

# Black Velvet Cake: Simple Scratch Recipe with Black Frosting

Forget the red. This Black Velvet Cake is the dramatic, sophisticated, and deeply chocolatey dessert you need to make. This simple scratch recipe guides you through creating an incredibly moist cake with a stunning, jet-black crumb, all thanks to a special ingredient. We are not stopping there, either. We are pairing this masterpiece with an equally dark and delicious black frosting, creating a show-stopping cake that tastes as good as it looks. If you love the flavor of Oreos and the texture of a classic velvet cake, this recipe is your new holy grail.

## ? The Allure of the Black Velvet Cake

### What Is a Black Velvet Cake?

A Black Velvet Cake is a riff on the classic Red Velvet Cake.<sup>3</sup> Both are “velvet” cakes, characterized by a tight, tender, and moist crumb, traditionally achieved with buttermilk and vinegar. While Red Velvet relies on red food coloring (or a reaction with older cocoa powder) for its color, Black Velvet gets its stunning dark hue from **black cocoa powder**. This creates a cake that is less about tang and more about a smooth, deep, cookie-like chocolate flavor.

### Why Bake from Scratch?

Store-bought cake mixes are convenient, but they can never replicate the rich flavor and perfect texture of a true, simple scratch recipe. When you bake from scratch, you control the quality of the ingredients. This means using real butter, fresh buttermilk, and high-impact flavors. This Black Velvet Cake recipe is straightforward, uses pantry staples (plus the black cocoa), and delivers a homemade result that is worlds apart from a box mix.

A slice of dark chocolate cake with black frosting, garnished with green mint leaves and green sprinkles, served on a white plate.

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- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)
- Total Time: [55 Minutes](#)
- Yield: [12-16 Slices](#)

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## Description

A dramatic, simple from-scratch Black Velvet Cake recipe paired with a rich, jet-black frosting. This cake uses black cocoa for a moist crumb and deep, Oreo-like flavor.

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## Ingredients

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☐ For the Black Velvet Cake: 2.5 cups all-purpose flour 1.5 cups granulated sugar 1/2 cup black cocoa powder, sifted 1 tsp baking soda 1 tsp salt 1 cup buttermilk, room temperature 1 cup melted unsalted butter 2 large eggs, room temperature 1 tsp vanilla extract 1 tsp white vinegar  
For the Black Frosting: 2 cups (4 sticks) unsalted butter, softened 5 cups powdered sugar, sifted 3/4 cup black cocoa powder, sifted 1/4 cup heavy cream 2 tsp vanilla extract 1/2 tsp salt  
Optional: 1-2 tsp black gel food coloring

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## Instructions

1. Prep: Preheat oven to 350°F (177°C). Grease and flour two 8-inch round cake pans (or line with parchment).
2. Mix Dry: In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, sifted black cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt.
3. Mix Wet: In a medium bowl, whisk together the buttermilk, melted butter, eggs, vanilla, and vinegar.
4. Combine: Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Whisk until just combined (do not overmix).
5. Bake: Divide batter evenly between the pans. Bake for 28-32 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
6. Cool: Let cakes cool in pans for 15 minutes, then invert onto a wire rack to cool completely.
7. Make Frosting: In a large bowl, beat the softened butter with an electric mixer until light and fluffy (about 3-4 minutes).
8. Add Dry: Sift the powdered sugar and black cocoa powder. On low speed, gradually add the dry mixture to the butter, alternating with the heavy cream and vanilla. Add the salt.
9. Whip: Once combined, increase speed to medium-high and beat for 3-5 minutes until fluffy. Add black gel food coloring if desired for a deeper black.
10. Assemble: Level the cooled cakes. Place one layer on a plate, top with 1 cup of frosting. Add the second layer.
11. Frost: Cover the entire cake with a thin crumb coat and chill for 20 minutes. Apply the final layer of black frosting.

## Notes

**Sifting:** Do not skip sifting the black cocoa powder and powdered sugar. This is the key to a smooth, non-gritty black frosting.  
**Room Temperature:** Using room temperature eggs and buttermilk ensures a more uniform, tender crumb.  
**Darkening:** The black frosting will get darker as it sits (oxidizes). For best results, make it an hour ahead.

- Prep Time: 25 Minutes
- Cook Time: 30 Minutes
- Category: Dessert
- Method: Baking
- Cuisine: American

## Nutrition

- **Serving Size:** 1 slice
- **Calories:** 480
- **Sugar:** 40g
- **Sodium:** 350mg
- **Fat:** 26g
- **Saturated Fat:** 16g
- **Unsaturated Fat:** 0g
- **Trans Fat:** 0g
- **Carbohydrates:** 58g
- **Fiber:** 2g
- **Protein:** 5g
- **Cholesterol:** 85mg

Did you make this recipe?

Share a photo and tag us-we can't wait to see what you've made!

## ? Understanding Your Cocoa Powder

### The Key: Black Cocoa Powder

The one non-negotiable ingredient for this cake is black cocoa powder. This is cocoa that has been heavily alkalized (or Dutch-processed).<sup>4</sup> This process neutralizes its acidity, resulting in a super dark color and a very smooth, non-bitter flavor.<sup>5</sup> It is the signature flavor of an Oreo cookie. Using it in this Black Velvet Cake gives you that iconic look and taste without any artificial food dyes.

