

From Brooke's Kitchen: Carrot Cake



Last week's Hungry Reaper delivery of fresh carrots called for a favorite dessert. Carrot Cake — With warm, comforting spices, a moist crumb, crunchy toasted nuts, and velvety cinnamon cream cheese frosting — dare I say it, this is the BEST carrot cake!

In search of a great carrot cake recipe, without pineapple or dried fruit, I stumbled upon Sally's Baking Addiction — <https://sallysbakingaddiction.com>. I made Sally's recipe a few times and have altered it slightly to my liking. You cannot go wrong with Sally's recipes!

—Brooke

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Total Time: 3.5 hours

Servings: Approximately 12

Ingredients

- 1 cup (130g) chopped pecans (1/2 cup for cake, 1/2 cup for frosting)
- 1 cup (130g) chopped walnuts (1/2 cup for cake, 1/2 cup for frosting)
- 1 1/2 cups (300g) packed light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup (100g) granulated sugar
- 1 cup (226g/240ml) vegetable oil
- 4 large eggs, at room temperature
- 3/4 cup (180g) smooth unsweetened applesauce
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 1/2 cups (313g) all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder

- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 cups (260g) grated carrots (about 4 large)

Cream Cheese Frosting

- 16 ounces (452g) full-fat brick cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- 1/2 cup (8 Tbsp; 113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 4 cups (480g) confectioners' sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- Pinch of salt, to taste

Instructions

Toast the nuts: Preheat the oven to 300°F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat. Spread the chopped pecans and walnuts on the prepared baking sheet and bake for 6–8 minutes, or until fragrant. Give the pan a shake halfway through baking. Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 10–15 minutes.

Increase the oven temperature to 350°F. Grease three 9-inch cake pans, line with parchment paper rounds, then grease the parchment paper. Parchment paper helps the cakes release from the pans.

Wash, peel, and grate carrots.

Make the cake: In a large bowl, whisk the brown sugar, granulated sugar, oil, eggs, applesauce, and vanilla until combined and no brown sugar lumps remain.

In another large bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and cloves together.

Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and, using a spatula or wooden spoon, fold the ingredients together until just combined. Fold in the carrots and 1

cup (about 130g) of the toasted nuts. (The rest of the nuts are for garnish.)
Pour/spoon the batter evenly into the prepared cake pans.

Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 20–25 minutes.

Cool the cakes in the pans set on a cooling rack for 1 hour. Run a knife around the edges to help loosen the sides, remove the cakes from the pans, peel off the parchment, and place on the rack to finish cooling. (The cakes must be completely cool before frosting and assembling!)

Make the frosting: In a large bowl using a handheld or stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat the cream cheese and butter together on medium-high speed until smooth, about 2 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed. Add the confectioners' sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, and a pinch of salt. Beat on low speed for 30 seconds, then increase to high speed and beat for 3 minutes until completely combined and creamy. If the frosting seems a bit thin and runny, refrigerate it for 30 minutes before using.

Assemble the cake: Using a large serrated knife or cake leveler, slice a thin layer off the top of each cake to create a flat surface. Place a cake layer on a cake **turntable**, cake stand, or serving plate. Evenly cover the top with 3/4 to 1 cup (180–240g) of the frosting. Top with the second cake layer, upside down, and spread the same amount of frosting as on the first layer. Top with the third layer, right side up, and spread the top and sides with the remaining frosting. Garnish with the remaining toasted nuts. Refrigerate the cake for at least 20 minutes before slicing. This helps the cake hold its shape when cutting. If you refrigerated the cake for longer than 4 hours, take it out of the refrigerator 2 hours before serving so it can mostly come to room temperature.

Cover leftover cake tightly and store in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. I like to use a cake carrier for storing and transporting.

Brooke's Tips: The best way to get a delicious, moist carrot cake is to avoid pre-shredded carrots! Using freshly grated carrots really makes this cake moist and delicious. Also, when baking, I measure in grams. Baking is an art, but also a science — scales are a wonderful way to make sure you are not over- or under-scooping with measuring cups!