

Best Vanilla Cake from Scratch

Best Vanilla Cake from Scratch is a recipe that highlights the beauty of simplicity. When baked correctly, vanilla cake becomes soft, moist, and fragrant, with just the right amount of sweetness. Unlike cakes overloaded with rich flavors, vanilla cake shines because of its balance. It is light enough to enjoy with coffee yet elegant enough to serve at a wedding. The recipe requires only basic ingredients, but the results feel bakery-worthy. From birthdays to quiet weekends, this cake adapts to every occasion. Once you try it, you'll understand why vanilla remains one of the most celebrated flavors in baking.

Why Vanilla Cake Stands Out

A Universal Favorite

Vanilla cake is loved worldwide because it blends seamlessly into countless occasions. Its golden crumb and delicate aroma never feel overwhelming. This quality makes it versatile, pairing beautifully with frostings, fillings, or fresh fruit. While trendy cakes come and go, vanilla cake remains a timeless centerpiece for celebrations large and small.

The Elegance of Simplicity

Sometimes, less truly is more. Vanilla cake does not depend on complex flavors or decorations to impress. Instead, it showcases quality ingredients and careful technique. Baked from scratch, it captures freshness that no boxed mix can deliver. Each slice feels both comforting and refined, proving why simplicity often creates the most memorable desserts.

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- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)
- Total Time: [55 minutes](#)
- Yield: [10 servings 1x](#)
- Diet: [Vegetarian](#)

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Description

This Best Vanilla Cake from Scratch is soft, fluffy, and filled with rich vanilla flavor. Perfect for birthdays, weddings, or everyday baking, this simple recipe creates a moist and tender cake every time.

Ingredients

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Scale 1x 2x 3x

- ☐ 2 ¼ cups (270g) All-purpose flour, sifted
 - ☐ 2 tsp (8g) Baking powder
 - ☐ ½ tsp (2g) Salt
 - ☐ 1 cup (200g) Granulated sugar
 - ☐ ½ cup (100g) Brown sugar, packed
 - ☐ ½ cup (170g) Unsalted butter, softened
 - ☐ 3 large Eggs, room temperature
 - ☐ 1 tbsp (15ml) Pure vanilla extract
 - ☐ 1 cup (240ml) Whole milk, room temperature
 - ☐ Cook Mode Prevent your screen from going dark
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Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease and line a 9-inch cake pan (or two 6-inch pans for layers) with parchment paper.
2. Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt together in a bowl and set aside.
3. In another bowl, beat butter, granulated sugar, and brown sugar until fluffy (3–4 minutes).
4. Add eggs one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Stir in vanilla extract.
5. Alternate adding 1/3 of the flour mixture with ½ of the milk, repeating until just combined. Do not overmix.

6. Pour batter into the prepared pan(s). Bake 30–35 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
7. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely before slicing or frosting.

Notes

Add citrus zest or almond extract for flavor twists.

Pair with buttercream, cream cheese frosting, or whipped cream.

Store at room temperature for 3 days or freeze slices for up to 3 months.

- Prep Time: 20 minutes
- Cook Time: 35 minutes
- Category: Dessert
- Method: Baking
- Cuisine: American

Nutrition

- **Serving Size:** 1 slice
- **Calories:** 280
- **Sugar:** 24g
- **Sodium:** 180mg
- **Fat:** 11g
- **Saturated Fat:** 7g
- **Unsaturated Fat:** 3g
- **Trans Fat:** 0g
- **Carbohydrates:** 40g
- **Fiber:** 1g
- **Protein:** 5g
- **Cholesterol:** 65mg

Did you make this recipe?

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Key Ingredients for Perfect Cake

The Foundation of Flour, Sugar, and Butter

All-purpose flour gives structure, while a combination of granulated and brown sugar balances sweetness with depth. Brown sugar's molasses content adds moisture, keeping the crumb tender.

Unsalted butter rounds out the base, lending richness and a melt-in-your-mouth texture. These familiar ingredients create a reliable foundation for success.

The Flavor and Moisture Enhancers

Eggs provide stability and lightness, helping the cake rise evenly. Whole milk ensures smoothness and moisture, producing a batter that bakes into a soft, golden crumb. The star, pure vanilla extract, elevates the recipe from simple to special. Real vanilla adds floral, sweet notes that define the cake's identity. Using quality vanilla is the difference between ordinary and extraordinary results.

Step-by-Step Baking Method

Preparing the Batter with Care

Begin by preheating your oven to 350°F and preparing pans with parchment. Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt in one bowl. In another, beat butter with granulated and brown sugar until fluffy. Add eggs one by one, then stir in vanilla extract. Alternate between adding flour mixture and milk, starting and ending with flour. This step ensures the batter blends evenly without overmixing.

Baking and Cooling Properly

Pour the smooth batter into prepared pans, spreading evenly. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, testing with a toothpick for doneness. It should come out clean or with a few crumbs. Let the cake cool in the pan for ten minutes, then transfer to a rack. This cooling period allows the structure to set, preventing crumbling when slicing. Patience here makes all the difference.

Fun Variations to Explore

Flavor Twists to Try

Vanilla cake is the perfect base for creative variations. Add lemon zest for brightness, or fold in berries for bursts of freshness. A touch of almond extract brings nuttiness, while spices such as nutmeg or cardamom add warmth. These adjustments keep the recipe interesting without losing its essence.

