

Coconut Cake

Yield: 12 to 16 servings.

For the cake:

- 1½ cups whole milk
- 10 ounces (2½ sticks) unsalted butter
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 6 large eggs, at room temperature
- 3 cups plus 2 tablespoons sugar, divided
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1½ teaspoons almond extract
- ¾ cup coconut water (collected from a fresh coconut or store-bought)

For the buttercream and filling:

- 1½ cups (3 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon coconut flavoring
- 6 cups (1½ pounds) powdered sugar, sifted of coconut, or as needed
- 3½ cups freshly grated or thawed flaked coconut, divided

1. Preheat the oven to 325°. Grease (with shortening) and flour three 9-inch cake pans.
2. To make the cake: Heat the milk and butter in a small saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly, until the butter melts. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool to room temperature.
3. Whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl.
4. Beat the eggs and 3 cups of sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed, until the mixture is thick and pale yellow in color, about 3 minutes, stopping midway to scrape down the sides of the bowl.
5. Using a spatula, stir the flour mixture into the egg mixture, stirring just until combined. Add the cooled milk mixture and the vanilla and almond extracts, and stir until smooth.



6. Divide the batter evenly among the prepared cake pans. Bake until the tops of the cakes are golden and spring back when touched, and the sides of the cake begin to pull away from the pan, about 25 minutes. Cool in the pans for 10 minutes. Turn out the cakes on racks and cool to room temperature.
7. To make the buttercream and filling: Beat the butter, vanilla, and coconut flavoring in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed until smooth. With the mixer running, gradually add the powdered sugar and beat until smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl often. The buttercream will be very stiff; beat in cream of coconut, 1 tablespoon at a time, until it is creamy and spreadable. Set aside 1 cup of the buttercream in a medium bowl to use in the filling. Cover the rest of the buttercream with plastic wrap and set it aside.
8. Make the filling by stirring 1½ cups of coconut into 1 cup

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of reserved buttercream. The filling should be spreadable, so stir in remaining cream of coconut as needed.

9. Make coconut syrup by simmering the coconut water and the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar in a small saucepan over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves. Remove from the heat.

10. To assemble: Place one of the cooled cake layers on a serving plate or cake stand. Tuck strips of waxed paper under the cake layer to keep the edges clean. Brush or drizzle about 2½ tablespoons of the coconut syrup, and spread the top with half of the filling.

11. Cover with another cake layer, brush or drizzle about 2½ tablespoons of the coconut syrup, and spread with the remaining filling.

12. Cover with the last cake layer, brush or drizzle with the rest of the coconut syrup, then spread the top and sides of the cake with the buttercream.

13. Cover the cake with the remaining 2 cups of coconut, pressing gently to help it adhere. When all of the coconut is on the cake, gently pull out the wax paper strips.

14. Cover the cake loosely with plastic wrap and chill at least 24 hours before serving.

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