



COME TO THE TABLE

BY DENISE BROWN

Old-Fashioned Pound Cake

Pound cake is a nostalgic treat for me. I'm getting a lot of grief lately for baking so many, but baking, nibbling, and serving them to others cheer me beyond logic. My mother made them for my father, to feed his raging metabolism, and for herself, to enjoy with hot coffee at the end of a long afternoon when the house was quiet. I do the same now, though pound cake for breakfast is a thing as well. Full of every ingredient your healthy diet instructs you to avoid, pound cake can be the culinary equivalent of a bright, shiny object for a distracted appetite. And there are very few complete pound cake failures. Underbaked? Slice, toast, and spread with a little butter. Overbaked? Plate up with juicy, sweetened berries and whipped cream. I don't know that there are as many recipes for pound cake as there are bakers who bake them, but I've tried several; this is my current favorite and about as traditional as you'll find, though I do add a teaspoon of baking powder to the mix.

- 2 sticks (16 ounces) butter**
- 4 large eggs**
- 3 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- Pinch of salt**
- 1/4 cup cream**
- 1 teaspoon baking powder**
- 2 1/3 cups flour**

Thirty minutes to an hour before baking, set out the eggs, cream, and butter and allow them to come to room temperature.

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees or 350. There's some disagreement on the perfect temperature at which to bake a pound cake. My mother baked at 325; Martha Stewart insists on 350. You've baked a cake or two before and you know your oven. You won't go wrong with either. Position a rack in the center of the oven. Line a heavy 9-inch by 5-inch loaf pan with parchment paper.



Place the butter in a large bowl and beat until smooth. Beat in the sugar until fluffy and light. Add vanilla, salt, and cream and beat well. (Yes, I have used a splash of milk instead of cream, and you may as well.) Use a spatula to scrape the sides of the bowl as needed.

Beat in the eggs, one at a time. Mix well after each addition, but avoid overbeating. After the addition of the last egg, beat in the baking powder.

Add the flour to the bowl. Use a large spatula to fold the flour into the mixture. This will take about 40 to 45 strokes. Fold lightly but thoroughly. You might find a little flour clings to the bowl and refuses to mix in. This is fine.

The batter will be very thick. Use a large serving spoon to scoop it into the prepared loaf pan.

Place the pan in the oven. At 325 degrees, bake for approximately 70 to 80 minutes. At 350 degrees, bake for about one hour. Avoid overbaking; test five minutes before you expect the cake to be done if you're in doubt. A toothpick inserted into the center of the cake should come out almost clean. Remove from the oven and place on a wire rack to cool.

Leave in the pan a good 20 minutes before lifting out and continuing to cool on the wire rack. Once completely cooled, wrap tightly in plastic. It will stay fresh for 3 to 5 days.

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