



Dear Friends,

When I was growing up, we had dessert every night. It wasn't something that I really ever thought about, it just *was*. And, of course, there was always a treat of some sort offered when my mom's friends came over for coffee, when she and Dad played bridge every week, and when she hosted a dinner party.

My mom was a good cook and baker—she still is—so we had wonderful apple pies in the fall; terrific brownies, chocolate chip cookies, and shortbread in the winter; and fresh fruit cobblers and shortcakes in the spring and summer. And at my grandfather's house in Maryland, my sisters and I took turns churning unforgettably good peach ice cream in a hand-cranked, salt-filled ice-cream maker.

Times have changed and so have desserts: Many are lighter and many are quick, and seasonality is more important than ever. Flavors that once would have seemed exotic—cardamom, pomegranate, lavender—are commonplace. But some things haven't changed. Now, as then, a good dessert is all about that little hit of sweetness that gives any dinner its official wrap-up and launches us into the rest of the evening.

It has been said that the soul of a baker is different than the soul of a cook. Dessert making requires precision, and that's where this book comes in. Each of the more than six hundred recipes here has been tested and retested by the experts in the *Bon Appétit* kitchens to guarantee sweet success every time. After more than five decades of publishing recipes for cakes, cookies, pies, tarts, cheesecakes, ice creams, and so much more, we've been able to pack a lot of info and expertise into these pages. So in addition to the recipes, you'll find notes that let you know what to expect from each recipe; extensive tips and sidebars offering do-ahead suggestions and test-kitchen secrets; step-by-step illustrations to guide you through preparation; and thorough chapters on stocking your pantry, buying the most useful equipment, and mastering the essential techniques of dessert making. We want this to be your ultimate dessert resource, guidebook, and helpmate in the kitchen, whether you're an enthusiastic beginner or a confident cook.

So go ahead and make something sweet for dinner tonight—I certainly will be. Because nothing provides the satisfaction, gets the attention, or creates memories like a great dessert.

Barbara Fairchild, Los Angeles, California



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cakes

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Red Velvet Cake with Raspberries and Blueberries

The stunning contrast of red cake and fluffy white cream cheese frosting has made this a southern tradition for festive occasions. Mixing a touch of cocoa powder with the buttermilk and vinegar creates a reddish brown color, but it's the red food coloring that earns this cake its name. **12 Servings**

Cake

- 2¼ cups sifted cake flour (sifted, then measured)**
- 2 tablespoons natural unsweetened cocoa powder**
- 1 teaspoon baking powder**
- 1 teaspoon baking soda**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 1 cup buttermilk**
- 1 tablespoon red food coloring**
- 1 teaspoon distilled white vinegar**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 1½ cups sugar**
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature**
- 2 large eggs**

Frosting

- 2 8-ounce packages Philadelphia-brand cream cheese, room temperature**
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature**
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract**
- 2½ cups powdered sugar**
- 3 ½-pint containers fresh raspberries**
- 3 ½-pint containers fresh blueberries**

CAKE: Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter and flour two 9-inch-diameter cake pans with 1½-inch-high sides. Sift flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda, and salt into medium bowl. Whisk buttermilk, food coloring, vinegar, and vanilla in small bowl to blend. Using electric mixer, beat sugar and butter in large bowl until well blended. Beat in eggs 1 at a time. Beat in dry ingredients in 4 additions alternately with buttermilk mixture in 3 additions. Divide batter between prepared pans.

Bake cakes until tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 27 minutes. Cool in pans on racks 10 minutes. Cut around pan sides to loosen cakes. Turn cakes out onto racks; cool completely.

FROSTING: Using electric mixer, beat cream cheese and butter in large bowl until smooth. Beat in vanilla. Add sugar and beat until smooth.

Place 1 cake layer, flat side up, on platter. Spread 1 cup frosting over. Arrange 1 container raspberries and ½ container blueberries atop frosting, pressing lightly to adhere. Top with second cake layer, flat side down. Spread remaining frosting over top and sides of cake. Arrange remaining berries decoratively over top of cake.

