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Martha Stewart Pound Cake Cream Cheese

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The Timeless Appeal of Martha Stewart's Cream Cheese Pound Cake

Few desserts evoke the same sense of comforting nostalgia as a perfectly baked pound cake. Dense, buttery, and remarkably tender, it is a staple of Southern baking and home kitchens across America. Among the countless variations, one recipe stands out for its exceptional texture and flavor: the Martha Stewart Pound Cake with Cream Cheese. This version elevates the classic by incorporating cream cheese, which adds a subtle tang, an incredibly moist crumb, and a richness that is simply irresistible. Whether you are a seasoned baker or a curious beginner, mastering this recipe is a rewarding journey into the heart of classic baking.

This article explores everything you need to know about Martha Stewart's cream cheese pound cake. We will delve into why this particular recipe works so well, break down the key ingredients and techniques, and offer tips to ensure your cake turns out perfectly every time. We will also discuss variations, serving suggestions, and the secret to achieving that signature golden crust.

Why Cream Cheese Makes the Perfect Pound Cake

Traditional pound cake recipes rely on a simple ratio of one pound each of flour, butter, sugar, and eggs. While delicious, these cakes can sometimes be a bit dry or dense. The addition of cream cheese transforms the cake in several important ways:

- Moisture: Cream cheese contains a higher percentage of water and fat than butter alone. This extra moisture prevents the cake from drying out, even after a few days.
- Tenderness: The fat in cream cheese coats the flour proteins, inhibiting gluten development. This results in a finer, more tender crumb.
- Flavor: The subtle tanginess of cream cheese balances the sweetness of the sugar and the richness of the butter, creating a more complex and sophisticated flavor profile.
- Structure: Cream cheese adds stability to the batter, helping the cake rise evenly and maintain a beautiful domed top without cracking excessively.

Martha Stewart's version captures all these benefits. Her recipe is famously reliable, producing a cake with a velvety interior and a slightly crisp, buttery crust. It is a dessert that tastes as good as it looks—and it looks stunning on any table.

The Martha Stewart Cream Cheese Pound Cake Recipe: A Closer Look

Before we dive into the step-by-step process, let's examine the core ingredients. This recipe is built on precision, so understanding each component is key to success.

Key Ingredients

- Unsalted Butter: 3 sticks (1½ cups), at room temperature. Using unsalted butter allows you to control the salt level. The butter must be soft but not melted, so it creams properly with the sugar.
- Cream Cheese: One 8-ounce block, at room temperature. Full-fat cream cheese is essential for the best texture and flavor. Low-fat versions contain more water and can make the cake gummy.
- Granulated Sugar: 3 cups. The large amount of sugar not only sweetens but also helps create a tender crumb by interfering with gluten formation.
- Large Eggs: 6 eggs, at room temperature. Eggs provide structure and leavening. Room-temperature eggs incorporate more easily into the batter, creating a homogeneous emulsion.
- All-Purpose Flour: 3 cups, sifted. Sifting removes lumps and aerates the flour, contributing to a lighter cake.
- Vanilla Extract: 1 tablespoon (or more, to taste). Use pure vanilla extract for the best flavor.
- Salt: ½ teaspoon. Salt enhances all the other flavors.

Step-by-Step Instructions

Martha's method emphasizes the importance of creaming the butter, cream cheese, and sugar until light and fluffy. This process incorporates air, which is crucial for a tender crumb.

1. Preheat and Prepare: Preheat your oven to 325°F (165°C). Generously grease and flour a 10-inch tube pan or a 12-cup Bundt pan. A nonstick baking spray with flour works well too.
2. Cream the Fats and Sugar: In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or using a hand mixer), beat the butter and cream cheese on medium speed until smooth and combined. Gradually add the sugar, beating until the mixture is light, pale, and fluffy—about 4 to 5 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed.
3. Add Eggs One at a Time: With the mixer on low speed, add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. This prevents the batter from curdling. After all eggs are incorporated, mix in the vanilla extract.
4. Incorporate Dry Ingredients: In a separate bowl, whisk together the sifted flour and salt. With the mixer on low speed, gradually add the flour mixture to the butter mixture, mixing just until combined. Do not overmix—overworking the batter can make the cake tough. Finish folding by hand if needed.
5. Bake: Pour the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top. Bake for 60 to 70 minutes, or until a long skewer or cake tester inserted into the center comes out clean. The top should be deep golden brown. If the top is browning too quickly, tent loosely with foil during the last 15 minutes.
6. Cool: Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 15 minutes. Then invert onto the rack to cool completely. Do not rush this step; removing the cake too early can cause it to stick or break.

Expert Tips for the Best Cream Cheese Pound Cake

Even a straightforward recipe can benefit from a few professional touches. Here are some insider tips to guarantee a flawless cake every time.

