



## Red Velvet Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting

December/January 2007

**WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:** Beyond Red Velvet Cake's shocking bright color, there's something more—an extra-tender cake and fluffy cream cheese frosting, which we achieved by using a two unexpected ingredients: buttermilk and vinegar. They reacted with our recipe's baking soda to create a fine, tender crumb. We also zeroed in on the perfect amount of cocoa that would add a dark hue to our Red Velvet Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting recipe and also lend it a pleasant cocoa flavor.

**Serves 12**

### INGREDIENTS

#### Cake

- 2 1/4** cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2** teaspoons baking soda
- Pinch salt
- 1** cup buttermilk
- 1** tablespoon white vinegar
- 1** teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2** large eggs
- 2** tablespoons natural cocoa powder
- 2** tablespoons red food coloring
- 12** tablespoons (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 1/2** cups granulated sugar

#### Frosting

- 16** tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 4** cups confectioners' sugar
- 16** ounces cream cheese, cut into 8 pieces, softened
- 1 1/2** teaspoons vanilla extract
- Pinch salt

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. **For the cake:** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour two 9-inch cake pans. Whisk flour, baking soda, and salt in medium bowl. Whisk buttermilk, vinegar, vanilla, and eggs in large measuring cup. Mix cocoa with food coloring in small bowl until a smooth paste forms.
2. With electric mixer on medium-high speed, beat butter and sugar together until fluffy, about 2 minutes, scraping down

bowl as necessary. Add one-third of flour mixture and beat on medium-low speed until just incorporated, about 30 seconds. Add half of buttermilk mixture and beat on low speed until combined, about 30 seconds. Scrape down bowl as necessary and repeat with half of remaining flour mixture, remaining buttermilk mixture, and finally remaining flour mixture. Scrape down bowl, add cocoa mixture, and beat on medium speed until completely incorporated, about 30 seconds. Using rubber spatula, give batter final stir. Scrape into prepared pans and bake until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, about 25 minutes. Cool cakes in pans 10 minutes then turn out onto rack to cool completely, at least 30 minutes.

**3. For the frosting:** With electric mixer, beat butter and sugar on medium-high speed until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add cream cheese, one piece at a time, and beat until incorporated, about 30 seconds. Beat in vanilla and salt. Refrigerate until ready to use.

4. When cakes are cooled, spread about 2 cups frosting on one cake layer. Top with second cake layer and spread top and sides of cake with remaining frosting. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve, up to 3 days.

---

#### TO DYE FOR

We prefer liquid food coloring to gel or paste colors; it is much easier to incorporate and better distributes the cocoa powder. Look for the large bottle of McCormick Red Food Color (found with the vanilla extract) so you won't have to buy the multipack and be left, like we were, with dozens of bottles of blue, green, and yellow coloring.

---

#### BARELY RED

With just cocoa powder and no red food coloring, the cake has only a faint red hue.



---

#### REDDER

Adding a tablespoon of food coloring gives the cake muted red color.



---

#### REDDEST

With two tablespoons of food coloring, the cake has a deep, vibrant red color.



America's Test Kitchen is a 2,500-square-foot kitchen located just outside of Boston. It is the home of *Cook's Country* and *Cook's Illustrated* magazines and is the workday destination for more than three dozen test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to test recipes until we understand how and why they work and arrive at the best version. We also test kitchen equipment and supermarket ingredients in search of brands that offer the best value and performance. You can watch us work by tuning in to America's Test Kitchen ([www.americastestkitchen.com](http://www.americastestkitchen.com)) or *Cook's Country* by America's Test Kitchen on public television.