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martha stewart pound cake cream cheese

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Discover the Classic Charm of Martha Stewart’s Pound Cake with Cream Cheese

When you think of timeless desserts that have stood the test of time, a buttery, dense pound cake topped with a silky cream cheese frosting is hard to beat. In the world of culinary artistry, few names resonate with trust and elegance as strongly as Martha Stewart. Her signature pound cake, crowned with a luscious cream cheese glaze, has become a staple for celebratory occasions and cozy family gatherings alike. This article invites you on a culinary journey through the history, technique, and secrets behind Martha Stewart’s beloved pound cake with cream cheese, offering a step by step guide that will help you recreate the indulgent treat in your own kitchen.

Why Martha Stewart’s Pound Cake Stands Out

Martha Stewart’s reputation as a household name in cooking, entertaining, and home décor stems from her meticulous attention to detail and commitment to high quality ingredients. Her pound cake recipe, often shared in her cookbooks, magazines, and television shows, exemplifies her philosophy: simple, honest ingredients combined with precise technique yield a dessert that feels both comforting and sophisticated.

- Balance of Flavors: The classic batter delivers a rich, buttery base that is subtly sweet, while the cream cheese frosting adds a tangy counterpoint.
- Texture Mastery: The cake’s dense crumb is complemented by the silky frosting, creating a harmonious mouthfeel.
- Versatility: This base can be adapted for holiday celebrations, birthdays, or a quiet afternoon treat.

Ingredients for Martha Stewart’s Pound Cake with Cream Cheese

Below is a breakdown of the ingredients you’ll need to recreate this iconic dessert. All measurements are given in U.S. customary units, but metric equivalents can be easily derived if you prefer.

For the Pound Cake

1. 4 cups all purpose flour (plus extra for dusting)
2. 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
3. ½ teaspoon baking soda
4. ½ teaspoon salt
5. 1 cup unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
6. 2 cups granulated sugar
7. 4 large eggs, at room temperature
8. 1 cup whole milk, at room temperature
9. 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
10. 1 cup fresh lemon zest (optional, for a citrusy twist)

For the Cream Cheese Frosting

1. 8 ounces cream cheese, softened to room temperature
2. ¼ cup unsalted butter, softened
3. 2 cups powdered sugar, sifted

4. 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
5. 1–2 tablespoons heavy cream or milk (as needed for consistency)
6. Pinch of salt (optional, enhances flavor)

Preparation Steps: From Mixing to Serving

Step 1: Preheat and Prepare

Preheat your oven to 325°F (160°C). Grease a 10 inch bundt pan or a 9 x 5 inch loaf pan with butter and dust with flour, tapping out any excess. This ensures a clean release of the cake once it's baked.

Step 2: Sift Dry Ingredients

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Sifting eliminates lumps and ensures even distribution of leavening agents, which is crucial for a uniform crumb.

Step 3: Cream Butter and Sugar

Using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat the softened butter and sugar together until the mixture is pale, fluffy, and has increased in volume—usually about 4–5 minutes. This aeration locks in air that will give the cake its tender structure.

Step 4: Add Eggs One at a Time

Incorporate eggs into the creamed mixture, adding them one at a time and ensuring each is fully mixed before adding the next. This gradual addition prevents curdling and promotes a smooth batter.

Step 5: Combine Wet and Dry Mixtures

Alternate adding the dry ingredients and the milk to the batter, beginning and ending with the dry mix. Stir gently after each addition, just until combined. Overmixing can develop gluten, resulting in a tougher cake.

Step 6: Incorporate Vanilla and Lemon Zest

Fold in the vanilla extract and, if using, the fresh lemon zest. The zest adds a bright, aromatic note that cuts through the richness of the butter.

Step 7: Bake the Cake

Pour the batter into the prepared pan and tap the pan lightly on the counter to release any air pockets. Bake for 55–65 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. A good rule of thumb is to start checking at the 50 minute mark.

Step 8: Cool Before Frosting

Allow the cake to cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then turn it onto a wire rack to cool completely. This step prevents condensation from forming on the frosting, which could cause it to slide off.

Step 9: Prepare the Cream Cheese Frosting

In a large bowl, beat the softened cream cheese and butter together until smooth. Gradually add the sifted powdered sugar, one cup at a time, mixing well after each addition. Stir in vanilla extract, a pinch of salt, and enough heavy cream or milk to achieve a spreadable consistency—usually 1–2 tablespoons.

Step 10: Frost the Cake

Once the cake has cooled, spread a thin layer of frosting across the top. This "crumb coat" helps seal the cake's surface and prevents the final frosting from sinking into the crumb. Chill for 15 minutes, then apply the final thick

layer of frosting, smoothing it with a spatula or knife.

