

My Ultimate Carrot Cake Recipe (uses carrots in two ways)

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Adriana

Carrot Lover's Cake with ButterCream Cheese Frosting



Ingredients

Carrot Puree:

- 6 tablespoons (84g) unsalted butter ( carrot puree)
- 4 1/2 cups (672g) carrots, peeled & sliced 1/4 in. ( carrot puree)
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda ( carrot puree)
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt ( carrot puree)

Carrot Cake:

- 2 cups (222g) carrots, finely grated
- 3 1/2 cups (405g) all-purpose flour, unbleached
- 3 3/4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt (I use Diamond Crystal Kosher, but if you use fine salt, add half the volume)
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon allspice
- 1 1/2 cups (360g) caramelized carrot puree*
- 1/2 cup (84g) sour cream, full fat
- 1 1/2 teaspoons (7g) vanilla extract
- 7 1/2 tablespoons (105g) unsalted butter
- 2 1/4 cups (480g) brown sugar (light or dark)
- 4 1/2 tablespoons (54g) oil (canola or vegetable)
- 6 large (102g) egg yolks
- 3 large (150g) eggs
- 1 1/2 cups add-ins, see footnote**


ButterCream Cheese Frosting (makes about 7.5 cups):

- 3 3/4 cups (852g) unsalted butter, cold from the fridge
- 5 3/4 tablespoons (30g) dried milk powder
- 2 1/2 tablespoons (35g) water
- 30 tablespoons (425g) cream cheese, full fat***
- 2 cups (375g) white granulated sugar
- 3 3/4 tablespoons (22g) dried egg white powder or Wiltons meringue powder
- 1 1/4 teaspoons (2g) lemon juice (optional but recommended)****

- 3/4 teaspoon (2g) kosher salt (I use Diamond Crystal)

Instructions

Carrot Cake

- 1. Make the caramelized carrot puree (Use the ingredients labeled: "  carrot puree"):**
 - Preheat the oven to 400°F/205°C.
 - In a small baking dish, add the butter and place in the oven until melted for a few minutes. Remove the pan and carefully stir in the baking soda and salt. Toss the carrots in the melted butter.
 - Cover with foil and bake for 35-45 minutes. Remove the foil during the last 10 minutes to get some extra caramelization. You'll know they're done when the carrots are slightly caramelized (browned) on their surfaces and easily mashed with a fork.
 - Puree the carrots using a blender or food processor.
 - Set your carrot puree aside to cool for at least 15 minutes before using. You can also do this step ahead of time and store your carrot puree in the fridge in an airtight container.
- 2. Prep oven and pans for cake:** Preheat your oven to 350°F/180°C.
Butter the insides of three cake pans and line the bottoms with a circle of parchment paper. Dust a very light coating of flour inside the pans.
- 3. Grate carrots:** Using the small holes on a box grater, finely grate your carrots. Place them into a bowl and cover so they don't dry out. Don't blot them dry - we need that carrot goodness, juices and all to flavor our cake.
- 4. Combine dry ingredients:** In a small bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and allspice for 30 seconds. Set bowl aside.
- 5. Combine wet ingredients:** In a measuring cup, stir your cooled carrot puree, sour cream, and vanilla until there are no lumps of sour cream. Set that aside as well.
- 6. Cream fats with sugar:** In a mixer with the paddle attachment, beat the softened butter and brown sugar on medium-high speed for about two minutes, scraping down the bowl at least once. Pour in the oil and beat for another 2 minutes or until the butter-sugar-oil mixture is more aerated and lighter in color.
- 7. Add eggs:** On the lowest speed, add the yolks, mixing just to combine. Add in the egg(s), mixing until the mixture no longer looks curdled and is smooth and light brown.
- 8. Alternate dry and wet ingredients:** Add the dry in 3 additions and the wet in 2 additions as follows:
 1. Add half of your flour mixture to the stand mixer. On low speed, mix until all the flour incorporates. Scrape down with a spatula.
 2. Add half of your sour cream-carrot mixture, mix on low speed, and scrape.
 3. Add half of your remaining flour mixture, mix on low speed, and scrape.
 4. Add the rest of your sour cream-carrot mixture, mix on low, and scrape.
 5. Last, add the rest of the flour, the finely shredded carrots, and your add-ins (if using). I like to fold in with a spatula to avoid overmixing. Make sure to break up all the shredded carrots - they like to clump together in the batter.
- 9. Pour batter into pans:** Evenly distribute the batter into the buttered and lined pans, using a spatula to even out the surfaces so the cakes bake flat.
- 10. Bake cakes:** Bake for about 30-35 minutes and start checking at 25 minutes. If you do not have three pans, you can bake them one after another. Let the batter sit out at room temperature until you're ready to bake it.
The cakes are done when a skewer inserted into the centers of the cake comes out with moist crumbs, or the internal temperature is 200°F/93°C.

