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## Pumpkin cake with spice cake mix

This pumpkin spice cake celebrates the warm and cozy flavors of fall in a lighter, eye catching cake that is guaranteed to impress at every occasion, plus it’s make ahead friendly and freezer friendly! This pumpkin spice cake recipe is a light and tender butter sponge cake, infused with warm pumpkin pie spice and layered with fluffy cream cheese whipped cream sweetened with real maple syrup and topped with crunchy toasted pecans. Are you drooling yet? In this pumpkin spice cake recipe post, I’ve included step by step photos, tips and tricks and everything you need to know about how to make this pumpkin spice cake a tender success! Fall ‘tis the season for everything pumpkin! If you’re a pumpkin lover, don’t miss all of my pumpkin recipes! Pumpkin cheesecake, pumpkin cheesecake bars, pumpkin Nutella bars, pumpkin Bundt cake, pumpkin roll and Nutella pumpkin roll, pumpkin bread, pumpkin bread pudding and pumpkin muffins are all fabulous! pin this recipe to save for later PUMPKIN spice cake RECIPE This pumpkin spice cake tastes just as gorgeous as it looks and is scarily easy to make. This subtly sweet, warmly spiced cake is different than my other pumpkin cake recipes in that instead of being a rich cake with a rich cream cheese frosting, it’s a light butter sponge cake with a light cream cheese whipped cream. The lightness of the cake allows you to enjoy all the towering layers without feeling weighed down, you’ll even be going back for seconds and thirds! For the cake itself, I wanted a tender cake but one that was sturdy enough to hold up to the layers – the answer: a butter sponge cake! The batter has a high ratio of eggs to flour which creates more structure and moisture at the same time. The eggs, melted butter and sugar are beaten all together (known as the egg foaming method) which gives the cake structure and leavening to the recipe. It is also a super easy, one step mixing technique. For the frosting, I wanted a light frosting, but one that wouldn’t collapse in between the cake layers – the answer: cream cheese whipped cream! It is essentially the best of both cream cheese and whipped cream. The cream cheese makes it thick enough to support the cake and the heavy cream makes it light and airy at the same time. It is flavored with sugar and a splash of pure maple syrup which beautifully compliments the crowning crunchy, toasted pecans. PUMPKIN SPICE CAKE RECIPE INGREDIENTS Pumpkin: make sure to use pure pumpkin puree and not pumpkin pie filling!Pumpkin pie spice: is a blend of cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and cloves to make this pumpkin spice cake taste like fall. I’ve also added extra cinnamon because – cinnamon!Butter: please do NOT substitute the butter with oil or you will be missing out on some serious flavor and the eggs won’t foam correctly. Use unsalted butter so we can control the salt in the recipe.Sugar: use granulated sugar and do not substitute with brown sugar or honey or it will change the texture of the cake.Baking soda and baking powder: works with the whipped egg mixture to leaven the cake. Take care they are fresh, (throw out after 6-12 months) so it works!Eggs: provide structure and moisture. Use room temperature eggs because they whip to a higher volume which promotes a more tender cake.All-purpose flour: is the best for this pumpkin spice cake recipe. Skip the cake flour, bread flour and wheat flour. I have not made this recipe with gluten free flour, so I can’t speak to whether it will work here. If you try it, please let me know!Vanilla: use pure vanilla extract for best results. Salt: enhances the flavors and cuts through the sweetness. You want to use good old table salt. MAPLE CREAM CHEESE WHIPPED CREAM: Maple syrup: please use pure maple syrup and don’t use the imitation breakfast kind, sometimes called “pancake syrup.” Pancake syrup is made of corn syrup and flavored with maple extract. Pure maple syrup is produced from the sap of maple trees grown in Canada and the Northeastern United States and has a distinctive rich, sweet and nutty flavor. Cream cheese: use full fat cream cheese for best results. The cream cheese should be softened to room temperature at room temperature otherwise it can make your whipped cream too soft.Heavy cream: use only heavy whipping cream – milk or half and half will not work. Make sure your heavy cream is chilled, take it out of the refrigerator just when ready to use.Sugar: use only granulated sugar, and no, you won’t be able to taste the texture!Orange juice: balances the sweetness. You can use bottled or fresh.Vanilla extract: pure vanilla extract for the best flavor. Can You Make Pumpkin Spice Cake With Canned Pumpkin? Fresh Pumpkin? You can make this pumpkin spice cake with canned pumpkin or cooked fresh pumpkin. If using canned pumpkin, take care you are using pumpkin puree and NOT pumpkin pie filling because they are not the same thing. Pumpkin puree is cooked and pureed pumpkin without any