Temperature Matters

All ingredients must be at room temperature. Cold cream cheese and eggs will not cream properly with the butter and sugar, resulting in a dense, lumpy batter. Take them out of the refrigerator at least one hour before starting.

Do Not Overbeat the Eggs

After adding each egg, beat just until the yolk disappears. Overbeating can incorporate too much air, which may cause the cake to rise dramatically and then collapse. The goal is a smooth, emulsified batter.

Use a Quality Pan

A heavy-gauge aluminum or nonstick tube pan or Bundt pan promotes even baking. Dark pans can cause over-

browning; if you use one, reduce the oven temperature by 25°F. Grease every crevice of a Bundt pan thoroughly to ensure the cake releases cleanly.

Test for Doneness Correctly

A cake tester should come out clean or with a few moist crumbs attached. If it's wet with batter, keep baking. A cracked top is normal and even desirable—it adds rustic charm.

Delicious Variations on the Classic

Once you have mastered the basic Martha Stewart cream cheese pound cake, you can experiment with numerous additions to suit your taste.

Lemon Cream Cheese Pound Cake

Add the zest of two lemons to the sugar and rub it in with your fingers before creaming. Also add 1 tablespoon of fresh lemon juice along with the vanilla. For a glaze, whisk together 1 cup powdered sugar and 2 to 3 tablespoons lemon juice, and drizzle over the cooled cake.

Chocolate Chip Pound Cake

Fold 1 cup of miniature chocolate chips into the batter at the end. Toss the chips with a tablespoon of flour first to prevent them from sinking to the bottom. The cream cheese pairs beautifully with the chocolate.

Blueberry Swirl Pound Cake

Gently fold 1 cup of fresh or frozen blueberries (tossed in flour) into the batter. Alternatively, swirl in a blueberry compote halfway through filling the pan. Be careful not to overmix or the batter will turn blue.

Marble Pound Cake

Remove one-third of the batter and stir in 2 tablespoons of cocoa powder dissolved in 1 tablespoon of hot water. Spoon the plain and chocolate batters alternately into the pan, then swirl with a knife for a beautiful marble effect.

Serving Suggestions and Pairings

This pound cake is delicious on its own, but a few accompaniments can elevate it to a memorable dessert.

- Fresh Berries and Whipped Cream: A classic combination. The tartness of raspberries or strawberries cuts through the richness of the cake.
- Simple Glaze: A thin vanilla or citrus glaze adds sweetness and a glossy finish.
- Ice Cream: A slice of warm pound cake with a scoop of vanilla bean ice cream is pure comfort.
- Toasted and Butter: For breakfast or a snack, toast a slice and spread with a little butter. The caramelized edges are heavenly.
- Strawberry Shortcake: Use thick slices of pound cake as a base for macerated strawberries and whipped cream—a twist on the classic shortcake.

Storage and Make-Ahead Tips

One of the best things about this cream cheese pound cake is that it keeps beautifully. Wrap the completely cooled cake tightly in plastic wrap and then in foil. It will stay moist at room temperature for up to 5 days. You can also refrigerate it for up to a week, but bring slices to room temperature before serving for the best texture.

For longer storage, freeze the whole cake or individual slices. Wrap in plastic wrap, then foil, and place in a freezer bag. It will keep for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator or at room temperature for a few hours.

Common Questions About Martha Stewart's Pound Cake

Why did my pound cake crack on top?

A slight crack down the center is actually a hallmark of a well-made pound cake. It occurs because the outside sets before the inside finishes rising. If the crack is very deep or uneven, your oven temperature may be too high. Always use an oven thermometer to verify temperature.

Can I use a loaf pan instead?

Yes, but adjust the baking time. Divide the batter between two 9x5-inch loaf pans and bake for about 50–60 minutes. Check for doneness with a skewer.

Why did my cake sink in the middle?

Sinking often results from underbaking or opening the oven door too early. Wait until at least 45 minutes have passed before checking. Also, ensure your baking powder is fresh (though this recipe uses no leavening other than eggs and creaming, so overmixing can also cause sinking).

Can I reduce the sugar?

Sugar is not only for sweetness; it provides structure and moisture. Reducing it will alter the texture. For a less sweet cake, consider adding a tart glaze or serving with unsweetened whipped cream.

Conclusion

Martha Stewart's cream cheese pound cake is more than just a recipe; it is a blueprint for baking perfection. Its moist, tender crumb, rich flavor, and timeless elegance make it a favorite for holidays, potlucks, or simple afternoon tea. By understanding the role of each ingredient and following a few key techniques, you can create a cake that rivals the best bakery offerings. Whether you enjoy it plain or dressed up with berries and cream, this pound cake is sure to become a cherished addition to your baking repertoire. So preheat your oven, soften that cream cheese, and get ready to fill your home with the irresistible aroma of a classic dessert.

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