



#6 Carrot Cake With Light Mascarpone Cheese Icing



This carrot cake is super easy and if you're new to baking and don't have an electric mixer yet, every step of this recipe can be done just using a bowl and a good old-fashioned whisk. That includes icing! I love using mascarpone cheese in icing rather than the traditional cream cheese and butter. All you have to remember is to use COLD mascarpone cheese and COLD whipping cream straight from the fridge. Use organic carrots for best results. Walnuts can be substituted with other nuts.

DIRECTIONS

1. Start off by greasing and lining the baking tin. Preheat the oven to 175°C/gas mark 4. In a bowl combine most of your dry ingredients: the flour, salt, bicarbonate of soda, spices and walnuts.
2. In a separate bowl crack the eggs, add the sugars and whisk vigorously by hand for 2 minutes until you notice the colour is slightly paler and the volume has increased. (If you're using an electric mixer beat on medium speed for just under a minute. There's no need to do it for longer.)
3. Add about a third of the oil, whisk for half a minute, then repeat until all of the oil is gone. Apply a bit of elbow grease for this, you may need to swap hands half-way through! (For the electric mixer, beat on medium speed for just half a minute.)
4. Using a spatula fold in the carrots and the dry ingredients. Stir several times until all ingredients are well combined.
5. Transfer the batter into the tin and bake for 50 minutes or until the cake is brown, risen and comes away from the sides. If you're unsure, stick a skewer or a toothpick into the middle; if it comes out clean, the cake is done. Leave to cool completely before applying the icing.
6. For the icing - place the COLD mascarpone cheese in a medium bowl and pour in the COLD whipping cream. Add the vanilla, icing sugar and orange zest, if using. Stir gently a few times, then beat by hand for 3-5 minutes.

INGREDIENTS

Rectangular baking tin about 23 cm x 33 cm or round 23 cm in diameter or 30 cupcakes
250g plain flour
175g caster sugar
175g light brown sugar
½ teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons bicarbonate of soda
1 generous teaspoon cinnamon + ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg (or ground mixed spice for a slightly different flavour)
4 eggs
250ml vegetable oil
300g carrots, peeled and finely grated
120g walnuts, chopped finely
For the icing:
250ml whipping cream
120g mascarpone cheese
75g icing sugar
1 generous teaspoon vanilla bean paste or 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
grated zest of one orange (optional)

Don't worry if at the beginning the icing looks very runny, it'll suddenly thicken up towards the end and you'll be rewarded with that perfect creamy, yet light consistency. I love seeing that happen, baking chemistry at its best! If you're going for the electric mixer, start whipping on a low speed for about half a minute, then turn it to medium. Spread the icing evenly all over the cooled cake and put the kettle on.



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