### Black Cocoa vs. Other Cocos

It is important to understand how different cocoa powders behave, as this affects the final cake.

| Cocoa Type    | Acidity             | Color       | Flavor Profile                     |
|---------------|---------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Natural       | High (Acidic)       | Light Brown | Sharp, fruity, acidic              |
| Dutch-Process | Neutral             | Dark Brown  | Smooth, earthy, milder             |
| Black Cocoa   | Very Low (Alkaline) | Jet Black   | Very smooth, non-bitter, Oreo-like |

Because black cocoa is alkaline, this recipe balances it with acidic buttermilk and vinegar, while also using baking soda for the perfect leavening.

# ? Crafting the Perfect Black Velvet Cake Batter

## Mixing Your Dry Ingredients

First, preheat your oven to  $350^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $177^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). Prepare two 8-inch round cake pans with non-stick spray, parchment paper circles, and a dusting of cocoa powder (or flour). In a large bowl, sift or whisk together your all-purpose flour, granulated sugar, black cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt. Sifting is highly recommended, especially for black cocoa, which can be prone to clumping.

## Combining the Wet Ingredients

In a separate, medium bowl, combine your wet ingredients. Lightly beat the eggs, then whisk in the room-temperature buttermilk, melted butter (or oil), white vinegar, and vanilla extract. Using melted butter adds richness, while buttermilk and vinegar provide the acid needed to react with the baking soda, creating a tender crumb and a good rise.

# ? Baking and Cooling Your Cake Layers

## Creating the Final Batter

Now, pour the wet ingredient mixture into the large bowl of dry ingredients. Whisk everything together *just* until the flour streaks have disappeared. Be careful not to overmix. A few small lumps are perfectly fine. Overmixing will develop the gluten in the flour, leading to a tough or rubbery cake.<sup>6</sup> The batter will be relatively thin, which is normal for this type of cake.

## Baking to Perfection

Quickly divide the batter evenly between your two prepared cake pans. Bake on the center rack of your preheated oven for 28-32 minutes. The cakes are done when they spring back lightly to the touch, or when a toothpick inserted into the center comes out with a few moist crumbs. Let the cakes cool in their pans on a wire rack for about 15 minutes before turning them out to cool completely.

# ? Achieving the Perfect Black Frosting

## The Black Cocoa Frosting Base

The perfect companion to a Black Velvet Cake is a rich, from-scratch black frosting. This recipe uses a base of American buttercream, but with a large amount of black cocoa powder added. In a large bowl, using an electric mixer, beat the softened butter until it is light and creamy. Sift in the powdered sugar and black cocoa powder, alternating with additions of heavy cream and vanilla extract.

## The Secret to Jet-Black Color

Your frosting will be dark, but to get it truly *black*, you have two options. First, you can add a few drops of black gel food coloring. Second, you can use the power of time. After mixing, the black

cocoa will “bloom” and oxidize. Cover the bowl of frosting and let it sit at room temperature for an hour, or even overnight. It will darken significantly. If you want to use the Oreo flavor from our sister recipe, check out this [Black Velvet Cake: The Best Easy Oreo Frosting Recipe](#).

## ? Assembling Your Show-Stopping Cake

### Leveling and Stacking

For a professional-looking cake, you must level your layers. Once the cakes are completely cool (this is critical), use a long serrated knife to slice off the domed tops, making them flat. Place your first cake layer on a turntable or serving plate. Add a generous scoop of black frosting (about one cup) and spread it evenly to the edges.

### The Crumb Coat and Final Layer

Carefully place the second cake layer on top. Apply a very thin layer of black frosting all over the top and sides of the cake. This is your “crumb coat,” which seals in any loose crumbs. Refrigerate the cake for 20-30 minutes to let this layer set. Once chilled, apply the remaining black frosting, using an offset spatula or bench scraper to get a smooth, dramatic finish.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

Why is my black frosting gritty?

Grittiness in black frosting almost always comes from using unsifted powdered sugar or black cocoa. Black cocoa powder, in particular, can be clumpy. Always sift your dry ingredients for the smoothest possible frosting.

Can I use this recipe for cupcakes?

Yes, this Black Velvet Cake recipe works beautifully for cupcakes. Simply line a muffin tin with paper liners and fill them about two-thirds full. Bake at  $350^{\circ}\text{F}$  for 18-22 minutes. This recipe will yield approximately 24 cupcakes.

My black frosting tastes bitter. What went wrong?

If your black frosting tastes bitter, it is likely because you relied only on black cocoa powder and did not use enough fat or sugar to balance it. While black cocoa is less bitter than natural cocoa, a large amount can be intense.<sup>7</sup> Ensure you are using the full amount of butter and powdered sugar, and a pinch of salt to round out the flavor.

## Conclusion

This Black Velvet Cake: Simple Scratch Recipe with Black Frosting is a true show-stopper that proves homemade is always better. The combination of a moist, tender crumb and the deep, cookie-like flavor of black cocoa is unforgettable. By making both the cake and the frosting from scratch, you create a cohesive and deeply satisfying dessert. This cake is perfect for Halloween, a sophisticated celebration, or any time you want to impress with your baking skills. It is a simple recipe that delivers dramatic, delicious, and deeply chocolatey results every time.

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