

BLACK WALNUT CAKE RECIPE

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Follow our easy, step-by-step, instructions to learn how to make this old fashioned Black Walnut Cake.



Black Walnut Cake Recipe, an old fashioned Southern favorite.

I made this Black Walnut Cake to carry to my brothers house for our Thanksgiving dinner this year. (2018) This is my cake story, and I'm sticking to it. Smile.

For the past few years, I've had the great privilege to make many road trips with my older brother as we delivered his [Carolina Pig Cookers](#) grills all up and down the East Coast. Mostly, we travel together on trips in North and South Carolina, or Virginia.

Over the years, conversations often turn to food after a big meal, or when we're starting to get hungry. Smile. We also reminisce a lot about days gone by.

I've heard my brother talk about Black Walnut Cakes on many of those excursions, so I thought it was about time I tried to make one for him. Mama use to make them ever so often, and I don't think either one of us have had one in years.

If you've never had them, black walnuts have a unique taste all their own. They can also be a bit difficult to crack open and enjoy.

First, you have to wait for the walnuts to fall off the tree in the Fall of the year. They have a green outer shell that has to dry out, then you can get to the inner black walnut shell that holds the nut meat.

Bricks or large rocks were often used to crack the shell of the black walnut, often times into many pieces. After that, you would use one of Mama's old "[bobby pins](#)" to pick the meat out of the nut. You most always were eating very small pieces of the nut at a time. It was work, but worth it. Smile.

So, as it would happen, my brother called me a few days before Thanksgiving and slyly suggested that he would like to have one of his old fashioned cake favorites for the holidays.

"What might that be," I asked? And, without skipping a beat, he replied "Coconut, an old fashioned coconut cake like Mama use to make."

Now, he knew I'd made these in the past, and I knew he was dropping a hint. But, I didn't say anything.

TWICE more, before Thanksgiving, he mentioned that coconut cake. Go figure.

I never did tell him that I was already working on a Black Walnut Cake.

After another big Thanksgiving meal at his house, my brother slipped back into the dining room with a slice of cake in hand. I watched carefully as he bit into it, and I caught his eye as he looked over at me looking at him.

I waited.

"I knew you'd be watching me to see what kind of face I'd make when I took a bite", he said with a grin. "That's why I took the first bite in the kitchen before coming in here." Sneaky isn't he?

"Well," I asked?

"It's good, it's got a little walnut flavor but not a whole lot." he says.

I have to admit that I agreed with him. The walnuts alone added just a subtle hint of flavor to the cake, and I guess we both had been expecting a bit more.

I didn't think about there actually being a Black Walnut Cake Flavoring that I could have ordered. But there is. I'll share that info here as well.

My niece said the frosting was "delicious" and that I made it look almost "professional." That made me smile of course.

I know it may be more of a preferred taste when it comes to cakes, but it certainly is an old Southern favorite as far as cakes are concerned. They just don't seem to show up on family tables, reunions, or church socials like they did years back. So, let's see if we can remedy that. Want too?

Ready to give our cake a try? Alright then, let's head on out to the kitchen, and... Let's Get Cooking!

Black Walnut Cake – You'll need these ingredients to make the cake.

Frosting – And, you'll need these ingredients to make the frosting.

We'll make the cake layers first. To begin, sift your flour into a large bowl. You'll need 3 1/2 cups of sifted flour for the layers. Sift the flour, then set this aside for the time being. We'll measure out what

we need a bit later.

Chop the walnuts a bit smaller if desired.

I like using local pecans and walnuts from [Carolina Nut Cracker](#).

I generally purchase their pecans from our North Carolina State Farmers Market in Raleigh, but you can also order Pecans, English Walnuts, and the Black Walnuts online from their website.

To begin making the layers, add the butter and the shortening to a large mixing bowl.

Cream the butter and shortening together until smooth. This will take about three minutes with a good hand mixer.

Add the one cup of firmly packed brown sugar to the bowl.

Fill your measuring cup with brown sugar, then press it down and add more until you have a firmly packed cup of sugar.

Cream this mixture together until well combined.

Add one cup of white granulated sugar to the bowl.

Cream this mixture together until smooth. Don't forget to scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed while you'r mixing everything together.

Next, we'll add the eggs, one at a time, into the sugar mixture.

It's always best to crack the egg into a small bowl first so you can see any egg shell that might fall in. This way, you can remove it easily. You don't want any eggshell to get into the batter where it could be much harder to see. Better safe than sorry. Smile.

Add the eggs, one at a time to the mixing bowl.

After you add each egg, mix each one into the batter just until it's incorporated. Don't over mix it. Repeat this process until you have added all the eggs to the batter.

Let's start adding the flour. Place one level cup of the sifted flour into the bowl.

We're going to alternate between adding flour and buttermilk to complete making the batter for the layers. We'll end with flour.

Mix the cup of flour into the batter just until it's incorporated into the mixture.

Add about a half cup of the buttermilk into the mixture. The recipe calls for 1 1/2 cups of buttermilk, so this will divide out to adding a half cup of buttermilk at a time.

Just repeat the process, alternating between adding a cup of flour, mixing, then adding a half cup of buttermilk and mixing again until you've added three cups of flour and the 1 1/2 cups of buttermilk into the batter. Confused yet? I hope not.

You'll end up adding the 1/2 cup of flour last, then mixing this into the batter.

This concept of alternating between flour and milk is pretty much the standard for making cakes. You'll see the process repeated often in cake making. It just works out for us to add the flour one cup at a time, then a half cup of buttermilk at a time until we get it all mixed into the batter.

Mix each addition just enough to bring it into the batter. It doesn't have to be perfect each time until you get to the last addition, then you want to be sure you have all the flour mixed in and no lumps showing. Be sure to scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed as you go.