DO AHEAD: *Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover with cake dome and refrigerate. Let stand at room temperature 1 hour before serving.*

Testing for Doneness

The baking time indicated in a recipe provides the estimated time you can expect the cake to be done, but visual cues are your best bet for determining doneness. Here are three ways to determine if a cake is perfectly done:

- 1.** Insert a toothpick, cake tester, or even a thin metal skewer (like the ones used to truss a turkey) into the center of the cake. It should come out clean or with just a few crumbs attached.
- 2.** Gently press your finger onto the top of the cake. The cake should spring back without leaving an impression of your finger.
- 3.** Check the sides of the cake. In most cases, the edges should just begin to pull away from the sides of the pan.

The rules change when making molten cakes: A tester should come out with thick batter attached, and the tops and sides should be set but the centers should feel wobbly.

Step by Step to Picture-Perfect Frosting

A cake is truly more than the sum of its delicious parts—but a beautiful frosting is key to making a fantastic first impression. Here are some ways to create professional-looking frosted cakes.

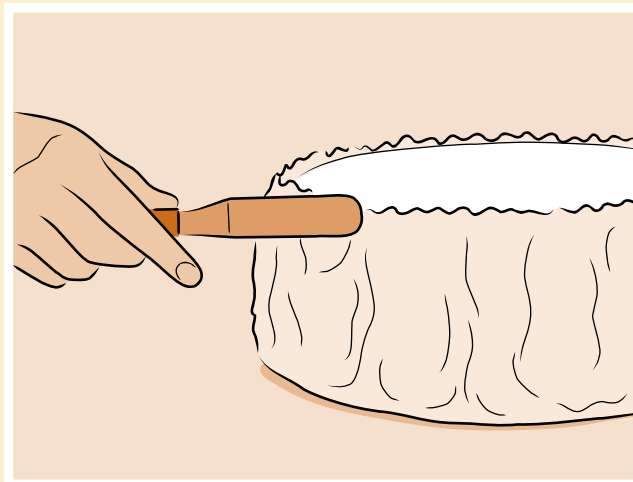
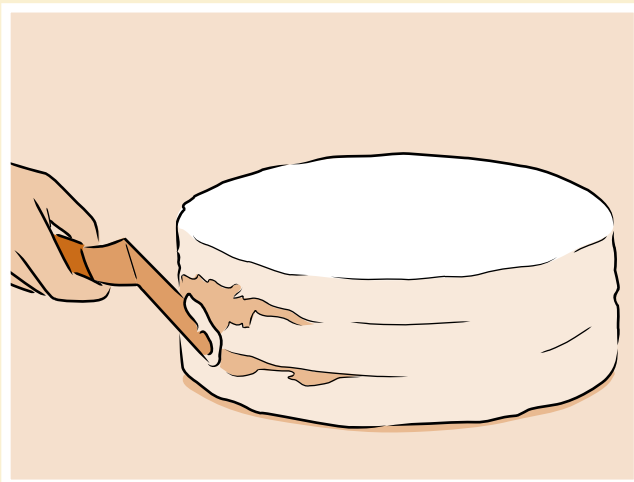
1 PREP: If the cooled cake layers are domed, use a serrated knife to carefully trim the tops and make them level. Set one cake layer on a cardboard round that is slightly smaller in diameter than the cake so that it's concealed, or set the cake layer on a flat cake plate. A dab of frosting on the cardboard or plate helps anchor the cake.

2 FILL AND LAYER: Spread the filling over the cake layer, keeping it within a half inch of the edge of the cake; then top with the second cake layer (this allows some wiggle room for the filling to ooze). It's best to place the bottom layer cut side up and the top layer cut side down; the cut surfaces absorb some of the filling, while the smooth, flat surface forms a nice shape for the finished cake. Sometimes the top

layer slides around, which makes frosting the cake difficult. To solve this, cover the layered cake with plastic and chill it until the filling becomes firm and the top layer is securely set in place.

3 ADD THE CRUMB COAT: Spread a thin layer of frosting over the entire cake, then chill the cake until the frosting is cold. Don't worry if the cake doesn't look attractive at this point; the crumb coating is simply used to glue any loose cake crumbs to the cake's surface to make it easier to apply the final coating of frosting. (Not all recipes call for this step.)

4 FROST: Finally, spread the remaining frosting decoratively over the sides and top of the cake. Setting the cake on a cake turntable or lazy Susan and using a long offset spatula will help you create a perfectly smooth finish.



