



The Experts'

GUIDE TO ENTERTAINING

*Recipes for company from some of our best-loved bakers,
food writers, and chefs.*

written by posie brien • photographed by kristin teig
food styling by liz neily

Rose Levy Berenbaum

CARROT CAKE WITH WHITE CHOCOLATE BUTTERCREAM

"This classic carrot cake is perfect for entertaining because it can easily be made days ahead and yet remains moist and delicious. And people love it! Cream cheese gives a slight tang to the white chocolate buttercream that complements the cake beautifully, balancing out the sweetness and serving as a perfect flavor and texture for the tender crumb." —RLB

WHEN IT'S TIME TO ENTERTAIN, WE ALL WANT TO IMPRESS. Everything we make for company—whether it's a casual weeknight dinner with friends or a glitzy cocktail party—should be memorable and occasion-worthy. Yes, we want to offer up food that looks beautiful and tastes delicious, but we also need it to be achievable and reliable. We're always on the lookout for recipes that we can add to our personal collection of entertaining must-haves: each of these comforting yet vibrant and flavorful recipes is vouched for by people who cook for a living and understand the importance of impressive results.

To uncover some of the very best, we turned to the experts for inspiration. We tapped some of our favorite food writers, cookbook authors, and bakers—celebrated restaurateur Yotam Ottolenghi, beloved gourmet Nigella Lawson, and ice cream maven Jeni Britton-Bauer, among others—and asked for the recipes they love to make the most for company. They're sharing their back-pocket essential dishes here. From a savory Dutch baby, puffy and golden and flecked with herbs, to a showstopping layer cake with a surprise inside (vertical stripes of bright pink buttercream!), these are recipes that are comforting and full of vibrant, rich flavors that will make every home baker look like a professional.

Take inspiration from their years of experience and try your hand at Gail Simmons' banana upside-down cake, or Joanne Chang's mushroom empanaditas. Take all that time you won't spend stressing over searching for the perfect recipe, and use it to accept compliments from every guest at your table.

Carrot Cake with White Chocolate Buttercream

YIELD: ONE 9" LAYER CAKE

CAKE

- 2 1/2 cups (10 5/8 ounces) King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour**
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder**
- 1 teaspoon baking soda**
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon**
- 1 tablespoon Dutch-process cocoa**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 4 large eggs**
- 1 1/2 cups (10 1/2 ounces) granulated sugar**
- 1/2 cup (3 3/4 ounces) packed light brown sugar**

- 1 1/4 cups (8 3/4 ounces) canola or safflower oil**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- 3 cups (1 1/4 pounds before peeling) shredded carrots, firmly packed**

FROSTING

- 1 1/2 cups + 1 tablespoon (12 1/2 ounces) cream cheese**
- 1/2 cup (4 ounces) unsalted butter**
- 10 1/2 ounces white chocolate**
- 1 tablespoon + 2 teaspoons crème fraîche or sour cream**
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract**

Set a rack in the lower third of your oven and preheat to 350°F. Grease two 9" x 2" round pans or two 8" x 2" square pans. Line with parchment and grease the parchment.

For the cake: In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, cocoa, and salt. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the eggs, sugars, oil, and vanilla. Beat with a paddle attachment at low speed until blended. Add the flour mixture and beat for 20 seconds, just until incorporated. Scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl. Add the carrots and mix to combine.

Divide the batter between the prepared pans (about 1 pound 10 ounces in each). Bake for 45 to 55 minutes, until a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when lightly pressed in the center. The edges will just begin to shrink from the sides of the pans.

Remove from the oven and let cool on a rack for 10 minutes. Run a thin-bladed knife or spatula around the edges of the pans, then turn out of the pans and place back on the rack to finish cooling completely.

For the frosting: Thirty minutes ahead, place the cream cheese and butter on the counter. Cut the butter into four pieces and coarsely chop the white chocolate.

Place the chocolate in a heatproof bowl and melt in the microwave in 15-second bursts, stirring in between, until the chocolate is 85% melted. Stir without further heating until the chocolate is completely fluid. Let cool until just slightly warm to the touch (80°F to 85°F).

Place the cream cheese, butter, and crème fraîche (or sour cream) in the bowl of a food processor and process until smooth and creamy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the cooled, melted white chocolate and pulse several times until incorporated. Add the vanilla and pulse until it disappears.

To assemble: Place one layer upside down on a serving plate. Cover with half the frosting (leave the sides uncovered). Invert the second layer over the first and frost the top of the cake with the remaining frosting. Keep refrigerated until ready to serve.

NUTRITION INFORMATION PER SERVING (1/16 of cake, 147g): 610 calories, 7g protein, 50g carbohydrates, 44g fat, 1g fiber, 14g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 88mg cholesterol, 341mg sodium, 34g sugars, 2mg vitamin C, 1mg iron, 132mg calcium.