

CakeCentral magazine

INSPIRED BY *Water colors*

incredibly indulgent

GLUTEN-FREE

yellow cake with
fudge frosting recipe

LISA MANSOUR'S
new york cake empire

plus...

HOW TO MAKE
a watercolor-inspired
buttercream cake



Contributors

ALYSSA CHRISTENSEN >

A writer and editor living in Seattle, Alyssa currently works with several businesses to improve their online presence. Along with contributing to *Cake Central Magazine*,

Alyssa runs her website *DearEnglishMajor.com* and is the Managing Editor of *HomeScribeCreative.com*.



< EMILY ELLYN

Cake Genius Emily Ellyn is best known as the Retro Rad Chef from Food Network; appearing on "Food Network Star," "Cupcake Wars" and most recently as the winner of "Cutthroat Kitchen." When she's not busy writing or finishing her Ph.D. in Food Service Education, you'll see her with her trademark cat-eye glasses cooking up fun at food and spirits events around the world. You can find her cooking up rad projects at www.emilyellyn.com.

JAY QUALLS >

Jay is one of the premiere bakers in America, specializing in couture wedding cakes at Jay Qualls Cakes. He is also the creator of the Jay Qualls Fondant Fabric. After graduating from Middle Tennessee State University with a business degree, Jay decided to put both his newfound business expertise and his passion for baking and designing to good use and open a high-end wedding cake boutique. With his unique sense of style in cake design, teaching, product development, and business consulting, he is one of the leaders in the cake industry.





DEAR
cake.
genius

Cracking cake tops, clumpy modeling chocolate
and alternative flours can't stump the cake genius.
By Emily Ellyn

Dear Cake Genius,

My cakes always crack on top. I use a gas oven, is this the problem? What mistakes am I making?

Sincerely,
Too hot to handle

Dear Too hot to handle,

This is nothing to crack up over! The tops of cakes often crack when oven temperatures are too hot. This causes the outside surface of the cake to set before the inside of the cake has had time to fully bake. As the inside of the cake heats up, expands, and starts to rise, the baked dough has nowhere to go but through the already formed crust causing cracks.

My top tip is to regularly test your oven with a thermometer and calibrate as needed to ensure you are baking at the proper temperature.

If this does not fix the problem, other possible explanations include:

1. Improper balance of dry and liquid ingredients causing batter to be too stiff or doughy; adjust recipe
2. Batter over-mixed; decrease mixing time
3. Flour too strong/elastic; substitute quality cake flour
4. Too much leavening agents; decrease leaveners
5. Oven too hot; adjust temperature and position cakes in middle of oven on middle rack

Stay Cool and Cook On

Dear Cake Genius,

Four out of five times my modeling chocolate comes out great, smooth and workable. When it fails the clay gets clumpy. Here is how I make it: I put white Ghirardelli chips in a bowl, melt perfectly in the microwave. I warm the corn syrup while letting the chocolate cool, then let the syrup cool. Stir some Ameri-gel blue color into the chips, pour in corn syrup fast and stir. It begins to transform, so I pour it onto wax paper. When I knead it the clay is clumpy and oozing oil. It looks like blue sand. What is the issue? Did the chocolate get too hot or is it the chocolate or color?

Yours Truly,
Modeling Mystery

Modeling Mystery,

For the readers out there who don't know, modeling chocolate (chocolate + corn syrup) is stronger than fondant and tastier than gum paste and can be used to cover cakes or form into decorative shapes.

The most common modeling chocolate mishap is that your modeling chocolate is dry and crumbly. Most often it is because there is not enough corn syrup in it. Beware that every brand of chocolate is a little different in fat and cocoa content, and this will affect the amount of corn syrup called for in a recipe. Therefore, slight adjustments may need to be made.

Try adding a small amount of corn syrup to the warm chocolate and mix it in again. Be very careful that you don't over mix or too many oils will seep out and cause the modeling chocolate to dry out again. Note that the mechanical action of working in color will cause the modeling chocolate to warm and soften. If a lot of oil is oozing out, you must rest between kneading to allow oil to solidify and then return to working it.

If your modeling chocolate becomes hard or dry and crumbly after it has cooled, just soften it with the warmth of your hands and rework it into a soft dough. If your modeling chocolate is still dry, then simply add a small amount of shortening to reconstitute.

