

Simply Superb Scratch Specials

Baking Fun for the Whole Family



Marble Pound Cake

Makes 1 (12-inch) cake, 12 to 16 servings

This is very fine cake – rich, with a buttery crumb, and so good it doesn't even need frosting! Bake in a fancy patterned tube pan or an angel food cake pan and serve for a special event: book club, company or family dinner, birthday or other celebration. You will need an electric mixer, either stand or hand, since creaming the butter and sugar and beating in the eggs is the key to the velvety texture. And follow the advice of expert bakers and let the eggs and butter stand at room temperature for several hours before you begin the cake – it makes for better mixing and a better cake.

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| 1 1/2 cups (3 sticks) butter, softened | 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour |
| 1 1/2 cups sugar | 1 tablespoon Clabber Girl or Rumford baking powder |
| 6 eggs | 1/2 teaspoon salt |
| 1/2 cup sour cream | 3 (1-ounce) squares unsweetened chocolate, melted and cooled |
| 2 teaspoons vanilla | |

Preheat oven to 350°F. In large mixing bowl with electric mixer at high speed, cream butter until fluffy, about 2 to 3 minutes. With mixer running, gradually add sugar, about 1/4 cup at a time. Beat 3 to 4 minutes, scraping down sides every minute or so, until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs, one at a time, scraping down sides between each egg. Beat in sour cream and vanilla.

In medium bowl, stir together flour, baking powder and salt. Add to egg mixture and mix on low speed until flour is blended in.

Spoon half the batter into medium bowl and set aside. Add cooled chocolate to remaining batter in bowl and beat on medium speed just until blended.

Spray bottom and sides of a nonstick 12-inch fluted or tube pan. (For pan without nonstick coating, generously butter bottom and sides and then dust with flour.)

Alternate generous spoonfuls of white and chocolate batters in bottom of pan, then drop spoonfuls of white batter on chocolate already in pan and chocolate on white. With rubber or metal spatula and reaching to bottom of pan, gently swirl batters just once around the pan to marble. Rap pan sharply on counter to get rid of any air bubbles.

Bake until a thin wood or metal skewer inserted off center comes out clean, about 55 minutes to 1 hour. Let pan cool on rack for 5 minutes. Loosen edges and around center opening with tip of sharp knife. Place cooling rack on top of pan. Using hot pads, invert so that cake comes out on the rack. Cool completely.

Variations:

- Add 1 tablespoon grated orange peel to the white portion of the batter before spooning into the prepared pan.
- Add 1 to 2 teaspoons instant coffee powder or instant espresso powder to the chocolate portion of the batter before spooning into the prepared pan.

Oatmeal Fig Chocolate Chip Cookies

Makes about 3 dozen cookies

A champion cookie – moist, chewy and crunchy all at the same time, thanks to the figs. Let the kids help with measuring, mixing and dropping the dough onto baking sheets. A small ice cream scoop is perfect for portioning the dough. Kids can also help stem the figs, but chopping should be for grown-ups or older kids only. Store cookies in an airtight container – they'll stay moist for several days, if they last that long.

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter**
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar**
- 3/4 cup brown sugar**
- 2 eggs**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla**
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour**
- 1 1/2 teaspoons Clabber Girl or Rumford baking powder**
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 1 1/2 cups quick-cooking (not instant) oats**
- 1 (9-ounce) package dried California figs, stemmed and chopped**
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips**

1/2 to 1 cup chopped nuts

Preheat oven to 375°F. In large mixing bowl, cream butter until light. Add sugars and beat until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Scrape down sides. Beat in vanilla. In medium bowl, stir together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add to butter mixture and stir until blended. Stir in oats, chopped figs, chocolate chips and chopped nuts. Drop by rounded tablespoonsful (about 1/4 cup or small ice cream scoop) onto greased or oiled baking sheets. Bake until firm to a light touch, about 15 minutes. Cool on wire rack.