Frostings and Fillings That Work

Vanilla cake pairs beautifully with almost any frosting. Classic buttercream keeps it traditional, cream cheese frosting adds tang, and whipped cream frosting offers lightness. For a decadent contrast, pair it with chocolate ganache. Many bakers love serving vanilla alongside [Decadent Homemade Chocolate Cake](#) for a dual-flavor dessert table that impresses guests. Vanilla's adaptability makes it a perfect partner for endless flavor combinations.

Serving Suggestions

Everyday Enjoyment

A plain slice of vanilla cake makes an excellent snack with coffee or tea. Dust with powdered sugar for an elegant but effortless touch. Pair with seasonal fruit for balance, making the cake feel refreshing and light. These simple serving ideas prove that vanilla cake does not need elaborate toppings to shine.

Celebrations Made Memorable

For birthdays, layer the cake with buttercream and decorate with sprinkles. For weddings, keep it sophisticated with smooth frosting and edible flowers. During the holidays, try a spiced whipped cream topping. Vanilla cake adjusts to the tone of the occasion, always adding joy and elegance to the table.

Storage and Freezing Tips

Keeping the Cake Fresh

Store vanilla cake at room temperature in an airtight container for up to three days. If using frostings that require refrigeration, such as whipped cream or cream cheese, keep the cake chilled for up to a week. Before serving, bring refrigerated slices to room temperature to restore texture and flavor.

Freezer-Friendly Method

For long-term storage, freeze slices individually wrapped in plastic. Place them in a freezer bag to prevent freezer burn. They stay fresh for up to three months. To serve, thaw at room temperature or warm briefly in the microwave. Freezing also makes portion control simple, allowing you to enjoy cake without baking a full batch.

Balancing Indulgence and Health

Portion Control as a Strategy

Vanilla cake is indulgent, but its richness means even small portions satisfy. Serving modest slices keeps dessert balanced, letting you enjoy sweetness without overindulgence. Sharing with family or friends spreads joy while encouraging mindful eating.

Healthier Adjustments for Balance

Simple substitutions can make vanilla cake lighter. Replace part of the butter with Greek yogurt to reduce fat. Use low-fat milk instead of whole milk or substitute some white flour with whole wheat flour for added fiber. Reducing sugar slightly also keeps the cake flavorful while lowering calories. These adjustments allow you to enjoy dessert with balance in mind.

Troubleshooting and Expert Tips

Solving Common Issues

Dry cake usually results from overbaking, so check a few minutes early. A dense texture often comes from overmixing, so stir until just combined. If the cake fails to rise, ensure your baking powder is fresh. These small adjustments improve results and guarantee a tender crumb.

Expert Advice for Better Results

Always use room-temperature ingredients for smoother mixing and even baking. Sift flour to prevent lumps and ensure a uniform crumb. For neat presentation, chill the cake before slicing and wipe the knife between cuts. Garnish with powdered sugar, glaze, or fruit for a professional finish. These small details elevate homemade cake into bakery-quality dessert.

FAQ

Can I make this cake gluten-free?

Yes, you can absolutely make this cake gluten-free by replacing the all-purpose flour with a gluten-free blend. Look for a high-quality mix that already contains stabilizers like xanthan gum, which helps mimic the elasticity of gluten. The cake will still rise well and maintain a moist, tender crumb. One tip is to avoid overmixing the batter, as gluten-free flour blends can sometimes become gummy if handled too much. Many bakers also like to add an extra egg or a spoonful of yogurt to improve structure. With these adjustments, you can confidently enjoy vanilla cake that is safe for gluten-free diets yet just as delicious as the traditional version.

Which vanilla should I use?

The choice of vanilla makes a big difference in this recipe. Pure vanilla extract is widely available and delivers a classic, reliable flavor that most people recognize. However, if you want to elevate your cake, vanilla bean paste is an excellent option. It has a more concentrated flavor and contains real vanilla bean speckles that add a touch of elegance to the finished cake. If you have access to whole vanilla beans, you can scrape the seeds into the batter for an even more luxurious result. Whichever option you choose, avoid artificial vanilla flavoring, as it lacks depth and can leave a sharp aftertaste.

Can I bake this as cupcakes?

Yes, this recipe adapts beautifully to cupcakes. Simply divide the batter evenly into a lined muffin tin, filling each cup about two-thirds full. Bake at the same temperature, but reduce the time to about 18 to 20 minutes. The cupcakes should spring back when lightly pressed and pass the toothpick test. Cupcakes are a fantastic option for parties, since they are individually portioned and easy to decorate. You can top them with piped buttercream swirls, cream cheese frosting, or even a light glaze for variety.

How do I know it's done?

Checking for doneness is crucial to avoid a dry or underbaked cake. Insert a toothpick or thin skewer into the center of the cake. If it comes out clean or with a few moist crumbs, the cake is ready. Be cautious not to wait until the toothpick is completely dry, as that can indicate overbaking. Another method is to gently press the top of the cake; if it springs back, it's done. The edges will also start to pull slightly away from the pan.

What frosting works best?

Vanilla cake pairs well with a wide range of frostings. Buttercream is the classic choice, offering creamy richness that complements the subtle vanilla flavor. Cream cheese frosting adds tang and works well if you want something less sweet. For a more decadent option, try chocolate ganache, which creates a glossy finish and adds depth. Whipped cream frosting is light and refreshing, perfect for warm-weather gatherings. Each option brings a different personality to the cake, so the

best choice depends on your occasion and preferences.

Best Vanilla Cake from Scratch proves that simplicity can be luxurious. With its golden crumb, fragrant vanilla, and adaptability, it belongs in every baker's collection. Whether served plain, topped with frosting, or layered with fruit, this cake delivers joy in every bite. Bake it once, and you'll understand why vanilla remains one of the most beloved flavors in baking.

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