

Golden Vanilla Pound Cake

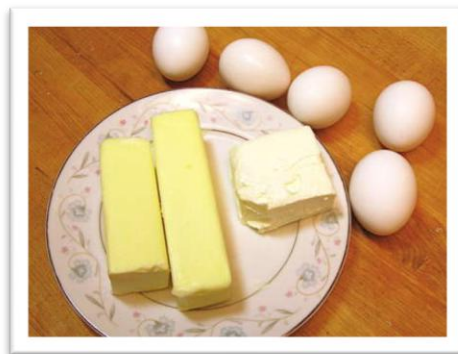


Elvis has left the building... But the cake's still here.

Did you know that Elvis' favorite cake, one he enjoyed on his birthday
AND at Christmas every year, was vanilla pound cake?

I grew up loving chocolate cake. Still do. But over the years I've also developed a great appreciation for vanilla cake, the dessert equivalent of your little black dress: simple, classic, goes with everything... and my very favorite vanilla cake is super-dense, golden pound cake.

While the following recipe does not hew to the original: 1 pound each of flour, sugar, eggs, and butter (thus the name: pound cake), it does come close to the original versions that I grew up with only taken UP a notch for a more professional presentation.



First, take the following out of the fridge to warm to room temperature:

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (6 ounces) unsalted butter
3-ounce package cream cheese
5 large eggs

This will take 2 to 3 hours, so plan ahead. **NOTE:** Do you REALLY have to do this? Well, no; but room-temperature ingredients ensure lump-free mixing, which is a plus in something as fine-grained as pound cake.



Put the following in a mixing bowl:

- 3/4 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 3-ounce package cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract



Mix until smooth. Because the butter and cream cheese are at room temperature (hint, hint...), this happens quickly and easily.



Next, beat in the 5 large eggs; the mixture will look a little grainy/curdled.



Beat for 3 minutes after you've added the final egg. The batter will grow somewhat in volume, though it'll still appear grainy.

Once all the eggs have been added, stir in 3 tablespoons milk.



Add 2 tablespoons King Arthur **Cake Enhancer** (optional, for moistness); and 1 teaspoon baking powder. Then gently fold in 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups + 2 tablespoons (7 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces) King Arthur Unbleached all-Purpose Flour.



Not a deal breaker, but to ensure easiest release of your lovely cake, once it's baked — even with non-stick pans, spray your **9" x 5" x 2 3/4"** loaf pan with **baking spray**...

...then line it with **parchment**, and spray the parchment.

OK Now, be sure to USE THE CORRECT SIZE OF LOAF PAN...

and for this recipe, that would be 9" x 5" x 2 3/4" deep, or 12" x 4" x 4" deep.

Take out your ruler, and measure the inside top of your loaf pan.

Please don't use a smaller pan, e.g., 8 1/2" x 4 1/2"....

or Here's what'll happen:



Oooops...

Lesson learned...also, that's why you put your loaf pan onto a baking sheet (lined with foil or parchment); as it helps with the cleanup when or just in case... the pan you're using isn't **QUITE** big enough.



Spread the thick batter into the pan...smoothing the top surface with a spatula.



Bake the cake for about 55 minutes and when it comes out of the oven...



...it should have domed nicely.

Next, my secret....you are going to gild the top of the cake with an extra touch of vanilla. Not straight vanilla; but a sugar/vanilla/water combination that adds wonderful flavor, color, and some delicate crunch.



While the cake is baking, stir together the following:

2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon water

NOTE: The sugar won't fully dissolve; that's OK.



Remove the cake from the oven, and brush with the sugar mixture. It'll be kind of stiff, and may clump up; again, that's OK. Return the cake to the oven for an additional 15 minutes or so. Yes, It's a bit challenging trying to figure out when it's done; the center will test done, while the very top, right under the crust, will still be kind of soggy. The center should register about 200°F to 205°F on an instant-read thermometer.

NOTE: It's actually easier baking the cake in the 12" x 4" loaf pan, as the longer, thinner loaf bakes more evenly.