added sugar or spices. Pumpkin Pie filling, however, is sweetened and seasoned with fall spices. Both pumpkin puree and pumpkin pie filling can be found in the baking aisle of your grocery store, so make sure you are grabbing the right can! I stock up on cans of Libby’s 100% pure pumpkin puree at the end of every season, that way I can start making glorious pumpkin everything in August and September, long before the shelves are stocked. HOW TO MAKE PUMPKIN PUREE You are welcome to use your own fresh pumpkin instead of canned pumpkin puree. My only caution is that you cannot use a carving pumpkin (like the pumpkin you carve for Halloween), but need to use a sugar pumpkin. Sugar pumpkins are smaller, sweeter, and less fibrous than carving pumpkins. Carving pumpkins are raised for their durability and not their taste; they are blander, stringier and moister than sugar pumpkins. To make pumpkin puree: Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper (for easy cleanup). Halve the pumpkin(s) and scoop out the seeds (reserve seeds for roasting if you wish). Slice each pumpkin halve in half to make quarters.Place pumpkin quarters cut sides down on the baking sheet. Roast for 35 minutes at 425 OR until the flesh easily pierces through with a fork. Set aside to cool for a few minutes (you can use this time to clean the pumpkin seeds) then peel the pumpkin skin off of the pumpkins, discard the skin.To drain cooked, fresh pumpkin, line a strainer with cheesecloth and place over a large bowl. Add the cooked pumpkin puree and let drain for 1-2 hours or until the pumpkin is thick and can hold its shape when pressed together in the cheesecloth. Once the pumpkin is to this consistency, you can use it in this recipe! WHAT IS PUMPKIN PIE SPICE MADE OF? Pumpkin pie spice is a blend of cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, allspice and ground cloves. It should be easy to find in the spice aisle of all major grocery stores. If you don’t have pumpkin pie spice, you can use 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon (for a total 2 tpsp cinnamon in this recipe), ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg, ½ teaspoon ground ginger and ½ teaspoon ground cloves. HOW TO MAKE PUMPKIN SPICE CAKE This pumpkin spice cakes very simple to make yet delivers impressive results. Here’s how to make it with step by step photos (full ingredient measurements in the recipe card at the bottom of the post): Mix dry ingredients: Whisk the flour, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in a bowl; set aside. Foam eggs: Using a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat sugar, melted butter and eggs on medium high speed until pale and fluffy, about three minutes. Add pumpkin: Reduce speed to low, add pumpkin and vanilla and mix until combined. Add dry ingredients: Slowly add the flour mixture and mix on low until only few small flour streaks remain. Bake: Divide batter between prepared pans and level. Bake for 22-28 minutes or until a toothpick comes out with a few moist crumbs, rotating pans halfway through baking. Let cakes cool: Transfer cake pans to a wire rack and let cool for 10 minutes, then invert each cake onto a large plate, discard the parchment, and re-invert back onto the lightly greased rack. Let cool completely. Meanwhile, make the whipped maple frosting. Add cream cheese, sugar, maple, vanilla, orange juice and salt to a large bowl. Beat with a handheld mixer until light and fluffy. Only begin to add the heavy cream once the cream cheese mixture is very light. Add heavy cream and beat until stiff peaks form. “Stiff peaks” simply means the whipped cream will stand straight up when the beaters are removed and not curl at the tips. Cut cakes in half: Transfer the cakes to a cutting board. Use a long-serrated knife to score the cakes in half all the way around before cutting. This way, you are not slicing straight through the cake and coming up uneven on the other side. Assemble: Place one cake round on a plate or pedestal, then spread ½ cup of frosting evenly over the top spreading to within ¼” of the edge. Repeat with remaining cake layers and frosting. Add pecans. Sprinkle pecans over top. Serve. Tips for the best pumpkin spice cake Although this pumpkin spice cake recipe is simple, there are a few proper techniques that ensure the perfect cake: Here’s what to pay special attention to: Use correct pan size. It is important that you use 8×8 round cake pans and not 9×9 cake pans. The cakes are quite short and will be too thin if you use 9×9 pans unless you don’t plan on cutting each cake in half.Don’t skip the parchment. A fool-proof non-stick surface is a crucial when making this cake. Parchment paper will beautifully release your cake every time. Use cooking spray with flour. It is so quick and easy to use and saves you the hassle and mess of buttering and flouring your pans. You should be able to find it at your local grocery store in the baking aisle. Use pumpkin puree NOT pumpkin pie filling. Pumpkin puree is 100% pure pumpkin