Tip: You can chop the figs with a sharp chef's knife on a cutting board, snip them into pieces with kitchen shears, or in a food processor fitted with the metal blade. Pulse on and off only until pieces are of similar size – do not over process.



Better Baking Tips

Start with the best and the freshest ingredients.

Baking powder: Check the date on the bottom of your baking powder can, and, if it's more than a year old, buy new. It's a minimal investment in the ingredient that makes muffins, cakes, cookies rise (leaven). Check the country of origin listed on the can. American-made baking powder must meet a strict standard for leavening action. And choose a brand with a built-in leveling edge on the can for

easier measuring.

Dried figs add moisture, flavor and texture to a wide variety of baked goods. You'll find them in handy pouches or plastic wrapped crowns. Be sure to keep leftover figs tightly wrapped, so they won't dry out.

Spices too should be fresh. If there's a can or bottle that's been in your drawer since you can't remember when, it's time for a new supply.

Accurate measuring is another key to successful baking.

Do use measuring spoons for ingredients such as baking powder, baking soda, salt and spices. And measure all the

white ingredients before getting to the spices. That way you don't carry the dark colors of the spices into the light-colored baking powder.

Use dry measuring cups for dry ingredients – flour, sugar, oatmeal, etc. No need to sift flour, but give it a good stir to loosen it up before measuring. Spoon lightly into the measuring cup and level the top with a knife.

Use liquid measures (usually glass) for milk, oil, molasses or other liquids.

And here's an easy trick for measuring sticky stuff such as molasses or honey: first measure the oil in the cup, then the

molasses. The molasses or honey will slide right out. Or spray the measuring cup with cooking spray.

More Tips For Successful Baking

Oven temperature is another key to success. Invest in an oven thermometer and check it after the oven has had at least 20 minutes to preheat. If hotter than the temperature you selected, adjust the setting downward. Vice versa if oven is too low.

Timing, too, is important. The recipes here give you a description of doneness as well as a time range, so you have an additional way to judge when the baked goods are done.

Good pans make a big difference. A good pan is an investment for good results. Be sure to use the pan size given in the recipe.

For more information about baking and for lots of great recipes, the Clabber Girl Baking Powder website www.clabbergirl.com is the place to go. You'll also want to check out www.homebaking.org for other great family baking ideas.

About California Dried Figs

These sweet little ripened and dried-on-the-tree fruits add so much to baked goods – flavor, moisture, sweetness and crunch from the tiny seeds. You'll find dark Black Mission figs or honey-colored Calimyrna,

either in pouches, in plastic wrapped crowns or in bulk. Either variety works in the recipes here. Because the figs dry on the tree they still have their stems attached and you'll need to cut or pinch the stems off before using.

To chop figs, use a chef's knife and a cutting board, snip them with kitchen shears (dip shears in hot water as you cut to prevent sticking), or pulse on and off in a food processor just until all pieces are chopped.

Check out www.californiafigs.com for lots more information about figs, and for more recipes.

Why doctor a mix when you can stir up amazing baked goods from scratch? For the same amount of time and money – frequently even less – the results will be fresh, flavorful and exclusively yours.

Celebrate February – Bake for Family Fun Month – with any or all of these wonderful recipes. The directions are clear and simple, so that the whole family can get involved, get great results and learn just how easy (and better tasting) it is to bake from scratch – any month.

Baking is both a science and an art. The combination of baking powder, flour, butter or oil, eggs, dried figs, spices and other ingredients is a carefully balanced formula, so you do need to follow the recipe. The art comes with the joy of creating batters and doughs, shapes and forms, and, of course, the eating.



Carrot Applesauce Cupcakes

Makes 10 large or 16 medium cupcakes

Here's an easier, less-rich version of the famous carrot cake. Cupcakes are now very chic for every event – you'll find them as fancy tiered towers at elegant weddings, for individual treats for special birthdays, or as convenient and portable snacks.