11. **Cool slightly and wrap:** Allow the cake to cool in the pans slightly, about 10 minutes. Once you can lift the cake pans with your hands, release the cakes from the pans, peel off the parchment, and wrap the cakes in plastic wrap. The cakes will still be warm, but this will preserve the moisture levels of this cake before assembly. I do this even if I'm assembling right after baking. Just make sure they are entirely cooled to the touch before adding frosting.

ButterCream Cheese Frosting

1. Remove your cold butter from the fridge and cut it into 1-inch chunks. Place the butter back into the refrigerator.
2. In a small bowl, add water to the milk powder to hydrate. Stir to get rid of all the big lumps. The smaller chunks should dissolve by the time we need this and it should look like a thick paste. Set the bowl aside.
3. Set up a double boiler that allows the bowl of your stand mixer to sit on top of the steam. Bring the water to a boil.
4. Meanwhile, add the cream cheese (cold from the fridge is fine) and white granulated sugar to the bowl of the stand mixer. Using the whisk attachment, whisk on medium speed until the sugar is completely incorporated, at least 2 minutes. The cream cheese will turn more yellow, start to loosen up and be grainy from the sugar. Set aside until your water heats up, at least 5 minutes.
5. Once you see a good amount of fog rising from the pot, place your stand mixer bowl on top. Using a spatula, stir this mixture periodically, scraping the sides.
Heat your cream cheese mixture until it reaches 180°F/82°C.

Feel the mixture with your fingers. It will be hot, so please be careful and take a small amount off the spatula. When you slide the mixture between your fingers, you should feel no lumps or grains of sugar. (If so, you need to continue cooking.) When it's done, to me, it feels like Vaseline moisturizer - very slick. It will look like a yellow mixture thickened with cornstarch.

6. Carefully remove the hot bowl from the double boiler and stir the powdered egg whites and the milk powder paste.
Run the mixer with the whisk attachment for 5 minutes on high speed. At the end of this step, the cream cheese will still be yellow but have the thick texture of Elmer's glue.
7. With the mixer on medium speed, drop in your chunks of cold butter. Once all the butter is added, turn the mixer to high.

This is the emulsification step - so you'll see a yellow mess of chunks in your bowl gradually turn to a creamy off-white color as the butter takes in the cream cheese.

At the end, the frosting will have come together, be lighter in color, but full of air pockets because we were using the whisk.

The timing will depend on the quantity and power of your mixer, but this step should take anywhere from 1-5 minutes.

8. Now let's flavor and smooth out our buttercream. Switch over to the paddle attachment. Add your lemon juice if using (it's so good, I highly suggest it if you love tangy cream cheese.) Let the mixer run at low speed to smooth out all the air pockets - about a minute.
If the frosting is too soft, place your bowl in the fridge for about 5 minutes. Then, mix on low speed with the paddle attachment until it's smooth. Remember, this is an emulsion, so it may look liquid when too hot or like it has tiny curds when it's too cold. Just keep mixing until the butter brings in the cream cheese; it will come together.
I've tested storing the frosting in the fridge overnight, letting it come to room temperature, and re-

smoothing with the paddle attachment, which worked very well. My baking community on Instagram has also told me that you can freeze this buttercream.

Assembly and decorating:

Please see the video I've linked above to see how you can put this cake together.



Notes from Adriana

*You may get a little more carrot puree that you need from the initial roasting step. Roast using the amounts indicated for the carrot puree and then after that, measure out how much you need.

**Dried fruit and nuts are "add-ins" for carrot cake and seem to be pretty divisive (you either love or hate them in your cake). This recipe with or without add-ins to suit any palate. You can add up to the total volume indicated in your recipe. Things that work well are: raisins, currants, toasted walnuts or pecans, chopped candied ginger, a pinch of finely grated orange zest, or shredded coconut. My fav: raisins, toasted pecans, and just a touch of orange zest. Note that if you do add extra ingredients, make sure to smooth out your batter if you're baking cakes or mini cakes so they bake evenly. (This is not necessary for cupcakes) Also, it may take a couple minutes more to bake, so be sure to use a skewer test to ensure there's no uncooked batter in the centers.

***The cream cheese brands that work best are: Lucerne, Walmart's Great Value (my favorite), or Target's Good and Gather. Trader Joe's was a runner up, but gave a more yellow frosting and was a tad bit more runny. I have now tested and confirmed that Philadelphia full fat cream cheese works great. Also tested Philadelphia in the tub - the result was every so slightly runnier in the end. Still workable for piping and smoothing, but if you have issues, add a little bit more butter to offset the decrease in fat content they use for this kind of cream cheese.

**** The citric acid contained in lemon juice increases the acidity or "tanginess" of cream cheese without adding a lemon flavor. It's delicious if you love a cream cheese flavor - you can sub vanilla extract, but it does add an extra flavor element on top of the cream cheese instead of enhancing it like lemon juice.