that has been cooked and pureed. Pumpkin pie filling, however, is sweetened and seasoned with spices and will not work in this recipe.Use room temperature eggs. Room temperature eggs bind together more easily and whisk to a higher volume. This promotes more even distribution into the batter resulting in a light, fluffy cake (because eggs trap air). Cold eggs result in a denser cake. Room temperature eggs also create a runnier batter which is easier to spread/not overwork so the cake has more lift and rises more evenly. How to quickly bring eggs to room temperature. Fill a bowl with warm water (not hot) and add eggs and let sit 10-20 minutes.Let melted butter cool. The melted butter is added directly to the eggs and sugar so it’s important that the butter is cooled to room temperature otherwise it will make the eggs curdle. The melted butter creates a chewier, less open cake (yet still tender) which supports the layers. Foam the eggs until ribbons form. Beating eggs with sugar is called the egg foaming method and is used in foam cakes such as angel food, sponge or chiffon. This step is important because it is the only time we get to whip air into the cake batter which is what leavens the cake. You will want to beat the mixture for the full 3-4 minutes until the mixture is beautiful thick, fluffy and a foamy pale-yellow cream that falls into a thick ribbon when the paddle is lifted. The ribbon should sit on top of the mixture for a couple seconds before sinking. Don’t overmix egg mixture. If the mixture is not whipped long enough, it will be too thin and not be able to hold the ribbon formation, resulting in a tougher cake. Whipping the mixture too long will make it too fluffy to make the ribbons, resulting in more of a foam consistency. I recommend checking the mixture right at 3 minutes then continue only if needed, stopping once you have reached the ribbon stage.Use a stand mixer with the paddle attachment. This is the most efficient way beat the egg mixture. You can use a hand-held mixer but it will just take longer. If using, make sure you circulate it through the mixture.Don’t overmix the batter. Once you add the dry ingredients with the egg mixture, stop mixing the batter as soon as you see most of the streaks of flour disappear. Overmixing cake batter causes the gluten in the flour to form elastic gluten strands which result in a dense, chewy texture.Bake immediately. Don’t forget to preheat your oven before you start making the cake batter. Once the baking powder/baking soda are added to the wet ingredients, a chemical reaction begins. You need to take advantage of this reaction quickly before it passes otherwise your cake won’t rise as intended or be as tender.Don’t over-bake the cake. Start checking your cake at 25 minutes and only add time if needed because an overbaked cake is a drier cake. Level cakes: leveling the cakes isn’t necessary, but can create a more aesthetically pleasing finished pumpkin spice cake. If you do decide to level the cakes, make sure they are completely cooled first.Do NOT over-microwave cream cheese to soften. For the perfect frosting consistency, let the cream cheese soften at room temperature. If you must use the microwave, take care to under do it or your frosting will be runny and will collapse in between the cake layers. It is best to plan ahead and never microwave the cream cheese. Whip to stiff peaks. It is important that you whip the cream cheese whipped cream to stiff peaks because we want it to be thick and firm enough to hold its shape in between the layers.Don’t over-bat whipped cream. That being said, stop beating as soon as stiff peaks form because over-beating can cause the cream to separate.Freeze whipped cream frosting if runny. If your frosting happens to be runny, stick it in the freezer until thickened, then give it a quick whisk before spreading. Just make sure not to forget about it in the freezer! Leave a plain border: Don’t frost the cake all the way to the edges, rather leave a 1/4-inch plain border because the filling will compress when the cakes are stacked on top of each other. The border prevents the frosting from spilling out the sides.Let the pumpkin spice cake sit at room temperature. This cake tastes best if removed from the refrigerator at least 30 minutes before serving to take the chill off. Slice first, then let rest. I suggest slicing the cake while it’s still cold and then letting it sit at room temperature because the cake will be firmer and easier to slice when it’s fresh from the fridge. RECIPE VARIATIONS This pumpkin spice cake is like pumpkin bread – you can pretty much add anything! Just take care to chop any add-ins finely so they easily incorporate into the batter. Here are some add-in ideas: Stronger maple flavor. Amp up the maple to ¼ cup and reduce sugar to ½ cup in the whipped cream frosting.Chocolate chips: are always divine paired with pumpkin. Use mini chocolate chips and fold them into the batter at the very end.Dried fruit: chopped raisins, dried cranberries, dried cherries, dried