

Velvety Midnight Chocolate Cake: Easy Dessert Idea

When you crave a truly decadent, rich, and moist chocolate cake, this Velvety Midnight Chocolate Cake is the only answer. This easy dessert idea is not your average chocolate cake. It is profoundly dark, impossibly tender, and packed with the deepest chocolate flavor imaginable. The “velvety” texture is no accident; it is the result of a few simple, strategic ingredients. The “midnight” color comes from quality cocoa, enhanced by one secret ingredient that makes all the difference. This recipe is your key to becoming a dessert legend, producing a cake that is perfect for birthdays, celebrations, or just a Tuesday night.

? What Defines a “Velvety Midnight” Cake?

The “Velvety” Crumb Texture

The “velvety” in this cake’s name refers to its unique crumb. It is incredibly soft, tender, and moist, with a fine, tight grain that melts in your mouth. This texture is achieved by using buttermilk and oil. Buttermilk, an acid, reacts with the baking soda to create lift, while the oil (instead of butter) provides superior, lasting moisture, ensuring the cake stays tender for days.

Achieving the “Midnight” Look and Flavor

The “midnight” aspect comes from its deep, dark color and intensely rich flavor. This is achieved in two ways. First, we use a good quality dark cocoa powder. Second, we use the ultimate secret weapon for chocolate baking: **hot coffee**. The coffee “blooms” the cocoa powder, releasing its deepest flavor compounds and intensifying the chocolate taste without making the cake taste like coffee.

A slice of dark chocolate cake with deep blue frosting and chocolate glaze, topped with white sprinkles, sitting on a white plate.

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- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)
- Total Time: [1 Hour](#)
- Yield: [16 Servings](#)

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Description

An easy and impossibly moist Velvety Midnight Chocolate Cake. This easy dessert idea uses hot coffee and buttermilk for a tender crumb and deep, rich chocolate flavor.

Ingredients

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☐ For the Cake: 2 cups all-purpose flour 2 cups granulated sugar 3/4 cup dark cocoa powder 2 tsp baking soda 1 tsp baking powder 1 tsp salt 1 cup buttermilk, room temperature 1/2 cup vegetable oil 2 large eggs, room temperature 1 tsp vanilla extract 1 cup hot strong brewed coffee For the Ganache Frosting: 12 oz semi-sweet chocolate chips (or chopped) 1 cup heavy cream

☐ Cook Mode Prevent your screen from going dark

Instructions

1. Prep: Preheat oven to 350°F (177°C). Grease and flour a 9×13 inch baking pan. 2. Mix Dry: In a large bowl, sift or whisk together the flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. 3. Mix Wet: In a medium bowl, whisk together the buttermilk, vegetable oil, eggs, and vanilla extract. 4. Combine: Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and whisk until about half-combined. 5. Add Coffee: Slowly pour the hot coffee into the batter while whisking gently. The batter will be very thin. Whisk until just smooth. 6. Bake: Pour the batter into the prepared 9×13 pan. Bake for 35-40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean and the top springs back lightly. 7. Cool: Let the cake cool completely in the pan on a wire rack. 8. Make Ganache: Place the chocolate chips in a medium heatproof bowl. Heat the heavy cream in a saucepan until just simmering (do not boil). 9. Rest: Pour the hot cream over the chocolate chips and let it sit for 5 minutes without stirring. 10. Whisk: Whisk the mixture, starting from the center, until the ganache is smooth and glossy. 11. Thicken: Let the ganache cool at room temperature, stirring occasionally, until it is thick and spreadable (about 1-2 hours). 12. Frost: Spread the thickened ganache over the cooled cake in the pan.

Notes

Hot Coffee: Do not skip the hot coffee. It is the secret to the moist texture and deep chocolate flavor. Decaf works fine. **Thin Batter:** The batter for this cake is extremely thin. This is normal and is what creates the velvety texture. **Cocoa:** Use a good quality dark or Dutch-process cocoa for the best “midnight” color and flavor.

- Prep Time: 20 Minutes
- Cook Time: 40 Minutes
- Category: Dessert
- Method: Baking

- Cuisine: **American**

Nutrition

- **Serving Size:** 1 serving
- **Calories:** 390
- **Sugar:** 38g
- **Sodium:** 300mg
- **Fat:** 20g
- **Saturated Fat:** 8g
- **Unsaturated Fat:** 0g
- **Trans Fat:** 0g
- **Carbohydrates:** 55g
- **Fiber:** 3g
- **Protein:** 5g
- **Cholesterol:** 45mg

Did you make this recipe?

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?? The Secret Ingredients for Success

The Power of Hot Coffee

If you learn one trick from this recipe, let it be this: add hot coffee to your chocolate cake batter. The hot liquid helps to dissolve the cocoa powder, which smooths the batter and releases flavor particles. The coffee itself contains compounds that amplify the taste of chocolate, making it taste richer and more complex.⁸ Your cake will not taste like coffee; it will just taste like the most incredible chocolate cake ever.

Buttermilk and Oil: The Moisture Duo

Butter, while delicious, contains water that can create a slightly drier crumb as it evaporates. This Velvety Midnight Chocolate Cake recipe uses vegetable oil, which is 100% fat.⁹ This coats the flour particles and locks in moisture, creating that signature tender, velvety texture that stays moist. The buttermilk adds a slight tang that balances the sweetness and provides the acid needed to activate the baking soda for a perfect rise.

