakes as your top and bottom and the flat layer between them; cut the hole for the explosion in the flat layer and the bottom bowl layer. (The top bowl should be upside-down, so that the end result is spherical like a coconut.) Don't forget to add the sprinkles to the center, for the explosion! Coat the outside of the cake with a thick layer of white frosting so that the coconut will stick. Cover the cake with the dyed coconut—but be careful to leave a circle of white frosting on the top, so that it looks like a coconut you've cut open.
3. Make it extra beachy, if you like: Garnish the cake with a paper umbrella and a straw, then sprinkle the graham crackers around the base, so it looks like it's in a bed of sand.