

Blissful buttermilk carrot cake bursts with flavor



Photo Susie Iventosch

Buttermilk Carrot Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting

By Susie Iventosch

I just adore carrot cake. In fact, I've almost never met a carrot cake that I didn't love, but some are still better than others. It's really just a matter of degrees for me. But this one is my favorite and the best I've tasted yet! I found this one in my old recipe box and it came from my great aunt, who apparently brought it to many a family dinner. I can certainly see why. Made with buttermilk, it is both light and moist, and the fluffy cream cheese frosting is blissful!

When you make the cake batter, it will be very thick due to all of the goodies like raisins,

nuts, pineapple, coconut and carrots in the batter. Don't worry it is a dense cake, bursting with flavor and crunchy bits in every bite.

This cake holds very well for a week or more in the refrigerator and makes a delightful snack for the mid-afternoon munchies. (I actually have a piece for breakfast now and then.) You can opt to make this cake as a 9x13 sheet cake or as a layer cake using either two 9-inch pans or three 8-inch pans. The only difference is that for a layer cake you might want to double the frosting recipe, so you can plenty of the cream cheese frosting between the

layers and over the entire cake. If layer cakes intimidate you, then just stick to the sheet cake

and your guests will be just as happy!

INGREDIENTS

Buttermilk Carrot Cake

3 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon cinnamon
2 cups granulated sugar
3/4 cup canola oil (or your favorite vegetable oil)
3/4 cup buttermilk (can be low-fat)
3 large eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2 cups grated carrots (peel before grating)
1 flat can (8-oz.) crushed pineapple, drained
2/3 cup walnuts or pecans, quartered (not chopped)
6 ounces flaked coconut (optional)

Cream Cheese Frosting (double recipe for layer cakes)

1 8-ounce package cream cheese (full fat is better), softened to room temp
1 cube butter, at room temp (4 ounces)
4 cups powdered sugar, sifted
3 teaspoons vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Buttermilk Carrot Cake

Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease or spray a 9x13 inch baking pan. (You can also use three 8-inch or two 9-inch cakes pans. If you use round cake pans, dust with flour after spraying or grease the pans to help extract the cooked cakes from the pan.)

Sift flour, baking soda, salt and cinnamon together and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, beat sugar with oil, buttermilk and vanilla. Beat in eggs, one at a time.

Add sifted dries and mix well. Then add the pineapple, carrots, coconut and nuts. Mix thoroughly with a wooden spoon. The batter will be very thick at this point.

Spoon batter into the prepared pans and bake for approximate 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Reduce baking time by about 10 minutes for round cake layer pans.

Cool completely before frosting. Meanwhile make frosting.

When ready to frost, simply spread the frosting over the top of the entire cake. If you're making layer cakes, then frost in between each layer and completely around the cake. If you aren't crazy about so much frosting on your layer cake, you can also make this as a naked cake, and just frost between the layers and on the top of the layer cake.

Cream Cheese Frosting

Place butter in the bowl of your mixer. Beat until creamy and fluffy, about 2-3 minutes. Add vanilla and sugar and beat until smooth. Now, add in the softened cream cheese. Adding the cream cheese last helps to keep the frosting from getting runny. If frosting is too thick, add a tiny bit of milk or cream, just a teaspoon at a time until it is a good spreading consistency. Conversely, if the frosting seems to soft to spread, add more powdered sugar, a tiny bit at a time.



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>

Family Focus

Helping children during these difficult times

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

These past years have been especially challenging for parents. On top of the typical issues families may experience, there have been many additional threats to our peace of mind. We have had over two years of addressing the coronavirus and all of its worries, accommodations and limitations; political turmoil; worldwide climate problems, with a drought and wildfires threatening our state; financial and housing concerns for many; and now, the tragic war in Ukraine that has been front and center on our minds.

It is more important than ever to try to shelter our children as much as possible from these very scary and unsettling situations. These are adult issues, although even adults often feel very helpless and discouraged by them. Exposing children to worrisome scenarios alters their sense of safety and well-being at a time in their lives when they are dependent and highly influenced by adults' words, behaviors and emotional reactions.

Unfortunately, children may see and hear upsetting information from various sources at times, but parents can refrain from contributing more. You can avoid listening to or watching disturbing media while children are present and avoid discussions of up-

setting subjects on the phone or in person with others when children can overhear. Diligent parents can try to prevent children from being exposed to more than they can understand or handle.

If your children ask questions about troubling events, offer a simple explanation with much reassurance that they will be okay. Starting at a young age, encourage them to come to you with any questions or worries so they can seek comfort from you. You want them to express anxieties as much as possible to ward off behavioral effects such as depression, anger, low academic performance, self-harm, substance abuse, sleep disorders, eating disorders and more.

I have noticed that during these past years, more parents than ever have reached out to therapists to help their children and teens cope with an overload of anxiety. Often the child or teen has been the one to express a desire to talk to someone. These times have been rough for children and their families.

Briana, age 9, was an only child of divorced parents and suffered from too much exposure to adult issues. Because she was highly intelligent and perceptive, she absorbed much more information than her parents realized. Unfortunately, Briana didn't feel that she could confide her fears and anxieties to either parent

and kept them to herself. As a result, she became depressed and developed a nervous tic. These conditions led, in turn, to Briana isolating herself from others which exacerbated her loneliness and depression.