Honeydew Bellini Granita with Minted Raspberries

Both the granita and the raspberry topping have a splash of Prosecco, Italian sparkling wine. The recipe calls for using a large baking pan so that the melon mixture will freeze quickly. But if you don't have room in your freezer, just use a smaller pan and chill it longer. **8 Servings**

- ½ large ripe honeydew melon, seeded, peeled, cut into 1½-inch cubes (about 2½ pounds)**
- ½ cup chilled Prosecco, divided**
- 4½ tablespoons (about) sugar, divided**
- 2 5.6-ounce containers fresh raspberries**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh mint plus 8 fresh mint sprigs**

Puree melon in processor until smooth. Strain through fine strainer into large bowl, pressing gently to extract 2½ cups juice; discard solids in strainer. Mix ¼ cup Prosecco into melon juice. Stir 3 tablespoons sugar into juice, 1 tablespoon at a time, to sweeten to taste (mixture should be sweet). Transfer mixture to 13x9x2-inch metal baking pan and freeze until slushy, about 30 minutes. Stir with fork and continue to freeze until set, about 45 minutes longer.

DO AHEAD: *Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and keep frozen.*

Gently toss raspberries, minced mint, remaining ¼ cup Prosecco, and remaining 1½ tablespoons sugar in large bowl to coat.

Using fork, scrape granita until entire mixture is mass of crystals. Spoon granita into goblets or glasses and top with raspberry mixture. Garnish with mint sprigs and serve.

Red and Green Grape Granitas with Muscat and Frozen Sugared Grapes

A truly gorgeous dessert: Red and green granitas are spooned over Muscat wine and topped with small clusters of frozen sugared grapes. If you prefer, you can also serve the granitas separately. **6 Servings**

- ¾ cup water**
- ¾ cup sugar**
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice**
- 3 cups green seedless grapes, stemmed (about 1 pound)**
- 3 cups red seedless grapes, stemmed (about 1 pound)**
- 6 small grape clusters (about 3 grapes per cluster)**
- 2 tablespoons plus ¾ cup chilled Muscat**
- Additional sugar**

Combine water and sugar in small saucepan. Bring to boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Boil 1 minute. Cool syrup. Stir in lemon juice.

Puree green grapes and half of lemon syrup in blender (some bits of grape peel will remain). Transfer to 13x9x2-inch metal baking pan. Puree red grapes and remaining lemon syrup in blender. Transfer to another 13x9x2-inch metal baking pan. Freeze 1 hour. Stir with fork every hour until frozen, about 4 hours.

Meanwhile, dip grape clusters into 2 tablespoons Muscat to moisten, then dip grapes into additional sugar to coat. Place grapes on small tray and freeze until frozen, about 4 hours.

DO AHEAD: *Granitas and grapes can be made 1 day ahead. Cover separately and keep frozen.*

Using fork, scrape granita until entire mixture is mass of crystals. Pour 2 tablespoons Muscat into each of 6 wide wineglasses. Divide green grape granita among glasses. Spoon red grape granita alongside green grape granita in each glass. Garnish each with sugared grape cluster and serve.

More to Try

The two granita mixtures would be equally lovely as the base for ice pops. Simply fill the molds halfway with the red grape mixture, and freeze until it's pretty firm. Then top it with the green grape mixture and continue freezing.





Triple-Cherry Streusel Bars

*Dried sweet cherries, tart cherry preserves, and cherry brandy give these bars their triple hit of fruit flavor. If you don't have kirsch (clear cherry brandy) on hand, use regular brandy or amaretto (almond-flavored liqueur) instead. **Makes 2 Dozen***

Filling

- 1 cup dried Bing (sweet) cherries**
- 1 cup tart red cherry preserves**
- 1 tablespoon kirsch (clear cherry brandy)**

Dough and Streusel

- Nonstick vegetable oil spray**
- 2 cups unbleached all purpose flour**
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt**
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup ($1\frac{1}{2}$ sticks) chilled unsalted butter, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes**
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons vanilla extract**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon almond extract**
- 3 tablespoons whole milk**
- 1 cup (packed) sweetened flaked coconut**
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sliced almonds**

FILLING: Combine cherries, cherry preserves, and kirsch in processor; blend to chunky puree.