Tips for Achieving the Perfect Pound Cake

- Room Temperature Ingredients: Butter, eggs, and cream cheese should all be softened to room temperature to ensure even mixing and proper emulsification.
- Don't Overmix: Overworking the batter can lead to a dense, rubbery texture. Mix just until the flour is incorporated.
- Use a Bundt Pan for Easy Release: A bundt pan's shape allows the cake to cool evenly and makes it easier to remove without breaking the crumb.
- Check the Oven Temperature: Use an oven thermometer to verify that your oven runs at the set temperature—over high temperatures can brown the crust too quickly.
- Adjust Sweetness to Taste: If you prefer a slightly sweeter cake, consider adding a tablespoon of honey or maple syrup to the batter.
- Flavor Variations: Add a teaspoon of espresso powder for a mocha twist, or swirl in a layer of raspberry jam before frosting for a fruity surprise.

Creative Variations and Serving Ideas

Martha Stewart's pound cake with cream cheese is a versatile canvas. Below are several ways to customize and elevate this classic dessert.

1. Lemon Zest Infused Cake with Lemon Cream Cheese Frosting

Swap the vanilla extract in the frosting for lemon zest and a splash of lemon juice. This creates a cohesive citrus theme that brightens the flavor profile.

2. Coffee Infused Pound Cake

Add 1–2 teaspoons of instant espresso powder to the batter. Pair with a coffee flavored cream cheese frosting (a dash of instant coffee or a spoonful of espresso) for a decadent, adult friendly dessert.

3. Berry Topped Variation

Layer fresh strawberries, blueberries, or raspberries between the cake and frosting. Drizzle with a simple berry glaze or a light honey lemon sauce.

4. Chocolate Swirl Pound Cake

Fold in a few tablespoons of melted dark chocolate into the batter, or drizzle melted chocolate over the frosted cake for an indulgent finish.

5. Savory Take Away

For a lighter version, reduce the butter to ¾ cup and add ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese to the batter. Serve with a side of fresh fruit or a light salad.

Healthful Tweaks Without Sacrificing Flavor

While the classic recipe is undeniably delicious, there are a few adjustments you can make to align the cake with modern health considerations.

- Whole Grain Flour: Substitute ½ cup of all purpose flour with whole wheat flour for added fiber.
- Reduce Sugar: Cut the sugar in the batter by ¼ cup and use a natural sweetener like maple syrup or agave nectar.

- Lighten the Frosting: Use low fat cream cheese and replace half of the powdered sugar with an equal amount of powdered erythritol.
- Add Nuts or Seeds: Incorporate chopped walnuts or sunflower seeds into the batter for texture and nutritional value.

Martha Stewart's Kitchen Philosophy Behind the Pound Cake

Beyond the recipe itself, Martha Stewart's approach to baking emphasizes patience, precision, and the celebration of simple pleasures. She often speaks about the importance of allowing a cake to "rest" after baking—a period where the crumb settles and flavors meld. This concept is mirrored in the step by step process above, where cooling times and careful frosting application are essential to achieving the signature mouthfeel.

Her love for seasonal ingredients is evident in the optional lemon zest or fresh berries that can be added to the cake, allowing the dessert to adapt to the time of year and the occasion.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I use a loaf pan instead of a bundt pan?

Yes, a loaf pan works well. The cake may take a few minutes longer to bake, so keep an eye on it. The final texture will be slightly different, but the flavor remains unchanged.

What if my cake doesn't rise evenly?

Ensure all ingredients are at room temperature and that you haven't overmixed the batter. Also, avoid opening the oven door frequently during baking, as this can cause temperature fluctuations.

How long does the cake keep?

Store the frosted cake in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days. For longer storage, refrigerate the cake for up to a week. Re warm slightly before serving if desired.

Can I freeze the cake?

Yes, you can freeze both the cake and the frosting separately. Freeze the cake in a tightly sealed container for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and let it return to room temperature before frosting.

Final Thoughts and Serving Suggestions

Martha Stewart's pound cake with cream cheese is more than a dessert—it's a testament to the power of classic techniques and quality ingredients. Whether you're preparing it for a holiday gathering, a birthday celebration, or a quiet afternoon treat, the process itself is rewarding, and the final result is a cake that delights the senses.

Serve slices on a warm plate, perhaps with a dusting of powdered sugar or a drizzle of fresh berry compote. Pair it with a cup of coffee or a glass of chilled white wine for an elegant finish. Let the rich, buttery crumb and silky cream cheese frosting transport you to the comforting kitchens of Martha Stewart's own culinary sanctuary.

Enjoy the art of baking and the joy of sharing a slice of this timeless classic with friends and family.

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