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# CAKES

When I design a cake, I look for uncomplicated flavors that can be assembled in a simple fashion. Primarily American layer cakes, Miette cakes are at once nostalgic and modern, taking you back in time with familiar flavors while exhibiting a refined aesthetic. Most of our cake recipes are familiar classics honed by the principles that define Miette: use of organic ingredients, precision in methodology, and an intentional small scale.

Scale, in particular, is central to the Miette philosophy. All of the cakes in our bakery are made in 6-inch pans, as I believe that most occasions call for no more. When I see a 9-inch cake in another bakery, I find it alarmingly big. If you are going to make a true Miette cake, a 6-by-3-inch round pan is essential. We scaled the master recipes in this chapter to yield two 6-inch cakes, so each time you bake, you will end up with an extra base. While this means you'll need to buy two pans, it makes for a trade-off of convenience, giving you a second foundation cake to work with another time and enough batter to make a 9-inch cake (plus a few cupcakes). All of the base cakes keep well; wrap tightly in plastic and refrigerate for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 2 months.

Miette cakes have minimal decoration, adhering to a simplicity that both belies and underscores their iconic quality. Through the refinement of elements, we have returned the cakes to their original ideals: The Bumblebee is the quintessential birthday cake; the Tomboy is a deconstructed version of chocolate cake with vanilla frosting; and the Lemon Debutante is a diminutive wedding cake. Though the cakes are always pretty, they are never frilly; their beauty comes in the anticipation of wanting to eat them. Cupcakes are cheerfully American, and accordingly, most of these cakes appear in our pastry case in cupcake versions.

The motto of simplicity extends to the Miette baking methodology and in turn, the organization of the chapter of cakes that follows. In this book, as at the bakery, we feature four essential “base” cakes as the foundation for all of the elaborated cakes. Following each base cake recipe are recipes for the constructed cakes, including assembly instructions and, for some, the respective cupcakes, all of which call on an assortment of sumptuous frostings and fillings found at the back of the book. Although each component is relatively simple, the construction and timing can be more complicated, so to repeat, it is important to read through the recipe first to make sure that you understand the whole process. The Coconut Mousse Cake, for example, involves four separate components that require a total of 2 days to make and assemble into the cake.

Finally, at Miette, temperature is everything—not just of the ingredients before you begin, but also in how you serve the cake. Buttercreams are best at room temperature, and therefore need to be removed from the refrigerator at least 4 hours before serving. By contrast, the mousse cakes need to be well chilled and left in the refrigerator until just before you serve them. Each recipe includes information on how the cake should be served for optimal enjoyment.

## CAKE-BAKING ESSENTIALS

Baking a perfect cake requires using perfect techniques. While we've integrated the details of Miette techniques into the recipes throughout this book, use the following section for a summary and general reference.



### **before you begin**

Using the right equipment is crucial to your cake-baking success. If you are getting ready to try your hand at the art of cakes for the first time, I strongly recommend you start by reading through the section called “Essential Ingredients” on page 210.

Next, make sure your kitchen is stocked with the following equipment: a heavy-duty stand mixer with paddle and whisk attachments, a microwave oven, medium- and fine-mesh sieves, a bain-marie or double boiler, several heat-resistant rubber spatulas, an instant-read thermometer, cake and loaf pans, a revolving cake stand for decorating, a supply of disposable cardboard cake boards, an offset (icing) spatula, pastry bags and piping tips, and a spackle blade. To create and decorate a Miette cake, a revolving stand is completely essential. Not only will you use it to frost, you will also use it to level and split the layers of the cake.

### **pan preparation**

Cakes require special care with pan preparation, including a coating of both fat and flour (or cocoa powder) that helps the cake fall from the pan easily after baking. For greasing, barely melted butter is best; soften room-temperature butter just a bit further—5 to 10 seconds—in the microwave. Use a pastry brush to coat the pan on all sides and to poke the butter into every nook and cranny. Sprinkle in about ¼ cup (1 ounce) flour and tilt, shake, rotate, and tap the pan to spread the flour in an even coat that covers the bottom, the corners, and all the sides. Whack it upside down, hard, on the countertop to tap out the excess flour; if you tap out onto parchment paper, you can funnel the excess back into your flour bag. When preparing a pan for

chocolate cake, use sifted cocoa powder instead of flour—flour may leave an unappealing white residue on the sides of your cake. When using cocoa, sift it beforehand for a smooth patina.

### **taking the temperature**

Paying attention to proper temperature is one of the most important factors in the science of baking, and perhaps most essential for cakes. Mixing ingredients that are the same temperature makes them emulsify more successfully, and you’ll see an appreciative difference in the texture of your cake. Start by bringing your butter and eggs to room temperature. Elements that are first heated or cooked must be allowed to cool, while elements that have been in the refrigerator may need to come up to room temperature. Use a thermometer to check the temperature of ingredients when specified, and plan ahead to allow for any necessary waiting periods.

### **paddle or whisk?**

The mixing steps in each recipe call for a specific attachment. The paddle attachment beats and incorporates, while a whisk will add air and generate volume, so the call depends on the nature of the mixture or batter itself. Some ingredients need to be folded gently by hand using a rubber spatula, to avoid deflating an extra-sensitive batter (see page 20).

### **adding the eggs**

Add the eggs to your batters slowly and carefully. This process simply cannot be rushed, as you are emulsifying a liquid into a fat. If not done gradually, you risk “breaking”



the batter, the term for when the fat and liquid that are beginning to hold together in a mixture suddenly separate again. Add one egg at a time and make sure that each egg is fully incorporated before adding the next.

### **mix lightly**

As most cakes are highly prone to overmixing, when you reach the step where you add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients, it is very important to mix lightly. This is because your dough or batter will become tough if you work it to the point that the gluten in the flour starts to form. When making bread, this is the goal of kneading; the opposite is true in baking pastry, where the goal is to develop as little gluten as possible. Once the liquid and flour mixture are combined in the bowl, you need to work with a light touch and alacrity to finish the mixing. While we often do a swift mix in the mixer just until the dry ingredients have been incorporated, I suggest that you always mix by hand after the dry ingredients have been added, using a gently folding motion with a rubber spatula or bowl scraper.

### **know your oven**

Be sure to preheat your oven thoroughly, and fit it with an accurate oven thermometer to ensure a consistent temperature. Learn to think in terms of getting to know your oven—even record observations in your kitchen notes—as understanding where its hot spots are or any other quirks. Position a rack in the center of the oven and arrange the cake pans on the rack so that they do not touch—the heat of the oven must be able to circulate evenly around the pans on all sides. Don't peek! You spent a lot of time and care getting just the right amount of air into the cake so that

the batter is a beautiful network ready to expand, with the application of heat, into tiny combs of air pockets. Opening the oven door during this process may cause the temperature to drop before the structure has solidified, causing the cake to collapse. Resist!

