

spiced pumpkin cake with brown sugar swiss buttercream

As soon as the days grow shorter and the leaves start to turn, this is the cake my family asks for. Some pumpkin cakes eat dense and heavy because they are overwhelmed with pumpkin puree. This one is very light and tender, yet the earthiness of the pumpkin still shines through. Neat trick, huh? The finishing touch is a Swiss meringue buttercream, though a cream cheese frosting (page 275) would be nearly as delicious.

MAKES ONE 3-LAYER 8-INCH CAKE, SERVING 12 TO 14

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F with a rack in the center position. Coat three 8-inch round baking pans with nonstick baking spray and line the bottoms with a circle of parchment paper.
2. In a large measuring cup, whisk the pumpkin puree, buttermilk, vanilla, eggs, and oil.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the sugar, both flours, baking powder, salt, baking soda, and spices and mix on low to incorporate. Add the butter all at once and mix on low until the mixture looks sandy, 2 to 4 minutes.
4. Add a quarter of the pumpkin mixture to the mixer bowl and blend to combine, then mix on medium-high for 2 minutes, until light and fluffy. Scrape down the bowl and paddle well. Add half of the remaining pumpkin, beat for 30 seconds, then scrape down the bowl and beat in the remainder of the pumpkin mixture. Mix on low for 2 minutes. Give the batter a few last folds with a rubber spatula.
5. Divide the batter among the prepared pans, tapping them a few times on the counter to release any large air bubbles. Bake all three

- 1 cup (250 g) pumpkin puree
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (190 g) well-shaken buttermilk, at room temperature
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 4 large eggs, at room temperature
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (75 g) canola oil
- 2 cups (400 g) granulated sugar
- $2\frac{1}{3}$ cups (280 g) cake flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (65 g) all-purpose flour
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons fine salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground cloves
- 12 tablespoons ($1\frac{1}{2}$ sticks/170 g) unsalted butter, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes and softened at room temperature for 20 minutes
- 1 recipe Brown Sugar Swiss Buttercream (page 277)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (30 g) chopped toasted walnuts
- 2 tablespoons (20 g) raw pepitas

recipe continues

on the center rack for 38 to 42 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with a few moist crumbs attached.

6. Place the pans on a wire rack to cool for 25 minutes then wrap the cakes, pans and all, in plastic wrap and cool to room temperature. Chill the layers for at least 1 hour, or up to overnight, before frosting.

7. To assemble: Transfer two-thirds of the buttercream to a large piping bag fitted with a large (½-inch) open round tip. Place one cake layer on a serving plate. Pipe a ring of buttercream around the outer edge, then fill in the center with more frosting. Top with the second cake layer and repeat. Add the final cake layer and use your palm to press down on the center of the cake gently but firmly until it is level.

8. Finish the cake by dolloping the remaining buttercream on top of the cake, using an offset spatula to spread it to the edges and a bit beyond. Sprinkle the walnuts and pepitas around the edges of the cake.

Baker's Note

Piping the buttercream onto the lower layers of the cake gives a neater look for a “naked” presentation; for a cake with fully frosted sides, you will need to make an additional half-batch of frosting.