DO AHEAD: *Filling can be made 1 day ahead. Transfer to bowl; cover and refrigerate.*

DOUGH AND STREUSEL: Preheat oven to 375°F. Line 13x9x2-inch metal baking pan with heavy-duty aluminum foil, leaving overhang on both long sides. Spray foil with nonstick spray. Blend flour, sugar, cinnamon, and salt in processor. Add butter, vanilla, and almond extract. Blend, using on/off turns, until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add milk and blend, using on/off turns, until mixture comes together in small clumps. Transfer 1 cup (packed) mixture to medium bowl and reserve for streusel.

Blend remaining mixture in processor until large moist clumps form. Gather dough together in large ball. Press dough over bottom of prepared pan; pierce all over with fork. Bake dough until golden, about 22 minutes; cool crust 15 minutes. Maintain oven temperature.

Add coconut and almonds to reserved 1 cup dough. Mix with fork, breaking streusel topping into small clumps.

Spread cherry filling over baked crust. Sprinkle streusel topping over. Bake cookie until cherry filling is bubbling and streusel topping is golden brown, about 30 minutes. Cool cookie in pan on rack. Using foil as aid, lift cookie from pan. Fold down foil sides. Cut cookie into bars.

DO AHEAD: *Can be made 2 days ahead. Refrigerate in airtight container.*

Pie Crust 101

A tender, flaky pie crust is a thing of beauty—and it is within the reach of every home cook. Just remember that baking is a science, so it's important to measure carefully and follow the recipe exactly. Follow these tips from the *Bon Appétit* test kitchen and you'll be a pie crust pro in no time.

1 STAY COOL: Chilled or—even better—frozen fat (butter, shortening, and/or lard) will create a dough that's easy to work with and will produce a flaky, tender crust; room temperature fat won't. Using ice water is important because the chilled water helps keep the fat cold.

2 LESS IS MORE: For a perfect crust you want short, weak strands of gluten (the protein that's in flour). The more you work the dough, the longer the strands of gluten become, and that can make the crust tough. The bottom line? Mix the dough just until it comes together, then stop.

3 CHILL THE DOUGH: Don't rush it. After you've made the dough, wrap it in plastic wrap, flatten it into a disk, and chill it for at least 30 minutes. This will give the gluten a chance to relax, making the dough easier to roll out. It's also not a bad idea to put the rolled-out crust (once it's in the pan) in the freezer while you prepare the filling. That will keep the crust from shrinking while it bakes and will also make sure the fat stays cold.

4 ROLL THE DOUGH: Give it space. Before you even get the dough out of the fridge, make sure you have a large, clean space for rolling. Lightly flour the work surface to prevent the dough from sticking—and flour your rolling pin, too. Roll out the dough gently, rotating the dough occasionally to create an even circle. If the dough begins to stick, sprinkle the work surface and/or the rolling pin with a little more flour. Make sure that the dough round is two to three inches larger in circumference than your pie plate. The extra dough will allow you to create a decorative edge on your pie. To transfer the dough to the pie pan, wrap the dough loosely around the rolling pin, then carefully unroll into the pan. Ease the dough into the edges of the pan, being careful not to stretch the dough to the corners (which will thin the dough). Lightly press the dough into the bottom and up the side of the pan.

5 A DIFFERENT WAY TO ROLL: Temperamental dough? Brand new to baking? Then consider rolling out the dough between two large sheets of parchment paper. Lightly flour one sheet of parchment. Unwrap the chilled dough disk, set it in the center of the parchment, then pound with the rolling pin until it is about six inches in diameter. Lightly dust the dough with flour and lay the second piece of parchment on top. Starting at the center and rolling out to the edges, roll the dough, using even pressure. To keep the thickness of the dough uniform, turn the parchment 90 degrees and flip it over after every few rolls. When you have a dough round two to three inches larger than your pan, remove the top sheet of parchment. Pick up the remaining parchment and dough, and quickly flip the round into the pie pan, centering the dough in the pan. Ease the dough into the dish and tear off the parchment in strips (peeling it off in one piece may tear the tender dough).

6 CRIMP THE EDGE: Finish your pie with a pretty design around the edge. Fold the extra crust under to make it even with the pan's rim. For a classic crimp, pinch the crust with your thumb and index finger on one side and your other index finger on the other side. For an easier crust, press the crust with the back of a spoon, the tines of a fork, or a chopstick.