### **doneness**

The most frequently asked question in my cooking classes is, "How long do I bake it?" And I always answer: "Until it's done." This is because every oven and pan, and even different geographic locations, can command a slightly different baking time. It's more important to recognize the signs for doneness. For cakes, you want the top to spring back, a wooden skewer or cake tester to come out clean when inserted into the middle of the cake, and the edges to pull away from the sides. This is simply because you need to know if the middle of the cake is cooked, not just the top or edges. For cookies and tart shells, color is the best indicator, and I take mine to a dark golden color because in my estimation, the flavor quadruples during the last 5 minutes of baking. Also there is a moment when your pastry has that perfect "done" aroma. It takes a fair amount of practice, but with experience, you'll learn to know by smell when things are done.

### **cooling and depanning**

Proper cooling and graceful depanning is the precursor to making the decorating of a cake much easier. The presence of a single jagged edge can foil your finish, because it kicks up crumbs that will inevitably get into the frosting. The first step is to wait for the cake to cool—if it is too warm, it will break apart—but not completely. When



there is still a touch of warmth, the cake will slide out of the pan more easily. One means to recognizing the moment is the temperature of the pan: It should be warm, but cool enough to hold comfortably in your hands. To remove the cake, slide the short side of an offset spatula between the edges of the cake and the pan. (An offset blade is better than a knife because it is slightly flexible and has no serration.) Once the blade is inserted, use gentle pressure to maintain a constant connection to the side of the pan, and keep the blade flat and the angle of the spatula straight up and down. You do not want to cut into the cake. Once you have circled the cake, turn the pan upside down and rap an edge of the pan on the counter. The cake should fall out into your hand. Invert the cake right-side up on a wire rack to cool for another hour. A cold cake is easier to cut. So, if time permits, wrap the cake tightly in plastic wrap and put in the refrigerator for 2 hours. The cake will keep, wrapped in plastic, in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. For longer storage, wrap the cake in a second layer of plastic and freeze for up to 2 months.

## CAKE ASSEMBLY AND DECORATING BASICS

At Miette, while our cakes look simple, they are very hard to master, as they require expert skill in a few basic techniques. Each recipe walks you through every step and all the keys and cues for the pertinent techniques; the following section takes an opportunity to gather all the details for reference and review, in the form of our standard procedure for assembling and frosting a basic three-layer cake.

Not every cake goes through every step following, and there are variations on the themes (for example, a layer cake with a frosted top but unfrosted sides), but the run-down provides a map to guide you through the last stages of any cake.

### leveling the cake

Usually the top of a cake becomes slightly rounded during baking. Since the orientation is reversed for the final cake, in order to use the perfectly smooth side from the bottom of the pan as the top, the dome needs to be removed to make sure the cake stands perfectly straight, a process we simply call “leveling.”

A revolving cake stand (often including a nonslip pad) will give you an enormous advantage when trying to make clean cuts, both when leveling and layering a cake. Working on a turntable allows you to turn the uncut width of the cake into the blade of your knife as you go, and so you are less likely to lose your way and slide into a wobbly thickness.

To level a cake, center it on a revolving cake stand. Using a large (longer than the diameter of the cake) serrated knife, press the serrated side of the blade against the surface of the cake at the outside edge, holding the blade perfectly horizontal. Using your other hand, rotate the stand gradually to bring the cake toward you while you saw gently with the knife. Continue sawing while rotating the stand to help your progress until you have passed the knife over the entire top and have removed any curve, creating a perfectly flat and level surface. Stop occasionally as you go and check the surface of the cake at eye level to monitor your progress. Be sure the knife blade stays exactly parallel to the work surface.



### **splitting the cake into layers**

To split the cake into layers, leave it on the rotating cake stand and again take up the serrated knife. To make three equal layers, get eye level with the side of the cake and make small marks with the blade of the knife at spots one-third and two-thirds of the way up from the base. (You can also use a ruler to ensure even layers.) Still working from eye level, cut the first layer: Hold the knife perfectly horizontal and saw gently from edge to edge while rotating the cake toward you, until you have a clean cut all the way through. Pick up the layer and tap it gently to loosen excess crumbs, then brush it as free of all crumbs as you can. Set aside in a clean area of the work surface. Repeat to cut the second layer. The top layer of the base cake becomes the bottom layer of the assembled cake; the bottom layer of the base cake becomes the top of the assembled cake.

### **stacking the cake**

When the cake is leveled and the layers are cut and the frosting and any other fillings are made, you are ready to stack the cake.

Double-check the layers for any remaining crumbs. Tap any crumbs from the revolving cake stand and brush the work surface clean. Place a nonslip pad or damp paper towel on the stand (this will prevent the cake board from slipping while you work) and center a cake board on top. Set aside the original bottom of the cake, with a perfectly flat side from the pan bottom, to be the top of the final cake. Take the original top of the cake, which you leveled, to be the bottom layer of the assembled cake. Center the first layer with its flattest side facing up on the board.

Place a scoop of frosting on top (ice-cream scoops work well). For a 6-inch cake, if you are using a buttercream or cream cheese frosting, you will need  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup. If using a chocolate ganache, use a  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup or less.

Using an offset spatula, spread the icing to the edges until the layer is fully covered. Gently take up the second cake layer and center it on top of the first, aligning it as precisely as possible. Top with a scoop of the frosting and spread as before. Top with the final layer, flat-side up.

### **applying the crumb coat**

The crumb coat is an initial layer of frosting—a primer coat, just as in painting—that you apply to the cake to hold in the crumbs and mask any minor flaws in the smoothness of the surface before you spread on the presentation layer of frosting. Don't look for beauty in this step. The goal is to contain the crumbs and set down a foundation for perfectly straight sides, a flat top, and a beautiful final coat.

To add the crumb coat, using the offset spatula, apply a scoop of frosting on one side of the cake. Holding the spatula vertically, rotate the cake stand in one direction to spread the frosting evenly around the sides, about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick. As you work your way around the circumference of the cake, add more frosting as needed to achieve a thin, even primer coat, but do not backtrack or you may pull crumbs back on top of the frosting instead of enveloping them within. Again, the crumb coat will not look finished—what is most important with this step is making sure the layers are aligned perfectly straight up and down on all sides, and are crumb free and smooth. If you have any adjustments to make to align the layers, now is the time to nudge them into position.



As you frost the sides, push the frosting up over the top edge of the cake to make sure the coverage is complete, then use this excess to crumb-coat the top, using the spatula to pull the frosting across the cake toward the center. There should be enough extra frosting from the sides to cover the top, but if necessary, add another small scoop and spread smooth to coat. Transfer the cake on its board to the refrigerator and chill until the crumb coat has hardened and the layers are firmly attached (the crumb coat also protects against sliding), 30 minutes to 1 hour.

