

Mary Todd's Courting Cake

Makes one 8-inch layer cake

Courtesy of Sur La Table Chef Angie Lee, for demo on February 20, 2016

For the caramel sugar syrup:

½ cup granulated sugar

½ cup hot water

For the cake:

1 cup granulated sugar

1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature

3 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 ½ cups cake flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

For the glaze:

½ cup unsalted butter

1 cup dark brown sugar

⅓ cup whole milk

2 cups confectioners' sugar

Chopped black walnuts, toasted (optional, for topping)

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter and flour two 8-inch round cake pans and line with parchment paper.

Prepare the caramel syrup: Add the sugar to a heavy saucepan and heat over medium heat. Stir continuously with a silicon spatula until the sugar melts and turns a very dark brown. Add the hot water and continue to stir until the sugar dissolves. Remove from the heat and allow to cool.

Make the cake: Place the butter and sugar to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment. With the mixer on medium high speed, cream the butter and sugar together until pale in color and fluffy in texture. Add the eggs and vanilla extract and mix to incorporate, stopping and scraping down the bowl and paddle with a silicone spatula as needed.

In a separate bowl, sift together the baking powder, flour and salt. Add a third of the flour mixture to the butter-sugar bowl and mix, followed by half of the cooled caramel syrup. Repeat with another third of the flour mixture, and the remaining half of the syrup. Mix in the final third of the flour mixture.

Divide the batter between the two prepared cake pans and bake for 45 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean. Allow the cakes to cool in the pan for 15 minutes, then remove the cakes from the pans and place on wire racks to cool completely.

While the cakes bake and cool, make the glaze: Melt the butter in a heavy saucepan. Add the dark brown sugar and cook over low heat for 2 or 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Carefully add the milk and bring to a boil. Cool to lukewarm, then transfer to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment. With the mixer on low speed, gradually add in the powdered sugar. Increase the mixer speed and beat vigorously until the mixture is smooth.

Once the cakes are cooled, place one of the two layer cakes onto a wire rack set over a rimmed baking sheet. Pour a small pool of glaze onto the top of one of the two layer cakes and spread with an offset spatula to cover the top of the layer. Place the second cake on top and pour the remaining glaze over the top, allowing it to flow over and down the exterior of the cake. If the glaze has cooled too much, you may need to use an offset spatula to spread the glaze. Garnish with toasted black walnuts, if using, and serve.

Recipe courtesy of Sur La Table chef Angie Lee, adapted from Mary Gosford's The Missouri Traveler Cookbook, published in 1958 by Farrar, Straus & Cudahy



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