apricots, etc. if that’s your thing.Coconut: sweetened, toasted coconut flakes could be folded into the batter or even added in between layers.Gingersnaps: add some crushed gingersnaps in between the layers or just on top of the cake with the pecans. Can I Make This Recipe as Cupcakes? I do not recommend this pumpkin spice cakes as cupcakes because it is a butter sponge cake and won’t have the consistency you’re looking for. Instead, use this pumpkin muffin recipe. How Far in Advance Can You Make This Cake? Pumpkin spice cake will last about 3-4 days at its peak but can last in the refrigerator for about a week. I actually recommend making this cake a day ahead of time because I think it tastes better/more flavorful the second day. You can also make the cake layers ahead of time. Once cakes have cooled, wrap them tightly in plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator for up to 3 days, or freeze for up to 2 months. How to store pumpkin spice cake Wrap the pumpkin spice cake with plastic wrap or use a cake carrier/storage container if you have one. Refrigerate for up to 7 days. I like to microwave my slices for 10 seconds for moister leftovers. DOES PUMPKIN spice cake NEED TO BE REFRIGERATED? Yes, this pumpkin spice cake should be refrigerated, not so much because of the danger of room temperature cream cheese, but because it holds its shape better. Fun fact: According to Jan Moon, Cooking Light Test Kitchen expert, you do not need to refrigerate cake with cream cheese frosting (the sugar will act as a preservative) IF your house stays below 70 degrees F and you plan on eating it within 2 days. Still, refrigerate this pumpkin spice cake for the best texture and stability. HOW TO FREEZE: I suggest freezing just the cake layers and making the frosting fresh the day you’re going to serve the cake, although you can freeze the fully assembled pumpkin spice cake: To freeze the cake layers: Tightly double wrap each cake layer separately in plastic wrap.Freeze cake for up to 2 months. Allow the cakes to thaw overnight in the refrigerator then unwrap and come to room temperature on the counter before assembling. To freeze assembled cake: Double wrap the cake in plastic wrap followed by foil.Freeze for up to 2 months.Thaw at room temperature, about 1-2 hours. Want to try this Pumpkin Spice Cake RECIPE? Pin it to your Cake, Dessert or Thanksgiving Board to SAVE for later! Find me on Pinterest for more great recipes! I am always pinning :)! ©Carlsbad Cravings by CarlsbadCravings.com 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice1 teaspoons ground cinnamon1 teaspoon salt1 teaspoon baking powder1 teaspoon baking soda1 1/4 cup granulated sugar8 tablespoons unsalted butter melted and cooled3 large eggs at room temperature1 15 oz. can pumpkin puree1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract1/2 cup pecans toasted and chopped more or less to taste8 ounces cream cheese at room temperature1/2 cup granulated sugar3 tablespoons maple syrup1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract1 teaspoon orange juice1/4 teaspoon salt1 cup heavy cream chilled Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line the bottom of two 8-inch round cake pans with parchment paper. Grease pans with cooking spray WITH FLOUR or grease and flour pans; set aside.Whisk the flour, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in a bowl; set aside.Using a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat sugar, melted butter and eggs on medium high speed until pale and fluffy, about three minutes. Reduce speed to low, add pumpkin and vanilla and mix until combined. Slowly add the flour mixture and mix on low until only few small flour streaks remain.Divide batter between prepared pans and level. Bake for 22-28 minutes OR until a toothpick comes out on a wire for 10 minutes, then invert each cake onto a large plate, discard the parchment, and re-invert back onto the lightly greased rack. Let cool completely.Meanwhile, make the whipped maple frosting. Add cream cheese, sugar, maple, vanilla, orange juice and salt to a large bowl. Beat with a handheld mixer at medium-high speed until light and fluffy, 1 to 2 minutes, scraping down sides as needed.Reduce speed to low and add heavy cream in slow stream, then increase speed to medium-high and beat until stiff peaks form, about 2 -3 minutes more. Refrigerate until the cakes have cooled completely.Transfer the cooled cakes to a cutting board. Use a long-serrated knife to score the cakes in half all the way around before cutting. This way, you are not slicing straight through the cake and coming up uneven on the other side.Place one cake round on a plate or pedestal, then spread ½ cup of frosting evenly over the top spreading to within ¼” of the edge. Repeat with remaining cake layers and frosting. Sprinkle pecans over top.This cake tastes best served at room temperature. Remove the cake from the refrigerator at least 30 minutes before serving to take the chill off. 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