### **reheating and remixing the frosting**

When the assembled cake is set and ready for the final coat, remix the frosting, warming slightly if necessary: Place the remaining frosting in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave on high for 15-second intervals, stirring in between each, until the frosting is soft and spreadable. Depending on how long ago the frosting was made and the temperature of the room, this can take from 15 to 30 seconds. If the frosting was frozen it may take up to 2 minutes. (If you overheat the frosting and it melts into liquid, don't panic—just put it back in the refrigerator until it firms up again, about 20 minutes.) If you don't have a microwave, you can also reheat your frosting in a bain-marie or double boiler (see page 215). With this method, you need to transfer the frosting to a heatproof bowl if it's not already in one. Place the bowl over gently simmering water. Stir often, pulling the frosting in from the sides of the bowl as it melts, until soft and smooth throughout, 1 to 2 minutes.

Transfer the warmed frosting to a clean bowl of a stand mixer and fit the mixer with the paddle attachment. Beat at

low speed until the frosting is smooth and very shiny, 1 to 2 minutes. Do not use a whisk and do not beat at too high a speed or for too long—any of these will add too much air and produce bubbles that will make the presentation layer look porous and pockmarked.

### **the presentation layer**

To apply the final presentation layer of frosting, transfer the cake from the refrigerator back to the revolving cake stand. Using the offset spatula, apply a scoop of the remixed frosting on one side and, again keeping the spatula in front of you, rotate the cake stand to spread the frosting in a smooth coat,  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick. Continue to add frosting to the sides of the cake, smoothing with the spatula as you make your way around it.

For extra-smooth sides, using a 4-inch spackle blade (see page 217), go around the frosted sides of the cake again, holding the edge of the blade perfectly straight up and down. As always, let the rotation of the stand do the work.

To finish the top, returning to the offset spatula, pull the excess frosting up and over the edges and across the top toward the center, as you did with the crumb coat, working evenly around the cake. Finally, add a small scoop of frosting to the top center of the cake and, holding the spatula flat in the center, rotate the cake stand gradually, moving the spatula to the edges in widening circles while applying gentle pressure to make a smooth, level top coat. If you are going to add piping around the perimeter, you don't need to worry about the seam at the rim being pristine, because the piping will cover it. If you are not adding piping, as



in the case of the Bumblebee Cake, push the extra frosting back toward the center, rotating the spatula inward to create a small spiral. Return the cake to the refrigerator and let set until firm, about 30 minutes.

### **piping and using a pastry bag**

To properly use a pastry bag, make a cuff by pulling the top half of the bag down over your hand. Using a rubber spatula, scoop frosting into the bag and pack lightly until

the bag is half full. Pull up the cuff and twist it to seal and tighten the frosting down into the cone. Purge the bag of air bubbles by squeezing until there is a burst of air and frosting sputters out of the bag. Keep the bag tightly twisted as you work so that the frosting doesn't push back up onto your hands. If you are piping a ring (for the inner layer that seals the cake layers), hold the bag at a 90-degree angle about an inch over the cake and let the frosting drop as you turn the cake stand and make your way around the cake.







# HOT MILK CAKE

**makes two 6-inch cakes**

Hot Milk Cake is a wonderfully delicate and moist cake that we use in place of a traditional “white” cake. This recipe yields two beautiful 6-inch layers for building on and decorating, and is the foundation for the Lemon Debutante Cake (page 29), the Princess Cake (page 34), the Coconut Mousse Cake (page 41), and the Strawberry Charlotte (page 45).

(Note: You only need one Hot Milk Cake for each of the assembled cakes.)

I originally found the comfortingly named “hot milk cake” in a collection of old New England recipes and have been using it ever since. Milk and butter give it a tender crumb with a sturdy texture and, unlike many traditional white cakes, which often can be dry, this hot milk cake is moist and flavorful. Hot milk cake is technically a sponge cake made with the addition of baking powder and a large amount of butter. The texture is stronger than most sponges—it stands up beautifully to buttercream—but still light and airy enough to absorb a syrup, without becoming gummy or grainy. That means you can flavor it in many different directions or serve it

## ingredients

**1½ CUPS (6½ OUNCES) ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR**

**2 TEASPOONS BAKING POWDER**

**¼ TEASPOON KOSHER SALT**

**½ CUP (4 OUNCES) UNSALTED BUTTER, AT ROOM TEMPERATURE**

**½ CUP WHOLE MILK**

**1½ CUPS (10½ OUNCES) SUGAR**

**3 LARGE EGGS**

**½ TEASPOON VANILLA EXTRACT**

## preparation

1. Read through or review the “Cake-Baking Essentials” section beginning on page 18.
2. Liberally butter two 6-by-3-inch cake pans and dust with flour (see page 19). Tap out the excess flour.
3. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
4. Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt into a bowl and set aside.
5. In a saucepan over medium-low heat, combine the butter and milk and heat, stirring occasionally, until the butter is melted, 3 to 4 minutes. (Alternatively, in a microwave-safe bowl, combine the butter and milk and microwave on high at 10-second intervals, stirring between each, until the butter is melted.) Pour the milk mixture into a large bowl. Set aside and let cool to slightly above room temperature; an instant-read thermometer should register between 80 and 85 degrees F. You want the milk and butter to remain incorporated, so whisk the mixture occasionally and vigorously while it is cooling and up until you add it to the batter.



on its own with berries and whipped cream. Hot milk cake is often used as the base for wedding cakes.

This is a challenging cake, in that there are a couple of steps you need to manage simultaneously. The key to success lies completely in temperature control, so it is crucial that you have an instant-read thermometer at the ready. Two separate mixtures that started hot are combined only when they have cooled to the same room temperature. Using a thermometer will help ensure the proper emulsification of the subtly special batter.

6. In the top pan of a double boiler or in a bowl for a bain-marie, whisk together the sugar, eggs, and vanilla. Fit the top pan or bowl over (but not touching) simmering water in the bottom pan or a saucepan and gently warm the mixture, stirring, just until the sugar is dissolved and the thermometer registers 110 degrees F, about 10 minutes. Pour the egg mixture through a medium-mesh sieve into the bowl of a stand mixer. Fit the mixer with the whisk attachment and whisk on high speed until the mixture is light and fluffy and has cooled to slightly above room temperature (between 80 and 85 degrees F), about 10 minutes. (Note: The batter becomes more stable as the mixture cools; this is an important factor in creating a cake with good structure.)
7. Stop the mixer. Add the sifted dry ingredients and mix on low until just incorporated. The batter should be smooth. Check the milk mixture to make sure it is fully cooled, then slowly pour it into the batter, whisking on low speed. Stop mixing as soon as the batter is well blended and smooth. Remove the bowl from the mixer, scrape down the sides of the bowl again, and fold by hand a few times with the spatula. Divide the batter between the prepared pans. Bake until the cakes are golden brown and a tester inserted in the center comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes.
8. Transfer to wire racks and let cool in the pans for about 20 minutes. When the cakes are cooled enough to handle the pans but still a tad warm to the touch, carefully run an offset spatula around the edges of the pans to loosen them, then invert the cakes onto the racks and remove the pans. Let cool for about 30 minutes longer. Wrap the cakes tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate to ensure that the interiors are completely cooled before decorating, at least 1 hour or for up to 3 days. To freeze, wrap tightly in a second layer of plastic wrap and store in the freezer for up to 2 months.