Add the flavoring next. Mix this in just until combined.

I'm using a Butter and Nut Flavoring from my friends over at Southern Flavoring Company. Next time, I will order their special **Black Walnut Flavoring** which would have been perfect for this cake. If you don't have either, you can use Vanilla Flavoring just as easily.

Sprinkle the chopped walnuts all around over the batter.

Grab a large spoon and fold the walnuts into the batter. Since the walnuts are heavier, it's easier to do this with a spoon. Use a folding action by dipping down to the bottom and bring the batter up over the top and repeat this until the walnuts are mixed into the batter. This will take just about 20 seconds.

Prepare your pans.

I like to cut a parchment circle to fit inside my pans. It's not necessary, but it helps the layers release from the pan much easier once they are baked. I also use a canned spray with flour mixed in to coat the inside of the pans.

If you prefer, just grease the pans, then dust the inside with a bit of flour until the pan is well coated.

Find which way works best for you. Smile.

Divide the batter evenly between the three pans.

I use a large spoon and try to scoop out about the same amount each time and add it to the pans. I add a spoonful of batter to one pan, then the next pan, repeating this process until I've used up all the batter.

Then, I use the back of the spoon to spread the batter out in the pan. Start at the center and gently spread the batter to smooth it out in the pan.

Place the pans in a oven pre-heated to 350F degrees. Bake until done.

I've always used a toothpick to test my cake layers to see if they are done. But, I wanted to change that tactic this time and use a quick read digital thermometer to bake the layers until they were done.

It didn't work out. But, it was my fault.

I had three pans in the oven at one time, which is okay. You just need to rotate them towards the end of their baking time so they bake more evenly. My plan was to bake them for 18 minutes, then rotate

the pans. If you do it early, before the layers start to firm up some, the layers might fall during the process.

At 18 minutes, I opened the oven door to rotate the pans. I could see the layers had already pulled from the side of the baking pans, which pretty much meant they were done.

I should have tested the layers then with the digital thermometer. I'm sure they were done.

But, I went ahead and rotated the pans and closed the oven door. After about 5 more minutes, I got concerned they would over bake and I checked the layers with the thermometer. They were already over the 200F – 205F degree range that I had hoped for. One layer was up to 215F degrees.

I immediately pulled them from the oven. Maybe I can do better next time. It's just part of the learning process. You can thank me later.

When done, remove the layers from the oven and place on a wire rack to cool for 10 minutes.

I didn't go into more detail here, but after 10 minutes, flip the layers over and remove them from the pans. Let them rest on the cooling rack until completely cooled before frosting.

Once my layers cooled, I wrapped them in clear plastic wrap and just left them on my counter until the next day to frost them.

Speaking of frosting... let's make some.

Let the butter and the cream cheese soften a bit first, then place it all into a large mixing bowl.

Using a mixer, cream these two ingredients together until fully combined and smooth. This took a couple of minutes using my mixer on almost the medium speed.

Gradually add the sugar, mixing until it gets combined with the butter and cream cheese.

This will take a bit longer because we've got a lot of sugar to add into the bowl. Eight cups is a lot of

powdered sugar, but just add a little at a time, mix it in, then add some more. Repeat the process until you've got it all mixed together.

Don't forget to scrape down the sides of the bowl every once in awhile during the process.

Add the Vanilla Flavoring.

I didn't think about it when I took the photo of the ingredients for making the frosting, but I did have a clear vanilla flavoring. That's what I added to the frosting to keep it whiter in color.

My friends at Southern Flavoring Company have a clear flavoring in their Happy Home line of all things vanilla.

Mix the flavoring into the frosting. Now, let's start frosting our layers.

Pipe a border of frosting around the layer.

I'm skipping a few photos with some of this process, but here's what I did.

I trimmed the dome off of one of the layers to make it more level. Then, I placed a dab of frosting in the center of the cake board I'm using to build my cake on. I turned the layer top side down, and placed it on the board, centering it as best I could. The dab of frosting helps hold the layer in place on the board.

Next, I placed some of the frosting in a decorators bag and piped a border of frosting around the outside edge of the layer. This acts as a barrier for adding more frosting as we proceed.

I used an ice cream scoop and placed three scoops of frosting onto the layer. It actually took four scoops, but I didn't realize that until I started smoothing it out. It really depends on how much frosting you want between each layer. Using a scoop will help you keep the thickness of the frosting between each layer about the same.

Use a spatula to spread the frosting out across the top of the layer.

Repeat this process with the second layer, then add the top layer.

Spread a much thinner layer on the top, then spread a thin layer all around the sides of the cake. This looks a little rough at the moment. Smile.

We're going to make a "crumb coat" for the frosting to seal in the crumbs. After I took this photo, I used my spatula to smooth out the frosting as evenly as possible across the top and the sides. Fill any gaps between the layers with frosting and smooth that out as well.

Once you have it smoothed, place it uncovered in your refrigerator for about 30 minutes to firm up the frosting.

This crumb coat, once chilled, will keep any crumbs on the cake from showing up in our final layer of frosting. It'll just make it prettier. Smile.

After about 30 minutes, you can remove the cake from the refrigerator and frost the sides and top as you like.

Enjoy!

I've never claimed to be a cake decorator. It's something I'd like to get better at, and I try to work on it whenever I make a cake. Old age might cause me to rush through it a bit though. Smile.

I did frost the cake all over as you can see, then sprinkled just a few of the crushed walnuts on top for a bit of eye appeal. This really isn't a decorating type of frosting, at least not for me.

And, since it IS a cream cheese frosting, it needs to be stored in your refrigerator once it's made to keep it fresh. I hope you enjoy our old fashioned Black Walnut Cake. I look forward to hearing your Comments on it below.