This recipe uses the muffin method of mixing, combining the mixed dry and liquid ingredients just until moistened. The easy mixing method makes it a great recipe for kids to assist with. Do let the adults handle the carrot shredding, either with a hand shredder or in the food processor.

If a spicy carrot cake is your favorite, just stir 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon and 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg in with the dry ingredients.



- 2 cups all-purpose flour**
- 3/4 cup sugar**
- 1 tablespoon Clabber Girl or Rumford baking powder**
- 3/4 teaspoon salt**
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda**
- 1 cup unsweetened applesauce**
- 2 eggs**
- 1/2 cup oil**
- 1 cup shredded carrots**
- 1 cup chopped nuts (pecans, walnut, hazelnuts or almonds)**

Lemon Cream Cheese Frosting:

- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened**
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced**

1-1/2 cups confectioners' sugar (depending on size of lemon)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray large or medium muffin tins or line with paper bake cups.

In large mixing bowl, stir together flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and baking soda. In medium bowl, beat applesauce, eggs and oil until blended. Stir in carrots and nuts. Pour liquid ingredients into dry ingredients and stir just until completely moistened, no more than 25 strokes.

Fill muffin tins or paper bake cups 2/3 full. Bake until top springs back when lightly touched and thin metal or wood skewer comes out clean, about 30 minutes. Turn out and cool, top side up, on wire rack. When completely cooled, frost with Lemon Cream Cheese Frosting.

Lemon Cream Cheese Frosting

In medium mixing bowl, beat together cream cheese, lemon peel and juice and confectioners' sugar until smooth.



Fancy Fig Bread

Makes 1 (9x5x3-inch) loaf, 12 to 16 slices

This easy bread uses the muffin method, meaning you mix the dry ingredients and the wet ingredients separately, then together. The secret to success is to mix just enough to moisten the dry ingredients – no more than 25 strokes or stirs. Bake the bread a day in advance, then wrap the cooled loaf in plastic wrap until ready to enjoy – the flavors blend as it stands. Cut slices with a long, serrated knife and serve with butter or whipped cream cheese for a breakfast or brunch, or a shower, luncheon or tea. Your family may want a loaf of their own, to slice and enjoy on the run for a weekday breakfast or snack.

Opt for either dried California Black Mission figs or the lighter colored Calimyrna – the choice is yours. Either variety adds wonderful flavor, texture and moisture.

Select light or dark molasses or honey as the sweetener, depending on your preference. Using molasses results in a rich, dark bread. The honey (historically a longtime a companion of figs) makes a lighter-colored bread. And, pick your favorite flavor of honey – clover, fireweed, orange blossom, buckwheat, etc.

Add nuts, if you wish, but you'll find the crisp and crunchy fig seeds add plenty of texture.

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour**
- 1 tablespoon Clabber Girl or Rumford baking powder**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 1/2 teaspoon soda**
- 1 (9-ounce) package dried California figs, stemmed and chopped**
- 1 cup chopped hazelnuts or other nuts**
- 2 eggs**
- 1/2 cup oil**
- 1 cup milk or plain yogurt**
- 1/2 cup light or dark molasses or honey**

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 9x5x3-inch loaf pan, or generously butter bottom and sides of pan and then dust with flour. In large mixing bowl, stir together flour, baking powder, salt and soda. Stir in figs and nuts. In medium mixing bowl or 1-quart measure, beat eggs, oil, milk and molasses or honey until blended. Pour egg/milk mixture into flour mixture and stir just until dry ingredients are moistened, no more than 25 strokes.

Turn into prepared loaf pan and spread batter evenly. Bake until thin metal or wood skewer comes out clean, about 55 minutes to 1 hour. Let cool in pan 5 minutes, then loosen edges with tip of sharp knife. Turn out onto wire rack to cool completely. Wrap cooled bread in plastic wrap to retain moisture.

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1476 Labrador Circle • Corona, CA 92882-5768
800/654-5463 • 909/808-9100 • Fax 909/280-0904
www.eces.com • e-mail: lauraj@eces.com