# LEMON DEBUTANTE CAKE

**makes one 6-inch layer cake**

If it could be said that any of our cakes went to finishing school, it would be this one. With a perfectly smooth gown of frosting and delicate piping, this cake is our most turned out; thus we call it the Debutante. It has three layers of sponge cake infused with tart lemon syrup, filled with lemon curd, frosted with light lemony buttercream and is finished with scalloped piping and a sugar flower. The Lemon Debutante Cake takes the Hot Milk Cake in a direction that fully maximizes its capability. The cake absorbs the syrup and holds up the curds and cream without becoming overwhelmed. Here is a textbook example of how to build a layer cake; think of it as a kind of cake compulsory, akin to skating in perfect circles. The decorating techniques for this cake are exactly the same as those you need to make a wedding cake.

This recipe calls for both a Lemon Buttercream made with Lemon Curd and for additional Lemon Curd, so plan to make the Lemon Curd first and give it ample time to chill before making the Lemon Buttercream.

## ingredients

**1 HOT MILK CAKE (PAGE 26)**

**¼ CUP LEMON SIMPLE SYRUP (PAGE 207)**

**ABOUT 3 CUPS LEMON BUTTERCREAM (PAGE 186)**

**ABOUT 4 TABLESPOONS LEMON CURD, CHILLED (PAGE 200)**

**1 SMALL CANDIED SUGAR FLOWER (SEE SOURCES, PAGE 218)**

## preparation

1. Read through or review the “Cake Assembly and Decorating Basics” section beginning on page 21.
2. Make the Hot Milk Cake as directed and make sure it is cool inside and out. (If frozen, let thaw in the refrigerator, 3 to 4 hours. If time demands, you can thaw on the countertop, 1 to 2 hours, but be careful not to let it sit for too much longer before you begin working with it, as a cold cake is easier to cut.
3. Clear a space in the refrigerator large enough for the cake on a cake board (see page 215). If making the simple syrup, let cool to room temperature. If you made the buttercream previously, remix the frosting until spreadable (see page 23).
4. Set a revolving cake stand on a clean, dry work surface and place the cake, top-side up, on the stand. Using a serrated knife and holding the blade perfectly horizontal, remove any dome from the top of the cake to level it. While you saw gently with the knife, use your other hand to rotate the stand gradually and bring the cake toward you. Get eye level with the cake as needed to make sure you are holding the knife exactly level. Repeat to split the cake into three equal layers.

**continued**



5. Arrange all three cake layers on the work surface. Using your hands, tap off and brush away excess crumbs. Reserve the original bottom layer (flat-dark-side, or pan-side, up) to be the top layer of the assembled cake. Tap any crumbs off the cake stand as well, and brush the work surface clean. Using a pastry brush, brush the top of each layer with an ample amount of the lemon syrup.
6. Place a nonslip pad or damp paper towel on the cake stand to prevent slipping and center a cake board on top. Take up the original top of the cake, which you leveled, to be the bottom layer of the assembled cake. Center the first layer of cake with its flattest side facing up on the board.
7. Fit a pastry bag with a medium ( $\frac{1}{2}$ - or  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch) round tip and fill halfway with the buttercream. Pull up the cuff and twist it to seal and tighten the frosting down into the cone. Purge the bag of air bubbles by squeezing the bag until there is a burst of air and frosting sputters out of the bag. Keep the bag tightly twisted so that the frosting doesn't come back up on your hands. Holding the bag upright at a 90-degree angle, pipe a ring of buttercream about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in diameter around the outer edge of the cake to create a barrier. Spoon about 2 tablespoons of the curd onto the center of the cake and, using an offset spatula, spread it smoothly all over the top of the cake, out to the edges of the frosting barrier. Take up the filled pastry bag again and, starting at the inside edge of the barrier and working inward, pipe a tight spiral of buttercream over the curd. Gently smooth the buttercream with the offset spatula. You now have a frosted layer laced and dotted with pockets of lemon curd.
8. Arrange the second cake layer on top and press down lightly to seal and secure. Repeat to frost with the buttercream and curd as above. Place the reserved top piece, flat-side (crust-side) up, on top. You are now ready to apply the crumb coat.
9. Using the offset spatula, apply a scoop of frosting on one side of the cake. Holding the spatula vertically more or less in front of you, rotate the cake stand in one direction to spread the frosting evenly around the sides, about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick. As you work your way around the circumference of

continued





**STEP 4a:** Using a serrated knife, remove any dome to level the cake.



**STEP 4b:** Hold the knife level and split the cake into three equal layers.



**STEP 7a:** Starting at the inside edge of the frosting barrier, pipe a tight spiral inward.



**STEP 7b:** Gently smooth the buttercream with an offset spatula.



the cake, add more frosting as needed to achieve a thin, even primer coat, but do not backtrack or you may pull crumbs back on top of the frosting instead of enveloping them within. The crumb coat doesn't need to look finished; just make sure the sides are straight. Nudge the layers into position if needed. As you frost the sides, push the frosting up over the top edge of the cake to make sure the coverage is complete, then use this excess to crumb-coat the top, using the spatula to pull the frosting across the cake toward the center. There should be enough extra frosting from the sides to cover the top, but if necessary, add another small scoop and spread smooth to coat.

10. Place the cake, on the cake board, in the refrigerator until the crumb coat has hardened and the layers are firmly attached, 30 minutes to 1 hour. Cover and refrigerate the remaining buttercream (you should have about 1½ cups).
11. When you are ready to finish frosting, remix the remaining buttercream: Place in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave on high for 30-second intervals, stirring in between each, until the frosting is soft, smooth, and spreadable, without any lumps, 15 seconds to 1 minute. If you don't have a microwave, you can also reheat the frosting in a bain-marie or double boiler. With this method, place the frosting in a heatproof bowl or the top pan of a double boiler. Place the bowl over (but not touching) gently simmering water in a saucepan or the bottom pan of a double boiler. Stir often, pulling the frosting in from the sides of the bowl as it melts, until soft and smooth throughout, 1 to 2 minutes.
12. Transfer the frosting to a clean bowl of a stand mixer and fit the mixer with the paddle attachment. Beat at low speed just until the frosting is smooth and very shiny, 1 to 2 minutes. Do not use a whisk and do not beat at too high a speed or for too long—any of these will add too much air and produce bubbles that will make the presentation layer look porous and pockmarked.
13. When the crumb coat is set, transfer the cake on its board from the refrigerator back onto the revolving cake stand, with the nonslip pad or a damp paper towel underneath. Add the presentation layer of



buttercream: Using the offset spatula, apply a scoop of the remixed frosting on one side of the cake and, again keeping the spatula in front of you, rotate the cake stand to spread the frosting in a smooth coat,  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick. Continue to add frosting to the sides of the cake, smoothing with the spatula as you make your way around it.

