

Chocolate Birthday Cake with Vanilla Frosting

I don't often get called to make birthday cakes, but when I do, this is the recipe I use. It's practically foolproof, and completely rich and delicious, with dark chocolate cake mounded with sweet, white frosting. I usually make it as a layer cake, but it works perfectly fine as a sheet cake or even cupcakes –just use the toothpick method to figure out the proper cooking time.

Cake :

butter, for the pans
3 c all-purpose flour, plus a little more for the pans
2/3 c cocoa powder
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 c sugar
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 c canola (or corn) oil
2 tablespoon distilled white vinegar
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 cup water
1 cup cold coffee

- Preheat the oven to 350°. Butter and flour two 9-inch cake pans, and line the bottoms with parchment.
- Gently mix together the dry ingredients in your mixing bowl with the beater blade.
- With the mixer on low, add the oil, vinegar, and vanilla, and mix, then add the water and the coffee, and blend until well mixed.
- Pour the batter equally into the cake pans, and back for 30 minutes, swapping and turning them after 15. You know they're done when a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

- Cool completely in the pans.

Frosting:

1-1/2 cup sugar

1/2 cup water

3 large egg whites

1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

pinch of salt

2 teaspoon vanilla extract

- Bring the sugar and water to a boil in a small saucepan, and heat to 240° or soft-ball stage. Meanwhile, start beating the egg whites, the cream of tartar, and the salt in your mixer until foamy.
- Once the sugar syrup is at temperature, resume beating the egg whites on high, and add the hot syrup in a slow drizzle.
- Add the vanilla, and continue mixing until the frosting is glossy and the mixing bowl is cool to the touch.