# Chocolate Birthday Cake

from Ina Garten

*makes 1 8-inch layer cake*

Parchment paper for lining pans

Butter for greasing pans

1 3/4 cup all- purpose flour, plus more for dusting pans

2 cups sugar

3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder (I use Ghiradelli)

2 teaspoons baking soda

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

1 cup buttermilk

1/2 cup vegetable oil

2 eggs, room temperature

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 cup freshly brewed hot coffee

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter 2 8-inch round cake pans. Line the bottoms with parchment. Dust pans with flour.

Sift together the dry ingredients into a large bowl: flour, sugar cocoa, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. In a separate bowl, mix buttermilk, vegetable oil, eggs, and vanilla. Pour wet ingredients into dry and mix until just combined. Pour in the hot coffee and mix until it is incorporated. Be sure to scrape down sides and bottom to ensure all the flour mixture is thoroughly moistened. Batter will look very thin.

Pour batter evenly into the 2 prepared pans. Slide pans in the oven and bake for 35-40 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Place pans on a cooling rack and let sit for 10 minutes. Slide a knife around the inside edge of each pan to loosen the cake, then invert onto the cooling racks. Peel the parchment off the bottom. Let cakes cool completely before frosting.

Lay one layer, flat side up on your cake plate or stand. Spread a layer of frosting over the top. Place the second cake round on the frosting, flat side up. Apply a generous amount of frosting to the top of the cake. Spread the frosting over the top and down the sides. Finish by filling in any places where the cake is exposed and smoothing the top and sides with a spatula. If the frosting is too loose, put it in the refrigerator and allow it to set up before spreading. The frosted cake can be kept on the counter until ready to serve. If it is a very hot day, keep it in the refrigerator to prevent the frosting from weeping.

**Note:**

Unfrosted cakes can be made ahead and frozen. After they are completely cool, wrap tightly in plastic and freeze for up to three months. Be careful not to place anything onto of the cakes. Even though they are frozen, then are still delicate and will crush easily.

For a larger cake and crowd, you can double the recipe. I have done this successfully many times.

# Mocha Buttercream

adapted from Mollie Katzen's *Vegetable Heaven*

*makes enough for 1 8-inch layer cake*

1 cup butter, at room temperature

3 1/2 cups powdered sugar

1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/2 cup fresh coffee, cooled

Cream the butter. Add the vanilla and mix. Sift in the cocoa and sugar (Do not forget to sift. If you add lumps in at this point, they are almost impossible to remove). Add the coffee and beat. It may appear curdled or separated at first. Continue beating frosting until it is fully incorporated, light, and fluffy. Spread on cake.