14. For extra-smooth sides, using a 4-inch spackle blade (see page 217), go around the frosted sides of the cake again, holding the edge of the blade perfectly straight up and down. Let the rotation of the stand do the work.
15. To finish the top, pull the excess frosting up and over the edges and across the top toward the center, as you did with the crumb coat, working evenly around the cake. Finally, still using the offset spatula, add a small scoop of buttercream to the center of the cake and, holding the spatula flat in the center of the cake, rotate the cake stand clockwise, moving the spatula to the edges in gradually widening circles while applying gentle pressure to make a smooth, even coat. Since you are going to add piping around the perimeter, you don't need to worry about the seam at the rim being pristine. Return the cake to the refrigerator and let set until firm, about 30 minutes.
16. To decorate the cake, pipe a small shell border: Fit a pastry bag with a small ( $\frac{1}{4}$ - or  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch) star tip and fill halfway with the remaining buttercream. Pointing the tip at the top rim of the cake at a 45-degree angle, apply a small burst of pressure to create a tiny hump and release, moving up just a tad to make a shell shape; repeat this motion around the perimeter to create the shell border. Refill the bag; holding it at a 45-degree angle at the base of the cake, use the same motion to pipe the bottom border. Place the candied sugar flower in the center of the cake. Very carefully transfer the cake on the board to a presentation platter or plate.
17. This cake needs to be served at room temperature. Serve at once, or hold at room temperature for up to 4 hours. For longer storage, refrigerate for up to 2 days and remove from the refrigerator 4 hours before serving.



# PRINCESS CAKE

**makes one 6-inch layer cake**

This cake arrived with her title and it is aptly deserved, as there is something regal in the lovely dome shape and pale green color. Originally made in the 1930s for the three princesses of Sweden, Miette's version is strictly traditional—almost. We added a modern ingredient and a contemporary aesthetic: white chocolate fondant instead of marzipan (and a tint that is a bare whisper of green). We love the smooth silky feel and sophisticated look of the fondant, and at holiday time, we turn this cake into a snowball by keeping the fondant white and covering it with shiny white sugar. At Easter, we use three different colors to tint the fondant, filling our case with a pastel array of cakes.

When I teach this cake in my classes, the students can hardly wait to roll out the fondant. But this step must be saved for the end, when the cake has been tucked away in the refrigerator and all the crumbs are cleared away. When working with fondant, your work surface must be pristine and your hands must be clean. Also note, the raspberry jam for this cake needs to be thick and seedless.

**continued**

## Ingredients

**1 HOT MILK CAKE (PAGE 26)**

**¼ CUP RASPBERRY SIMPLE SYRUP (PAGE 207)**

**ABOUT ¼ CUP PASTRY CREAM (PAGE 202), FULLY CHILLED**

**3 TABLESPOONS SEEDLESS RASPBERRY JAM, WARMED UNTIL POURABLE**

**2 CUPS HEAVY CREAM**

**4 TABLESPOONS POWDERED SUGAR**

**1 POUND WHITE CHOCOLATE FONDANT (SEE SOURCES, PAGE 218)**

**3 DROPS GREEN FOOD COLORING (OPTIONAL)**

**1 DROP YELLOW FOOD COLORING (OPTIONAL)**

**CORNSTARCH FOR ROLLING**

**1 CANDIED ROSE AND LEAF (OPTIONAL; SEE SOURCES, PAGE 218)**

**20 INCHES MOSS-GREEN SATIN RIBBON, 1 INCH WIDE**

**1 DECORATIVE STRAIGHT PIN**

## Preparation

1. Read through or review the "Cake Assembly and Decorating Basics" section beginning on page 21.
2. Make the Hot Milk Cake as directed and make sure it is cool inside and out. (If frozen, let thaw in the refrigerator, 3 to 4 hours. If time demands, you can thaw on the countertop, 1 to 2 hours, but be careful not to let it sit too much longer before you begin working with it, as a cold cake is easier to cut.
3. Clear a space in the refrigerator large enough for the cake on a cake board (see page 215). If making the simple syrup now, let cool to room temperature.

**continued**







A loose jam will disappear into the layers, and seeds are an annoyance when paired with the other creamy textures.

This cake is famously complicated and may take days to make, depending on your stamina and how each of the components comes together. I don't recommend you start with this cake; perhaps think of it as a potential goal once you have completed your other cakes. This will be your crowning achievement.

4. Set a revolving cake stand on a clean, dry work surface and place the cake, top-side up, on the stand. Using a serrated knife and holding the blade perfectly horizontal, remove any dome from the top of the cake to level it. While you saw gently with the knife, use your other hand to rotate the stand gradually and bring the cake toward you. Get eye level to the cake as needed to make sure you are holding the knife exactly level. Repeat twice to split the cake into three equal layers. Set one of the layers aside for snacking.
5. Arrange the two cake layers on the work surface. Using your hands, tap off and brush away excess crumbs. Turn the original bottom layer flat-dark-side, or pan-side, up; reserve this to be the top layer of the assembled cake. Tap any crumbs off the cake stand as well, and brush the work surface clean. Using a pastry brush, brush the top of each layer with an ample amount of the raspberry syrup.
6. Place a nonslip pad or damp paper towel on the cake stand to prevent slipping and center a cake board on top. Take up the original top of the cake, which you leveled, to be the bottom layer of the assembled cake. Center the first layer of cake with its flattest side facing up on the board.
7. Fit a pastry bag with a small ( $\frac{1}{4}$ - or  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch) round tip and fill halfway with the pastry cream. Pull up the cuff and twist it to seal and tighten the pastry cream down into the cone. Purge the bag of air bubbles by squeezing the bag until there is a burst of air and pastry cream sputters out of the bag. Keep the bag tightly twisted so that the frosting doesn't come back up on your hands. Holding the bag at a 90-degree angle, pipe a ring of pastry cream about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in diameter around the outer edge of the cake to create a barrier. Spoon the strained raspberry jam onto the center of the cake and, using an offset spatula, spread it smoothly all over the top of the cake, up to the edges of the pastry cream barrier. Take up the filled pastry bag again and, starting at the inside edge of the barrier and working inward, pipe a tight spiral over the jam using the remaining pastry cream. Using an offset spatula, gently smooth the inside of the spiral. Place the reserved top piece, flat-side up, on top and press down lightly to seal and secure.