Cheers to Model Bakers Like Yourself

Dear Cake Genius,

My husband is never satisfied with chocolate cake. They are never chocolate-y enough for him. How can I get a cake batter to taste chocolate-y enough for my chocoholic husband without messing up the delicate balance of a moist cake?

Yours Truly,
Chocophile Consort

Dear Chocophile Consort,

I understand chocoholic cravings (I too, love the stuff), so it is no surprise your husband desires the most chocolate-y of cakes! But for bakers, chocolate is a complicated ingredient with hundreds of volatile compounds that contribute to its aroma and flavor. Therefore, if you want to make the most of baking with chocolate, it is helpful to be familiar with the many variations of chocolate you will find.

UNSWEETENED 100% CHOCOLATE is chocolate liquor (not to be confused with liqueur) made from the ground cacao beans that give chocolate its core flavor and has no sugar added.

COCOA NIBS are little pieces of the cacao bean that have been roasted and hulled but not ground. They're crunchy with a dark roasted flavor and slightly bitter bite that creates distinct texture and flavor in baked goods.

COCOA POWDER is made when the cacao liquor is pressed to remove the cocoa butter, resulting in a fine, unsweetened powder. Cocoa powder comes in two forms: natural which retains the cacao's natural acidity, and Dutch processed which is neutralized with an alkali chemical resulting in darker color and more mellow flavor.

Both **BITTERSWEET AND SEMISWEET** are dark chocolate and often used interchangeably. Along with sugar, they contain at least 35% cacao solids and cocoa butter for an intense chocolate flavor, and no more than 12% milk solids.

MILK CHOCOLATE contains at least 12% milk solids and only 10% cacao resulting in a familiar creamy goodness. Due to the many different flavors of dairy solids available, flavor, texture, and quality can vary.

My personal preference for rich chocolate flavor is to use a bittersweet chocolate or bittersweet cocoa powder. Try the Ghirardelli 60% Cacao Bittersweet Chocolate Premium Baking Bar.

To intensify the flavors, I recommend using hot liquid (water, coffee, milk, etc.) in your recipe. This will cause the fat crystals in the cocoa butter to melt, helping to evenly disperse cocoa throughout the batter. Other than that, no Willy Wonka wonders are needed!

Like Water for Chocolate,
Cake Genius

Dear Cake Genius,

I often try to cook and eat with more healthy ingredients, not only more healthy per se, but also to vary the food nutritional profiles. Do you have any tips or recipes for cake baking with alternative flours like quinoa, amaranth, or even coconut?

To your health,
Flour Child

Dear Flour Child,

No matter if you are catering to a sensitive stomach, curious mind, or just flexing your flour power, here are some quick tips when using alternative flours to perform like wheat flours:

1. Combine several flours to get similar textures and taste.
2. Sift two or three times to incorporate air.
3. After combining wet and dry ingredients, let the batter sit to allow the flour to absorb the liquid.
4. Experiment with incorporating vital wheat gluten, Xanthan gum, tapioca flour, cornstarch, arrowroot, and/or baking powder to alternative flours
5. Add more fat to help keep the final product light.

Most seeds, grains, roots and beans can be ground into flour, to be mixed with water and fat, and then baked or fried. Cake Central Magazine could devote a year of publications to the subject. I highly recommend reading the online notes, baking tips, and recipes from alternative flour producers.

Here are some alternatives to inspire your inner flour power:

AMARANTH FLOUR is protein rich and gluten free with a subtle sweetness that pairs with molasses, malt and honey. Substitute for no more than 30 percent of the white flour in your muffin, pancake or bread recipes to keep the texture and leavening in tact. If baking with full amaranth, the cake will be overly dense, but rich in flavor.

COCONUT FLOUR has the highest fiber content of any flour while being gluten free, low in carbs, and a good source of protein and healthy fats. The natural sweet and fruity flavors of coconut are perfect for recipes low in sweeteners. Coconut flour must be used with other flours to create a sufficient crumb for bread and cakes. Be sure that when replacing coconut flour for white wheat flour in a recipe, you adjust liquid to compensate.

QUINOA FLOUR is an excellent source of complete protein. This powerful little grain is a great addition to any diet and is ideal for gluten free baking. With a unique nutty and slightly sour flavor, it is great for baking bread, muffins, English muffins, and making pancakes or waffles. To achieve a crumb likened to white flour, it should be mixed with leaveners and/or xanthan gum.

May the Flour Power Be with You