

Red Velvet Cake

Makes two 9-inch cakes or 24 cupcakes

Ingredients:

1 ¼ cups vegetable shortening
2 cups sugar, plus more for sprinkling the parchment paper
1 tablespoon unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
4 ½ teaspoons (2 tubes) red food- coloring gel
3 cups cake flour, plus more for flouring the cake pans
1 ¼ teaspoons fine sea salt
1 ¼ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1 ¼ teaspoons distilled white vinegar
3 extra large eggs
1 ¼ cups buttermilk
Unsalted butter (about 2 tablespoons), nonstick spray, or vegetable oil, for greasing the cake pans

Directions:

Position a rack in the center of the oven, and preheat to 350°F.

Put the shortening, sugar, cocoa, food coloring, flour, salt, vanilla, baking soda, and vinegar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. (You can use a hand mixer if you allow the shortening to soften at room temperature before beginning.) Paddle, starting at low speed, then raise the speed to low-medium and mix for about 1 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, mixing for 1 minutes after each is absorbed into the mixture. Add the buttermilk in two portions, stopping to scrape the sides of the bowl between additions.

Grease two 9 inch cake pans (2 inches deep) with the butter, flour them.

Divide the batter evenly between the two cake pans, using a rubber spatula to scrape down the bowl and get as much batter as possible out.

Bake until the cakes begin to pull from the sides of the pans and are springy to the touch, 35 to 40 minutes.

Remove from the oven and let cool for at least 30 minutes, preferable 1 hour. The cakes should be at room temperature before you remove them from the pan.

Put a piece of parchment paper on a cookie sheet, sprinkle with sugar, and one at a time, turn the pans over and turn the cakes out onto the parchment; the sugar will keep them from sticking.

Refrigerate or freeze until ready to decorate.