continued





**STEP 8a:** Shape the whipped cream into a dome about 3 inches high.



**STEP 8b:** Mold the dome to the edges of the cake, rotating the turntable while holding the spatula to even the curve.



**STEP 10a:** Carefully drape the fondant.



**STEP 10b:** Adhere the fondant to the shape of the cake.





**STEP 10c:** Trim the base of the fondant, leaving a ¼-inch overhang.



**STEP 10d:** Lift the edge of the cake with an offset spatula and begin tucking the fondant under it.



**STEP 10e:** Continue tucking all of the fondant. Smooth the cake surface.



**STEP 11:** Wrap the ribbon around the base of the cake.



8. In a chilled bowl, using an electric mixer set on high speed, whip together the heavy cream and powdered sugar until stiff peaks form. It is very important to make sure that the whipped cream is firm enough, or the cake will slump. Scoop the firmly whipped cream carefully onto the top of the cake and shape it into a dome about 3 inches high, mounding it all the way to the edges, rotating the turntable while holding the offset spatula to even the curve. Place the cake, on the cake board, in the refrigerator while you prepare the fondant.
9. On a clean work surface, and using clean hands, knead the fondant until soft and pliable. If you want the cake's "dress" to have a delicate green tint, add the green and yellow food coloring, a tiny drop at a time, until the fondant reaches the color you desire. Dust the surface of the fondant and a rolling pin with cornstarch. Occasionally lift and rotate the fondant so that it does not stick to the table. Roll the fondant out into a circle about 10 inches in diameter and ¼ inch thick. Using a clean, soft-bristled pastry brush, brush away any visible cornstarch.
10. Transfer the cake on its board from the refrigerator back onto the revolving cake stand, with the nonslip pad or a damp paper towel underneath, and set it near the fondant. Very carefully lift the fondant circle over the backs of your forearms. Center the fondant over the dome of whipped cream and then slowly drape it over the mound of cream and sides of the cake, sweeping your forearms away when you reach the board. Use your palms to smooth and pat the fondant gently to help it adhere to the shape of the cake all around. Using the tip of a sharp knife or a pizza wheel, trim the base of the fondant, leaving an overhang of about ¼ inch around the base of the cake. Lift one edge of the cake with an offset spatula, and very carefully tuck a small section of the fondant underneath the cake. Repeat all around the cake until the entire train of the fondant is neatly tucked under the cake and the surface is smooth all over.
11. Very carefully transfer the cake on the board to a presentation platter. Top with the candied rose and leaf, if desired. Wrap the ribbon neatly around the base of the cake and secure with the straight pin. Serve at once or refrigerate for up to 8 hours. Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before serving.







# COCONUT MOUSSE CAKE

**makes one 6-inch layer cake**

The Coconut Mousse Cake is our celebration of winter, with its pure white coconut flakes and the perfect consolation it offers during the season when our fruit choices are limited. Coconut is at once familiar, exotic, and nostalgic; the inspiration for this cake was a tall 1950s-style American layer cake covered in shredded coconut. Miette's version adds a layer of mousse and a coconut syrup that enhances the nutty-sweet coconut flavor.

This cake has many steps and some of the ingredients, particularly the coconut purée for the mousse, can be difficult to track down. See our Sources section (page 218), and give yourself plenty of time to tackle the steps individually. You need to make both the mousse and the icing the same day you assemble the cake. The mousse cake is assembled in a cake pan and needs time in the refrigerator to set. Pipe the boiled icing and add the final decoration several hours before serving. You can make this in either three or four layers. You will need about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of mousse per layer.

## ingredients

**1 HOT MILK CAKE (PAGE 26)**

**$\frac{1}{4}$  CUP COCONUT SIMPLE SYRUP (PAGE 207)**

**2 CUPS FRESHLY MADE COCONUT MOUSSE (PAGE 199)**

**ABOUT 2 CUPS FRESHLY MADE BOILED ICING (PAGE 192)**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  CUP (2 $\frac{1}{2}$  OUNCES) SHREDDED DRIED COCONUT**

## preparation

1. Read through or review the "Cake Assembly and Decorating Basics" section beginning on page 21.
2. Make the Hot Milk Cake as directed and make sure it is cool inside and out. (If frozen, let thaw in the refrigerator, 3 to 4 hours. If time demands, you can thaw on the countertop, 1 to 2 hours, but be careful not let it sit too long before you begin working with it, as a cold cake is easier to cut.)
3. Clear a space in the refrigerator large enough for the cake on a cake board (see page 215). The mousse cake will need several hours to set up.
4. If making the simple syrup now, let cool to room temperature. Make the mousse as directed.
5. Set a revolving cake stand on a clean, dry work surface and place the cake, top-side up, on the stand. Using a serrated knife and holding the blade perfectly horizontal, remove any dome from the top of the cake to level it. While you saw gently with the knife, use your other hand to rotate the stand gradually and bring the cake toward you. Get eye level to the cake as needed to make sure you are holding the knife exactly level. Repeat to split the cake into three or four equal layers.

**continued**



6. Arrange all the cake layers on the work surface. Using your hands, tap off and brush away excess crumbs. Turn the original bottom layer flat-dark-side, or pan-side, up; reserve this to be the top layer of the assembled cake. Using a pastry brush, brush the top of each layer with an ample amount of the coconut syrup.
7. Line a clean 6-by-3-inch cake pan with plastic wrap, leaving about 3 inches of overhang all around the sides to use later as a handle. Take up the original top of the cake, which you leveled, to be the bottom layer of the assembled cake. Place this first layer, syrup-side up, in the lined pan. Scoop one-third of the mousse on top of the cake layer and use an offset spatula to level it. Top with the second layer of cake, syrup-side up, and press down lightly to seal and secure. Add another layer of mousse. Repeat with the third layer if making a four-layer cake.
8. Place the reserved top piece, flat-dark-side up, on top. Cover with plastic wrap and carefully transfer the cake to the refrigerator. Let set for at least 3 hours and up to 2 days.
9. To unmold the mousse cake, wrap a hot towel around the pan for 1 minute and gently shake to loosen the cake. Invert the pan onto a cake board on a clean work surface, then gently lift off the pan. If it resists, give a little tug on the plastic-wrap "handle." When the pan is off, peel the plastic-wrap lining from the cake. Transfer the cake on its board onto the revolving cake stand, with a nonslip pad or damp paper towel underneath.



10. This cake requires only one coat of icing. Using the offset spatula, apply a generous scoop of the icing on one side of the cake. Keeping the spatula in front of you, rotate the cake stand to spread the icing in a smooth coat about 1 inch thick. (It needs to be thick enough to hide the sides of the cake, but not drooping down the sides.) Add more icing as you go, but do not back track! The icing will be covered with coconut, so it is not important for it to be perfect; however, the coat of icing should be straight up and down on all sides, as well as crumb free and smooth. As you frost the sides, push the icing up over the top edge of the cake to make sure the coverage is complete, then use this excess to frost the top, using the spatula to pull the icing across the cake toward the center. There should be enough icing from the sides to cover the top, but if necessary, add another small scoop.
11. Using a cupped hand, apply the dried coconut to the sides and top of the cake, pressing gently to help it adhere. Very carefully transfer the cake on the board to a presentation platter. Gather up any excess coconut and press it onto the cake, or reserve for another use. Refrigerate the cake for at least 1 hour and up to 8 hours. Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before serving.







