

CHECKERBOARD CAKE

INGREDIENTS

for the vanilla cake

1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 teaspoons table salt
1 cup granulated sugar
1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter, softened but slightly cool, cut into 12 pieces
3 large eggs
3/4 cups milk
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

for the chocolate cake

4 1/2 ounces high-quality bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
9 tablespoons (1 stick plus 1 tablespoon) unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup confectioners' sugar
6 large eggs, separated, at room temperature
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 cup all-purpose flour

for the vanilla frosting

8 ounces (1 package) cream cheese, softened to room temperature
1 stick unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
3 cups confectioners sugar

for the chocolate frosting

1/2 cup butter, room temperature
3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa
2 cup confectioners' sugar
3 tablespoons milk
1 tsp. vanilla

You will also need: square or rectangular cake pans at least 3 inches high and a ruler

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350F. Prepare your square or rectangular pans with cooking spray

In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine the flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar on low speed. Add the butter, 1 piece at a time, and combine until the mixture resembles coarse sand. Add the eggs, 1 at time, and mix until fully combined.

Add the milk and vanilla, increase the speed to medium, and mix until the batter is light, fluffy and free of lumps. Fill the prepared pan 3/4 full with cake batter and bake until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cupcake comes out clean, about 38-40 minutes. Cool the cake in the pan(s) for at least 1 hour and then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

Next make your chocolate cake: In the top part of a double boiler over very hot, but not simmering, water, or in a microwave at medium power, melt the chocolate. Remove from the heat or the oven, and let stand, stirring often, until cool. Beat the butter in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle blade on medium-high speed until smooth, about 1 minute. On low speed, beat in the confectioners' sugar. Return the speed to medium-high and beat until light in color and texture, about 2 minutes. Beat in the egg yolks, one at a time, scraping down the sides of the bowl. Beat in the chocolate and vanilla.

Beat the egg whites and granulated sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on high speed just until they form soft, shiny peaks. Do not overbeat. Stir about one fourth of the beaten whites into the chocolate mixture to lighten it, then fold in the remaining whites, leaving a few visible wisps of whites. Sift half of the flour over the chocolate mixture, and fold in with a rubber spatula. Repeat with the remaining flour. Fill the prepared pan 3/4 full with cake batter and bake until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cupcake comes out clean, about 38-40 minutes. Cool the cake in the pan(s) for at least 1 hour and then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

While your second cake is cooling, start making your frostings. For the vanilla, cream the cream cheese, butter, and vanilla in the bowl of your stand mixer. Add the sugar and beat until smooth. For the chocolate, cream butter in small mixer bowl. Add cocoa and confectioners' sugar alternately with milk; beat to spreading consistency (additional tablespoon milk may be needed). Blend in vanilla.

Now comes the hard part: Assembling. Using your ruler, measure and cut 1 inch x 1 inch x 4-6 inch strips from your finished cakes. For this one, I made them 1x1x4 so that I could have a completely square cake, but if you want a more rectangular cake, feel free to make the strips longer. You will need 8 of both chocolate and vanilla. Then, using the vanilla frosting as glue, assemble the cake so that looking at it from one end, it makes a checkerboard. Frost with a crumb coat and refrigerate for at least one hour. Finally, put on your second layer of frosting and decorate.

(Note: I put a little mark with chocolate on the side from which the cake should be cut to get the full checkerboard effect when sliced).