



Perfect, Easy Vanilla Cake

YIELD: one 9 x 13 cake, 15 servings

TIME: 2 hours

INGREDIENTS

Cake:

- 1 box Duncan Hines Perfectly Moist Classic Yellow cake mix
- 1 vanilla instant pudding mix (3.4 oz/96 g)
- 1 tbsp (15 g) vanilla extract
- 4 large eggs
- ½ c (80 g) vegetable oil
- ½ stick (4 tbsp or 57 g) salted butter
- 1 c (260 g) milk

Frosting:

- 2 sticks (1 c or 226 g) salted butter, at room temperature
- 1 c (230 g) granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp (15 g) vanilla extract
- ½ c (130 g) milk
- 3 tbsp (20 g) powdered sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

Cake:

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F. Prep your pan by greasing the bottom and sides with vegetable oil or butter.
2. Put the cake mix, pudding mix, vanilla extract, and eggs into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment.
3. Put the oil in a separate bowl. Melt the butter completely in the microwave. It's fine if it gets hot. Add it to the bowl with the oil.
4. Heat the milk in the microwave until warm, then add it to the oil/butter mixture and stir well.
5. Pour the oil mixture into the bowl of the mixer and stir until combined. Scrape down the bottom and sides of the bowl, then increase the speed to medium and mix for 2 minutes.
6. After the batter is done beating, pour it into the pan and smooth it out with a spatula. Bake for 25–28 minutes, until the center springs back when lightly pressed and a toothpick inserted into the middle of the cake comes out with a few cooked crumbs clinging to it.
7. Set the cake aside to cool.

Frosting:

1. Beat the butter in a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment until soft. Add the sugar and vanilla and beat again until light and fluffy.
2. Warm the milk in the microwave until it is about room temperature. Add it a little at a time to the sugar and butter mixture, beating to incorporate each addition before adding the next, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed.

3. Add the powdered sugar and mix to combine. Turn the mixer to high speed and beat for 5–10 minutes, until the sugar is dissolved and the frosting tastes smooth instead of grainy.
4. Once the cake is cool, frost and enjoy!

NOTES AND TIPS

I tried all the cake mixes when testing this recipe, and just like my mom always says, the Duncan Hines Classic Yellow is the best. The Duncan Hines Classic White mix is a good substitute.

For the cake, you can use a cheap or imitation vanilla extract. Because it's baked, it won't make a difference. Check out this [YouTube](#) video for the science explaining why! However, use the best vanilla extract you can get your hands on for the frosting. You can really taste the difference there.

You need to warm the milk for the cake so that the melted butter doesn't solidify into small chunks when it hits the cold eggs.

The salted butter is important in this frosting recipe. It doesn't taste the same if you use unsalted butter and add some salt to it because the salt may not dissolve.

The vanilla goes in the frosting when creaming the butter and the sugar to give you better flavor. When it dissolves into the fat, the vanilla flavor is more intense.

Warming the milk a little for the frosting helps prevent it from curdling when you incorporate it. The frosting is an emulsion, and emulsions work best if all their ingredients are at the same temperature.

If the frosting curdles or separates a little when the last of the milk goes in, don't worry. It should come right back together when you add the powdered sugar and beat it. If it doesn't, add one extra tablespoon of powdered sugar and beat it on high until it becomes smooth again (this could take a full five minutes; be patient).