? Step-by-Step: Creating the Cake Batter

Sifting the Dry Ingredients

First, preheat your oven to 350°F (177°C). Grease and flour a 9×13 inch baking pan, or line it with parchment paper. In a large mixing bowl, sift or whisk together all of your dry ingredients. This includes the all-purpose flour, granulated sugar, dark cocoa powder (or

Dutch-process), baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Sifting is crucial for cocoa powder to prevent lumps and ensure a smooth batter.¹⁰

Whisking the Wet Ingredients

In a separate, medium-sized bowl, lightly beat the large eggs. Then, whisk in the buttermilk, vegetable oil, and vanilla extract. Whisk this mixture until it is smooth and well combined. This separation of wet and dry ensures that you do not overwork the flour when you combine them, which is the key to a tender cake.

? The Final Mix and Bake

Combining and Adding the Coffee

Gently pour the wet ingredient mixture into the large bowl of dry ingredients. Mix on low speed or by hand with a whisk until the batter is *almost* combined, but you still see a few streaks of flour. Now, slowly and carefully pour in the hot, freshly brewed coffee. The batter will be very thin, like pancake batter. This is correct. Do not panic. Whisk until everything is smooth and uniform.

Baking Your Midnight Chocolate Cake

Pour the thin batter into your prepared 9×13 inch pan. Bake for 35-40 minutes. The cake is done when a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, or with just a few moist crumbs attached. The top should spring back lightly when touched. Be careful not to overbake, as that will dry out this beautifully moist cake. Let the cake cool completely in the pan on a wire rack.

? Frosting and Finishing Your Cake

A Simple Chocolate Ganache

This Velvety Midnight Chocolate Cake is so rich that it pairs perfectly with a simple, two-ingredient chocolate ganache. To make it, finely chop 12 ounces of good-quality dark or semi-sweet chocolate and place it in a heatproof bowl. Heat one cup of heavy cream in a saucepan until it is just simmering (not boiling). Pour the hot cream over the chocolate and let it sit, undisturbed, for five minutes.

Creating a Silky Finish

After five minutes, whisk the ganache, starting from the center and working your way out, until it is completely smooth and glossy. Let the ganache cool at room temperature, stirring occasionally, until it has thickened to a spreadable, peanut-butter-like consistency. This can take 1-2 hours. Once thickened, spread it generously over your cooled cake right in the pan.

? Tips and Variations for Your Cake

Pan Size Adjustments

This recipe is versatile. If you prefer a layer cake, you can divide the batter between two 8-inch or 9-inch round cake pans.

Pan Size	Bake Time	Yield
9×13 inch pan	35-40 minutes	1 sheet cake
Two 8-inch rounds	30-35 minutes	1 layer cake
Two 9-inch rounds	25-30 minutes	1 layer cake
24 Cupcakes	18-22 minutes	2 dozen cupcakes

Frosting Alternatives

While ganache is fantastic, this cake is a sturdy base for any frosting. A classic American chocolate buttercream would be delicious. A tangy cream cheese frosting would provide a wonderful contrast. For something truly decadent, you could even try the [Black Velvet Cake: The Best Easy Oreo Frosting Recipe](#), which would double down on the dark, rich flavors.

? Storing Your Velvety Midnight Cake

How to Keep it Moist

Because this cake is made with oil, it stays moist and delicious for longer than butter-based cakes. You can store the cake, covered tightly in the pan, at room temperature for up to three days. If you use a cream cheese frosting, it should be stored in the refrigerator but is best served at room temperature.

Freezing the Cake

This cake also freezes beautifully. You can freeze the entire unfrosted cake, wrapped tightly in two layers of plastic wrap and one layer of aluminum foil, for up to three months. Thaw it overnight at room temperature before frosting. You can also freeze individual slices (frosted or unfrosted) for an easy dessert whenever the craving strikes.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I use decaf coffee?

Yes, decaf coffee works just as well as regular coffee. The goal is the flavor and the hot liquid, not the caffeine. You can also use a teaspoon of espresso powder dissolved in one cup of hot water.

What is the best cocoa powder for this cake?

For the “midnight” color, a dark cocoa powder (like Hershey’s Special Dark) or a high-quality Dutch-process cocoa is recommended. Black cocoa powder can be used, but it will result in a more Oreo-like, less intensely chocolatey, flavor.

My cake is still thin, is it really done?

This is a very moist cake, so the “spring back” test is your most reliable indicator. If the center of the cake springs back when you lightly press it, it is done. The toothpick should come out clean.

Trust the process, and let it cool completely in the pan.

Conclusion

This Velvety Midnight Chocolate Cake is the easy dessert idea that will redefine your standards for chocolate cake. It is a one-bowl wonder (plus the bowl for wet ingredients) that comes together quickly and bakes into something truly special. The combination of hot coffee, buttermilk, and oil creates an impossibly moist and tender crumb, while the dark cocoa provides a deep, rich chocolate flavor. Whether you top it with a simple ganache or a fluffy buttercream, this cake is guaranteed to be a crowd-pleaser and will become your new go-to recipe.

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