Remove the cake from the oven, and after 5 minutes, loosen its edges with a table knife. After another 5 minutes, turn it out of the pan and cool it on a rack...

And there you have it – a dense, golden cake with a thin, deep-brown crust and lovely shards of vanilla-sugar on top. Thick slices make a wonderful base for ice cream and fudge sauce, or strawberries, or butterscotch...)

Here is the actual recipe:

This pound cake is a rich, dark brown outside, with an ultra-fine, golden crumb. If you like a dense, firm, loaf-shaped classic pound cake, then this one's for you. One non-traditional touch: the vanilla-sugar glaze brushed atop the cake towards the end of the baking time, which gives it a crackly-crunchy top crust.

Cake

- 3/4 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 3-ounce package cream cheese, at room temperature
- 3/4 teaspoon salt (1/2 teaspoon if you use salted butter)
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 5 large eggs, at room temperature
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 2 tablespoons King Arthur Cake Enhancer, optional
- 1 3/4 cups + 2 tablespoons King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour

TOPPING

- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon water

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a 9" x 5" x 2 3/4" loaf pan, or a 12" x 4" x 4" tea loaf pan. **NOTE:** To avoid overflow in the oven, be SURE to use the correct size pan!

In a medium-sized mixing bowl, beat together the butter, cream cheese, salt, sugar, baking powder, vanilla extract, and almond extract until well combined. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition; the mixture may look slightly curdled/grainy

After you've added the final egg, beat at high speed for 3 minutes. **Note:** The batter will still look a little curdled, but will have gained a bit of volume. Once all the eggs are added, stir in the milk.

Add the cake enhancer, then sprinkle in the flour gradually, with the mixer going at low speed. Mix just until combined. The batter will be smooth and thick (not pourable). Spoon the batter into the prepared pan

To make the topping, combine the sugar, vanilla, and water. Stir until the mixture is syrupy. At first it'll seem very stiff, but will become "drizzlable" as you stir. Set the topping aside.

Set the cake on a baking sheet, for easiest handling and as a precaution against potential overflow (which shouldn't happen if you use the correct size pan). Bake it for 55 minutes (for either size pan).

Remove the cake from the oven, and brush with the sugar mixture. It'll be kind of stiff, and may clump up; again, that's OK. Return the cake to the oven for an additional 15 minutes or so. It's a bit challenging

trying to figure out when it's done; the center will test done, while the very top, right under the crust, will still be kind of soggy. The center should register about 200°F on an instant-read thermometer.

Remove the cake from the oven, and after 5 minutes loosen the edges. After an additional 5 minutes, turn the cake out of the pan to cool completely on a rack.

Other NOTES:

- If desired, substitute 1 tablespoon lemon zest + 1/4 teaspoon lemon oil, OR 1/8 teaspoon Fiori di Sicilia flavoring, for the vanilla and almond extracts.
- If desired, bake the cake in a 9-cup tube or Bundt® pan. You'll need to bake it a shorter amount of time than in the loaf pan, so start checking at 55 minutes.
- Since this cake is so dense, the baking time can be tricky. You want it thoroughly baked, but not dried out. When the cake is done, a cake tester inserted into the center will come out clean, and the internal temperature at the center will be at least 200°F. The top 1/4" or so of the top crust may still be moist and sticky; **but it shouldn't be batter-like**. The finished cake may have some moist streaks near the top crust; that's OK.
- You'll find bringing the butter and cream cheese to room temperature makes them easier to beat without lumps forming.
- And room-temperature eggs help keep the batter lump-free, too. It takes about 2 to 3 hours to bring these ingredients to room temperature, so plan ahead.

This is great to bake up and bring to parties as gifts and to serve alongside coffee and tea. I hope you will try it and pass along to others as THIS is super yummy and is a gift that KEEPS on giving!

NOTE: I usually double and triple the recipe or use MINI loaf pans and then freeze or give away the extra loafs. They freeze well once completely cooled and then wrapped in plastic wrap, then foil and then finally sealed in a gallon ziplock bag.

Enjoy!!