

CakeCentral

magazine



GLORIOUS geodes GALORE!

YES! YOU CAN EAT THEM!

lovely lemon

citrus & raspberry
layer cake recipe

sparkle & shine

geode cake tutorial

chandelier wedding cake

from almost catastrophe
to captivating cake

pioneer of beauty

vietnam's mito sweets
brings passion
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cakes across america
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Contributors



< 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.



LINDSAY CONCHAR >

Lindsay is the blogger, recipe developer and photographer behind the blog Life, Love and Sugar. She's been baking and decorating cakes for about six years and blogging for four years. Though she blogs about all kinds of desserts, her true love is beautiful and delicious cakes. She's currently working on her first cookbook all about cakes and ways to decorate them simply, but beautifully, available October 2016.



DEAR *cake.* genius

The Cake Genius help you find simple syrup success, tackles cooking with gas, and coaches you to bake flat cakes.

By Emily Ellyn

Dear Cake Genius,

My cakes have a tendency to have a dry texture and I'm not a fan of using simple syrups after baking the cake. I would much rather incorporate an ingredient(s) that will be baked into the cake and give it a box mix texture that I desire. What ingredients can I use in cakes to ensure the texture will be moist like that of box mix cakes?

Sincerely,
Simple [Syrup] Solutions

Simple [Syrup] Solutions,

Dry cakes are crummy! If we can resolve why your Simple [Syrup] Solutions, cakes are dry, you may not need simple syrups (or simple solutions) to keep your cakes moist. Be sure to read the response to "We Can Bake It If We Try" below for tips on baking moister cakes.

In the meantime, I encourage you to experiment with some simply delicious solutions in lieu of simple syrups. Try brushing cakes with flavored liquors, fruit juices, or coffee, and flavor your simple syrups with coffee, fruit extracts, spices, or infuse with fragrant herbs.

Remember, when making substitutions or adding additional elements, the recipe must always include the basics. You'll need your flour, sugar, eggs, liquid, and a fat to work effectively. Here are a few more ways to moisten up your cakes:

SUBSTITUTIONS:

- yogurt, sour cream, or buttermilk to replace liquid
- egg yolks for eggs
- oil (I recommend high oleic oil) for butter
- a portion of all-purpose flour for cake flour
- a portion of corn syrup for sugar

ADDITIONS:

- yogurt or sour cream
- extra egg, egg yolk, or mayonnaise
- instant pudding

I don't suggest the popular applesauce addition, because it causes an overly sticky cake.

It will take a few experimental batches to perfect your recipe. Therefore, I highly recommend checking out Rose Levy Beranbaum's "Cake Bible" for a perfect base cake recipe.

Dear Cake Genius,

I have tried several things, including the strips around the outside of the cake pan, to bake a level cake. I seem to throw away half the layer when I level it. How do I get a cake layer to bake level?

Yours Truly,
Level Headed Baker

Level Headed Baker,

Baking excites me! I get giddy when I peek through the oven door glass to see my breads and cakes doubling in size as they bake. But although domed cupcakes and quick breads are favored, domed cakes create waste (except as an ingredient for tomorrow's trifle!). Even so, it's a frustrating thing to waste good cake when leveling out your layers.

Not to worry, the following 7 steps will yield level cake layers!

1. Sift dry ingredients to evenly distribute leaveners.
2. Incorporate wet and dry ingredients thoroughly, but do not over mix.
3. Use high quality level pans.
4. Ensure that your oven and shelves are level.
5. Spread batter evenly in pan. Many bakers thwap the filled cake pans on the counter before baking to ensure batter is even and to eliminate air bubbles.
6. Check oven for hot and cold zones; rotate pans if needed.
7. Regulate heat to prevent the outer edges of the cake from cooking more quickly than the center of the cake. To keep the edges of the cakes cooler longer and prevent the sides from baking lower than the center, try creating a double boiler for your pans. You can also continue to use the bake strips you have or create more substantial ones by pinning wet towels around pans to insulate the outside of the cake pans.

Ta-da! Perfectly layered cakes.

Dear Cake Genius,

What are the secrets to baking moist cakes? I'm cooking with gas, should the temperature be lower?

Best,
We Can Bake It If We Try

We Can Bake It If We Try,

Now, you're cooking with gas!

Gas ovens have a longer history than electric ovens so there are more recipes and research on their use. You are right to consider time and temperature because the keys to baking are to have accurate temperature, even heat, and controlled humidity.

Even though gas is very efficient and tends to heat very quickly, the oven temperature can fluctuate and the overall heating is often less even. So, remember to rotate your baked goods. Most gas ovens will have hot spots and be more humid than electric ovens since the combustion of the gas releases moisture into the air of the oven. You'll need to experiment to find hot spots.

Bake in the middle of oven or at least one rack higher to put a little more distance between the food and the heating element. Also, reduce the oven temperature by 25°F, particularly in the last half of baking, to reduce outside of cakes from cooking too fast. Cakes will take just a smidge longer but turn out lighter in color and more moist.

Get over this cake conundrum! The following are the leading causes for dry cake and how to fix them:

OVERCOOKED Check for doneness 10 minutes prior to instructions. Note that cakes will continue to cook when removed from oven.

OVER MIXED Gluten formation in the flour makes cakes tougher.

OVER THE HILL Batter used within 30 minutes of mixing will perform best.

OVER EASY Using just egg yolks or adding an additional egg yolk will yield a moister cake.

If possible bake, cool, and frost cakes the same day. The icing will act as a barrier to air that will dry out the cake. If baking in advance, store properly by allowing cakes to cool completely, and then wrap tightly. Be sure your plastic is sealed on all sides of the cake. Store cakes in a dry place at cool room temperature for 3 to 4 days or freeze up to a month.

You can handle the heat.