

WHITE MOUNTAIN LAYER CAKE WITH MARSHMALLOW BUTTERCREAM

Forget everything you know about “white cake,” this recipe’s a game changer: rich and velvety to the point of creaminess, heady with vanilla, and almost as fluffy as angel’s food cake. The secret is virgin coconut oil, which amplifies the aroma of butter and vanilla while creaming up lighter (and whiter) than butter alone. I top it all off with silky Marshmallow Buttercream, for a cake that’s beguilingly complex despite its apparent simplicity. See photo on page 109.

YIELD: one 8-by-5-inch three-layer cake; 16 servings | **ACTIVE TIME:** about 45 minutes | **DOWNTIME:** 90 minutes to cool

1 recipe Marshmallow Buttercream
(page 114)

Cake Batter:

4 cups | 16 ounces bleached cake
flour such as Swans Down

2 sticks | 8 ounces unsalted butter,
pliable but cool—about 65°F

¾ cup | 4 ounces virgin coconut oil,
solid but creamy—about 70°F

2¼ cups | 16 ounces sugar

2½ teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

¼ teaspoon Diamond Crystal kosher
salt (half as much if iodized)

1 cup | 8½ ounces egg whites (from
8 large eggs), brought to about
70°F (see note on page 111)

2 tablespoons | 1 ounce vanilla extract

1 teaspoon almond extract

2 cups | 16 ounces cultured low-fat
buttermilk, brought to about 70°F

To better synchronize the down-
time in both recipes, start the
Marshmallow Buttercream before
the cake. While it’s resting, adjust
an oven rack to lower-middle posi-
tion and preheat to 325°F. Line three
8-by-3-inch anodized aluminum cake
pans with parchment and grease
with pan spray; if you don’t have
three pans, the remaining batter can
be held at room temperature for up
to 3 hours. (The cakes will brown
more and rise less in 2-inch pans.)
Sift the flour (if using cup measures,
spoon into the cups and level with
a knife before sifting) and set aside.

Combine butter, coconut oil, sugar,
baking powder, baking soda, and
salt in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted
with a paddle attachment. Mix on
low speed to moisten, then increase
to medium and cream until fluffy and
light, about 5 minutes, pausing to
scrape the bowl and beater halfway
through. With the mixer running,
add the egg whites one at a time,

followed by vanilla and almond
extracts.

Reduce speed to low and sprinkle
in one-third of the flour, followed by
one-third of the buttermilk. Alternate
between the two, allowing each
addition to be roughly incorpo-
rated before adding the next. Once
smooth, fold with a flexible spatula to
ensure it’s well mixed from the bot-
tom up. Divide among the prepared
cake pans, about 22 ounces each.

Bake until the cakes are firm but
pale, browned only around the very
edges, about 40 minutes (or 210°F).
A toothpick inserted into the center
will emerge with a few crumbs still
attached, and your fingertip will
leave a slight indentation in the puffy
crust.

Cool until no trace of warmth
remains, about 90 minutes. Loosen
the cakes from their pans with a knife.
Invert onto a wire rack, peel off the

parchment, and reinvert. Crumb-coat and frost with Marshmallow Buttercream according to the directions on pages 142–44.

Under a cake dome or an inverted pot, the frosted cake will keep for up to 24 hours at room temperature. After cutting, wrap leftover slices individually and store at room temperature for up to 2 days more.

A NOTE ABOUT INGREDIENT TEMPERATURES IN CAKE MAKING:

Butter, buttermilk, and egg whites colder than 65°F or warmer than 70°F can produce a range of problems, from mild tunneling and air pockets in the cake to a heavy crumb or even a gummy layer along the bottom. Given that “room temperature” will vary from home to home, there’s no standard rule of thumb for how to warm

these ingredients, but in my 1000-watt microwave, three 6-second bursts at normal power is perfect for softening two sticks of butter; two 6-second bursts will knock the chill off a cup of egg whites; and a 25-second burst will bring a pint of buttermilk to cool room temperature. Alternately, they can simply be brought to room temperature and monitored with a digital thermometer.

→ *Mix it up!*

APPLE CIDER SPICE CAKE: All the cozy flavor of an apple cider doughnut with none of the frying. Omit the vanilla and almond extracts; add 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon and $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon grated nutmeg to the sugar. Replace the buttermilk with an equal amount of apple cider plus $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces (3 tablespoons) apple cider vinegar, and proceed as directed. You can’t go wrong with classic Vanilla Marshmallow Buttercream, but the butterscotchy Brown Sugar variation (page 115) works well too.

FLUFFY WHITE CUPCAKES: Line cupcake pans with papers. Fill each cup with $1\frac{3}{4}$ ounces batter—about two-thirds full. Reduce the baking time to 15 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of a cupcake emerges with only a few crumbs attached. Makes about 36 cupcakes.

HAZELNUT TORTE: This is the cake my brother requested for his wedding, paired with the “Milk” Chocolate variation of my Marshmallow

Buttercream (page 115) for a Nutella-esque dessert. Toast 9 ounces (2 shy cups) hazelnuts until golden and fragrant, about 10 minutes in a 350°F oven. Cool completely, then rub with a towel to remove their papery skins. Reduce cake flour to 12 ounces (3 cups), and pulse in a food processor with hazelnuts until powdery and fine. Handled the same way, almonds and pistachios work equally well.

LEMON SUNSHINE: For a bright and refreshing variation, omit the vanilla and almond extracts, add 2 tablespoons lemon zest to the sugar before creaming, and add 1 tablespoon lemon juice along with the buttermilk. Lime, orange, and grapefruit work equally well. I love this variation with tangy Cream Cheese Frosting (page 132).

GLUTEN-FREE: Replace cake flour with 8 ounces ($1\frac{1}{2}$ cups) cornstarch, 6 ounces ($1\frac{1}{4}$ cups) white rice flour, $4\frac{1}{2}$ ounces (1 cup) tapioca flour or arrowroot, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons potato flour.