# STRAWBERRY CHARLOTTE

**makes one 6-inch layer cake**

When we announce the arrival of the Strawberry Charlotte, the cakes are pre-sold before they even make it into the display case. They are magnificent to behold: a powdery band of ladyfingers tied up with a bow and a jumbled crown of tiny strawberries. And the inside is just as remarkable, enriched by a mousse that is as creamy as it is fresh and bright.

Charlottes are a French dessert traditionally made in a mold with ladyfingers and Bavarian cream or mousse. Typically the pan is lined with the ladyfingers and the filling is added. We found this technique to be incredibly difficult. The solution we devised is to mold the mousse separately, and pipe the ladyfinger batter in a way that lets it bake into a connected band of cookies. At assembly time, this allows you to wrap the cookie sash around the cake in one fell swoop.

Mousse is a delightful way to carry the flavor of fresh fruit into a cake, contributing creaminess and swoon-worthy unctuousness at the same time. In the cake, too—a simple, buttery sponge with a touch of syrup

**continued**

## ingredients

**1 HOT MILK CAKE (PAGE 26)**

**¼ CUP RASPBERRY SIMPLE SYRUP (PAGE 207)**

**ABOUT 2 CUPS FRESHLY MADE STRAWBERRY MOUSSE (PAGE 198)**

**TWO 3-BY-10-INCH BANDS LADYFINGERS (PAGE 204), TRIMMED TO A TOTAL OF 19 INCHES (SEE NOTE, PAGE 47)**

**APPROXIMATELY 28 INCHES MOSS-GREEN SATIN RIBBON, 1 INCH WIDE**

**1 PINT FRESH STRAWBERRIES, PREFERABLY SMALL AND WHOLE WITH STEMS ATTACHED, OR HULLED AND SLICED IF LARGER**

**1 DECORATIVE STRAIGHT PIN (OPTIONAL)**

## preparation

1. Read through or review the “Cake Assembly and Decorating Basics” section beginning on page 21.
2. Make the Hot Milk Cake as directed and make sure it is cool inside and out. (If frozen, let thaw in the refrigerator, 3 to 4 hours. If time demands, you can thaw on the countertop, 1 to 2 hours, but be careful not to let it sit too long before you begin working with it, as a cold cake is easier to cut.)
3. Clear a space in the refrigerator large enough for the cake on a cake board (see page 215). The mousse cake will need several hours to set up.
4. If making the simple syrup now, let cool to room temperature. Make the mousse as directed.

**continued**



for background complexity—there is little to distract you from the fruit. To heighten the color of the mousse, you can add a few raspberries to the fruit juice. Add the ladyfingers and the berries for garnish about 3 hours before serving. We get our strawberries from Swanton Farms, one of the farmers at the Ferry Building market. The berries are small and incredibly flavorful, and sometimes they still have their stems attached, making the charlotte look like a woodland wedding cake.

You will only use two of the three layers of cake in this assembly. At the bakery, the third layer becomes the first in the next cake; but at home you should just enjoy it with your coffee or tea. This cake has many parts and is best tackled over a couple of days, but you should make the strawberry mousse the day you will assemble the cake, as mousse sets up quickly. The mousse recipe makes more than you will need for this cake so we recommend putting it in ramekins or in a bowl to serve separately. (It keeps for 2 days so you don't have to eat everything all at once.)

There are few things that provide as deep a sense of accomplishment in the pastry kitchen as when you tie the bow around this striking cake for the finishing touch.

5. Set a revolving cake stand on a clean, dry work surface and place the cake, top-side up, on the stand. Using a serrated knife and holding the blade perfectly horizontal, remove any dome from the top of the cake to level it. While you saw gently with the knife, use your other hand to rotate the stand gradually and bring the cake toward you. Get eye level to the cake as needed to make sure you are holding the knife exactly level. Repeat to split the cake into three equal layers.
6. Reserve the top layer for another use (see recipe introduction). Arrange the two cake layers on the work surface. Using your hands, tap off and brush away excess crumbs. Tap any crumbs off the cake stand as well, and brush the work surface clean. Using a pastry brush, brush the top of each layer with an ample amount of the raspberry syrup.
7. Line a clean 6-by-3-inch cake pan with plastic wrap, leaving about 3 inches of overhang all around the sides to use later as a handle. Put the bottom layer, syrup-brushed flat-side up, in the pan. Scoop about 1 cup of the mousse on top of the cake layer and use an offset spatula to level it. Top with the second layer of cake, syrup-side down, and press down lightly to seal and secure. Add as much of the remaining mousse as you need to fill the pan to the rim.
8. Very gently place another piece of plastic wrap on top, directly on the surface of the mousse (this prevents a skin from forming). Carefully transfer the cake to the refrigerator and let set for at least 3 hours and up to 2 days.
9. To unmold the mousse cake, wrap a hot towel around the pan for 1 minute and gently shake to loosen the cake. Invert the pan onto a cake board on a clean work surface, then gently lift off the pan. If it resists, give a little tug on the plastic-wrap "handle." When the pan is off, peel the plastic-wrap lining from the cake. Invert the cake again, mousse-side up. Place the cake on a presentation platter.





**STEP 7:** Add as much of the remaining mousse as you need to fill the pan to the rim.



**STEP 10:** Carefully secure the ladyfingers around the sides of the cake.

10. One at a time, carefully secure the two bands of connected ladyfingers, powdered-sugar-side out, around the sides of the cake, pressing them into the mousse to secure. Wrap the ribbon around the cake, positioning it about halfway up the sides, and tie it snugly in a knot. Or, trim it to about 22 inches and secure it snugly with the straight pin. Don't allow any slack, because in addition to its pretty form, the ribbon is functioning to bond together the ladyfingers.
11. Refrigerate the cake for at least 2 hours and up to 2 days. Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before serving. Just before serving, arrange the strawberries on top in an artful pattern.

#### note

If the bands of ladyfingers are too tall, measure the overage, place on a cutting board, and cut off the bottom tips to match your measurement. If the combined bands are too long, measure the excess, place on a cutting board, and cut off the excess in a vertical strip to match your measurement, preferably between two cookies.



# BUTTER CAKE

**makes two 6-inch cakes**

Yellow cake can be nondescript, but this butter cake has tons of character. Its texture is like a pound cake, so it holds up beautifully to rich frostings and cuts incredibly well—all told, the perfect layer cake. As with the other base cakes in this chapter, you can make this cake up to 3 days in advance, but here, because the flavor of butter and rich tones of vanilla actually improve with time, we strongly recommend making it at least a day ahead. We use this recipe for our Bumblebee Cake (page 51), where it is layered with chocolate ganache for a truly decadent yellow layer cake. As with the other base cakes, this recipe yields two cakes; the second one stores beautifully, ready for decorating anytime.

