

Carrot & Walnut Layer Cake

INGREDIENTS

CARROT & WALNUT CAKE:

300g self-raising flour
150g plain flour
2tsp bicarbonate soda
2tsp cinnamon
2tsp mixed spice
160g brown sugar
1 1/2 cups grapeseed oil
1 cup golden syrup
6 eggs, lightly beaten
2tsp vanilla extract / vanilla bean paste
1 cup walnuts, chopped
600g carrot, grated

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING:

220g butter, softened
500g (2 blocks) cream cheese, softened
2tsp vanilla extract / vanilla bean paste
1/2tsp salt
1 kg (8 cups) soft icing sugar, sifted

METHOD

CARROT & WALNUT CAKE:

Step 1: Preheat oven to 150° C.

Step 2: Spray 6" round cake tins with canola oil, and line bases with baking paper (cut to size).

Step 3: In a large bowl, sift flours, bi-carb soda, and spices. Set aside.

Step 4: In a medium bowl, whisk together sugar, syrup, grapeseed oil, eggs, and vanilla.

Step 5: Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients — mix until just combined.

Step 6: Prepare mix-ins — grate carrot, chop walnuts.

Step 7: Gently fold carrot and walnuts into cake mixture until just combined.

Step 8: Distribute batter between the prepared cake tins (place each tin on scales and weigh out approximately 570g of batter in each).

Step 9: Place in oven and bake for 40-45 minutes. When done, cakes should be firm and bounce back when touched, or a wooden skewer should come out clean.

Step 10: Leave in tins for at least ten minutes before turning out onto cooling rack.

Step 11: When completely cool, use serrated knife to remove the raised top of each layer to create a level surface, ready for cake assembly.

FROSTING:

Step 1: Combine butter and cream cheese in the bowl of a stand mixer (or you can use an electric mixer). Beat until creamy and well-combined.

Step 2: Add vanilla bean paste and salt. Beat until combined.

Step 3: Sift soft icing sugar.

Step 4: With mixer on low speed, gradually add icing sugar to butter/cream cheese mixture. Only add one cup at a time and mix until completely combined. Add more (1/4 cup at a time) for firmer consistency.

Step 5: Add desired food colouring.

Step 6: Transfer frosting to a piping bag fitted with a large, round piping nozzle.

CAKE ASSEMBLY & DECORATION:

Step 1: Place 8" round cake board onto decoration turntable.

Step 2: Pipe a cream cheese anchor point onto the centre of the cake board.

Step 3: Place the first of four cake rounds onto the board and press down gently to ensure it sticks to the cream cheese.

Step 4: Pipe a thin layer of cream cheese in a coil-motion until surface is covered - spread with spatula to fill in gaps.

Step 5: Repeat steps 3 + 4 for remaining three layers of cake.

Step 6: Push two plastic cake dowels down into the cake until they reach the base - this ensures the layers stay aligned.

Step 7: Starting at base of cake and using the turntable, run an even layer of piped cream cheese around the cake until you reach the top. Use a spatula or levelling tool (such as a buttercream comb) to create your look of choice.

Step 8: Decorate outside of cake if you wish - I decided to opt for a speckled finish, with a chocolate nest filled with mini eggs.

ANNA'S TIPS

Baking tins: It is easiest and most efficient if you have four 6" round baking tins, however, I used two and re-used them for a second bake to create the four layers. A top tip would be to bake two layers the night before, and two layers the next morning to allow ample time for cooling.

Flours: I always use White Wings — quality ingredients do make a difference.

Cream cheese: I use Original Philadelphia — I have tried other brands, and this one is easiest to work with and tastes best in my opinion.

Salt: I use ground pink Himalayan Sea salt in all my recipes that require salt.

Food colouring: I use 'Colour Mill' — they have a beautiful range of colours, and they are blended and bottled in Australia.

Chocolate nest: This is simply created by covering vermicelli noodles (dry and broken into pieces) with melted, dark, baking chocolate! Find a bowl that looks perfect for your nest size, line it with glad wrap, and create the nest inside — refrigerate until set (I recommend making this the day prior).

Speckled frosting: Mix 1tsp of cocoa into 1tbsp of vanilla extract — use a stiff brush to dip into mixture and splatter over cake to create a speckled egg look.

Reducing the quantity for a smaller cake: This recipe can be easily made into a two or three-layer cake if four layers is too much or too high simply halve cake and frosting ingredients for a two-layer cake or measure out 3/4 of the ingredients for a three-layer cake.