Brad, a sophomore in high school, also wasn't willing to confide in his parents. He heard them experiencing their own anxieties about various issues and didn't want to add to their distress. Brad had high anxiety about grades, getting into college, and being able to socialize comfortably with his peers. Other anxieties revolved around personal safety. Brad didn't want to learn to drive because he worried about having an accident, road rage, and car-jackings. In addition, Brad was worried about what he would do if one or both of his parents died. He only felt comfortable at home, in his room, where he alternated between creating art, playing Minecraft, and watching YouTube.

One important component in working with both Briana and Brad was adding family sessions along with the individual therapy. The goal was to help them become more comfortable sharing their worries and concerns with their parents. Receiving additional support and understanding from the close people in their lives helped Briana and Brad immensely.

Along with sheltering chil-

dren from disturbing events as much as possible, parents need to demonstrate that they are open and receptive to discussing children's fears and worries. In order to do this, you can get your own support if needed so that you can offer your children congruent reassurance – meaning that your words match your behaviors and body language. If you are reassuring a child with comforting words, but your expression looks worried and alarmed, the child will register the entire message you are presenting and will not necessarily be reassured. Similarly, as in the case of one of Brad's parents, if you are consuming too much alcohol or other substances, your child may see this as a sign that you are distressed and not approachable.

Of course, the age of your children makes a difference in how much information you share with them. Elementary school age children and younger need the most protection from adult issues. Even if you need to paint a much rosier picture than you believe, you will be providing important comfort for your children. As your children become older, you will need to assess their ability to handle disturbing information so that you don't overwhelm them. It is much better to be cautious in your approach. And because they will pick up information from other sources, it is essential that you check in with

them frequently to find out what they are reading and hearing.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a well-accepted principle in the field of psychology, presents physiological needs, such as shelter, food, water and health as the foundation for all humans to be able to thrive. Next is another basic set of needs – safety and security in life and surroundings. These are vital requirements before emotional, social and intellectual needs can be fully attained. We want to provide all the safety nets we can so that our children can be happy and stable and achieve their full potential.



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a local marriage and family therapist. Contact her at 925-376-9323 or margierye@yahoo.com. Her books, "Family Focus: A Therapist's Tips for Happier Families," "Treat Your Partner Like a Dog: How to Breed a Better Relationship," and "Appetite for Life: Stories of Recovery from Anorexia, Bulimia and Compulsive Overeating" are available from Amazon.com.

SMC Theatre Program hosts 'Keeping It Real: A Festival of One-Acts'

Submitted by Benjamin Enos

The Theatre Program at Saint Mary's College is proud to announce the cast and creatives of the upcoming mainstage production, "Keeping It Real: A Festival of One-Acts," a fully-produced evening of world premiere plays under the artistic leadership of the Theatre Program Class of '22. The production will run from April 21-24 in LeFevre Theatre.

Written, directed and performed by students, the performance highlights themes of identity, miscommunication, rebellion, and youth culture. It is a glimpse into the minds of rising theatre artists, led by seniors Sejal Bahl (playwright/performer), Thomas Bradvica (playwright), Grace Clinton (playwright), Audrey Edmondo (projections designer), Aero England (playwright/performer), Naomi Kalter (dramaturg/director), and Sarah Shaughnessy (playwright). What's on their minds? Misunderstandings, hijinks, speaking their truths, and the absurdity of Collegiate Seminar.

"What a powerful opportunity to highlight and elevate the work of our exceptional senior class," said Theatre Program Director Deanna Zibello. "We've been building towards this moment for years, and now we're at the place where the years of training, supported by production resources, gives our students an extraordinary platform to showcase their talents."

The plays, directors, and casts include:

"An Awareness of Eccentricity"

By Thomas Bradvica
Directed by Avery Monson and Will Thompson
With Rianne Biernat, Kendra Eisenmann, Taj Shokar, Lydia Miller and Emma Ledesma

"Seminar 103"

By Sarah Shaughnessy
Directed by Dylan Cazin and Gabriella Thomas
With Emma Scanlan, Roya Amirshyebani, Taj Shokar, Xavier Romero, Weston Wheatley, Rianne Biernat, Naomi Kalter, and Ricky Sanchez

"Sweet Expectations"

By Grace Clinton
Directed by Joanne Houston and Chloë Parmelee-LaPorte
With Kendra Eisenmann, Lucy Bikahi, Chey Torres, Xavier Romero, Esteban LeCam, Molly Baziuk, Tamana Gill, Lanie Carleton, Lydia Miller, Alex Rutter, Aero England and Emma Scanlan

"Uprooted"

By Sejal Bahl
Directed by Kimiya Shokri
With Sejal Bahl, Lucy Bikahi, and Ricky Sanchez

"Unmasked"

By Aero England
Directed by Naomi Kalter
With Aero England, Roya Amirshyebani, Tamana Gill, Julian Florence Villegas, Molly Baziuk, Caroline Long, and Kenji Costantini

All performances will be performed in the LeFevre Theatre, Thursday-Sunday, April 21-24. They will also be available on-demand in May. Tickets are \$8-15 and can be ordered online: stmarys-ca.edu/Keeping-It-Real. ADA/Info: 925-631-4670.