The technique for this cake includes creaming the butter and sugar, to create plenty of air bubbles in the batter; note that it is important to take your time with this step, otherwise the cake, loaded with a generous amount of butter, may become overly dense. The more you cream it, the more air bubbles you create, which then expand in the oven, giving the cake a lighter texture—just be sure not to let the butter melt before or

## ingredients

**1⅔ CUPS (8 OUNCES) ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR**

**2 TEASPOONS BAKING POWDER**

**¾ TEASPOON KOSHER SALT**

**¾ CUP PLUS 2 TABLESPOONS (7 OUNCES) UNSALTED BUTTER, AT ROOM TEMPERATURE**

**1 CUP (7½ OUNCES) SUGAR**

**10 LARGE EGG YOLKS, AT ROOM TEMPERATURE**

**⅔ CUP BUTTERMILK**

**1 TEASPOON VANILLA EXTRACT**

## preparation

1. Read through or review the “Cake-Baking Essentials” section beginning on page 18.
2. Liberally butter two 6-by-3-inch cake pans and dust with flour. Tap out the excess flour.
3. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
4. Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt into a bowl and set aside.
5. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the butter and sugar and beat on medium speed until light colored and fluffy, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the egg yolks in three additions, beating until completely combined after each, about 2 minutes per addition, and stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula before adding more yolks. Raise the speed to high and beat for 30 seconds to fully combine.



during beating. You must also take your time adding the eggs into the creamed mixture, adding one at a time and beating until completely emulsified, to keep the structure intact. Remember, adding any liquids too quickly can break a batter (see page 19). This cake is too heavy to use as a cupcake so we have provided a separate Yellow Cupcakes recipe (page 77).

Use the best, richest unsalted butter you can find. Ours comes from Straus Family Creamery, which is only 50 miles from our shop. And while the recipe calls for a lot of egg yolks to give it a lovely yellow hue, you can save the extra whites for making Boiled Icing (page 192) or Buttercream (see pages 185–189).

6. In a bowl, stir together the buttermilk and vanilla. With the mixer on low speed, add the sifted dry ingredients in three additions alternately with the buttermilk mixture in two additions, beginning and ending with the dry ingredients. After each addition, beat until just combined. Remove the bowl from the mixer, scrape down the sides of the bowl again, and fold by hand a few times with the spatula.
7. Divide the batter between the prepared pans and smooth the tops. Bake until the cakes are lightly browned and a tester inserted in the center comes out clean, 35 to 40 minutes.
8. Transfer to wire racks and let cool in the pans for about 20 minutes. When the cakes are cooled enough to handle the pans but still a tad warm to the touch, carefully run an offset spatula around the edges of the pans to loosen them, then invert the cakes onto the racks and remove the pans. Let cool for about 20 minutes longer. Wrap the cakes tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate to ensure that the interiors are completely cooled before decorating, at least 1 hour or for up to 3 days. To freeze, wrap tightly in a second layer of plastic wrap and store in the freezer for up to 2 months.







# BUMBLEBEE CAKE

makes one 6-inch layer cake

This cake is named the “Bumblebee” because its cross section, yellow cake striped with bittersweet chocolate ganache, looks like the midsection of a bumblebee. As is the case with the simple Butter Cake, it gets better with time. I actually prefer to eat it on the third day after I make it, as the flavors have time to meld and the butter gets into every crumb. I love it for breakfast. The ganache is easier to spread if you allow it to get very soft.

Assembling this cake is more difficult than it looks because it is very hard to get a perfectly clean edge on the top of the cake. We solve this problem by pulling the extra frosting into a swirl at the center of the cake, which is then adorned and hidden with a sugar rose.

## ingredients

1 BUTTER CAKE (PAGE 48)

¼ CUP SIMPLE SYRUP (PAGE 207)

ABOUT 2 CUPS CHOCOLATE GANACHE (PAGE 195)

1 CANDY ROSE (OPTIONAL; SEE SOURCES, PAGE 218)

## preparation

1. Read through or review the “Cake Assembly and Decorating Basics” section beginning on page 21.
2. Make the Butter Cake as directed and make sure it is cool inside and out. (If frozen, let thaw in the refrigerator, 3 to 4 hours. If time demands, you can thaw on the countertop, 1 to 2 hours, but be careful not to let it sit too much longer before you begin working with it, as a cold cake is easier to cut.)
3. Clear a space in the refrigerator large enough for the cake on a cake board (see page 215). If making the simple syrup and ganache now, let cool to room temperature.
4. Set a revolving cake stand on a clean, dry work surface and place the cake, top-side up, on the stand. Using a serrated knife and holding the blade perfectly horizontal, remove any dome from the top of the cake to level it. While you saw gently with the knife, use your other hand to rotate the stand gradually and bring the cake toward you. Get eye level to the cake as needed to make sure you are holding the knife exactly level. Repeat to split the cake into four equal layers.

continued



5. Arrange all four cake layers on the work surface. Using your hands, tap off and brush away excess crumbs. Turn the original bottom layer flat-dark-side, or pan-side, up; reserve this to be the top layer of the assembled cake. Tap any crumbs off the cake stand as well, and brush the work surface clean. Using a pastry brush, brush the top of each layer with a conservative amount of the syrup.
6. If the ganache is at room temperature, check the consistency; you may need to add a tablespoon or so of hot water to get the desired spreadable softness. If you made the ganache earlier and it has been chilled to a solid, scoop it into a microwave-safe bowl and microwave on high in 30-second increments. It should be the consistency of room-temperature butter. If it is not yet soft, microwave in 30-second increments until it reaches the desired consistency. Transfer to a mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and beat on medium speed until lightened in color, smooth, and spreadable, 3 to 4 minutes total. You may need to add a tablespoon or so of hot water.

(If you don't have a microwave, you can reheat the ganache in a bain-marie or double boiler. With this method, place the ganache in a heat-proof bowl or the top pan of a double boiler. Place the bowl over, but not touching, gently simmering water in a saucepan or the bottom pan of a double boiler. Stir often, pulling the ganache in from the sides of the bowl as it melts, until soft and smooth throughout, 4 to 5 minutes.)

7. Place a nonslip pad or damp paper towel on the cake stand to prevent slipping and center a cake board on top. Take up the original top of the cake, which you leveled, to be the bottom layer of the assembled cake. Center this first layer of cake with its flattest side facing up on the board.
8. Using an ice-cream scoop or large spoon, scoop about ¼ cup of the ganache onto the cake. Using an offset spatula, smooth the ganache to the edges. Arrange the second cake layer on top and press down lightly to seal and secure. Repeat to frost with the ganache as above. Continue with the third cake layer. Place the reserved original bottom layer, flat-dark-side up, on top. You are now ready to apply the crumb coat.



9. Using the offset spatula, apply a scoop of ganache on one side of the cake. Holding the spatula vertically more or less in front of you, rotate the cake stand in one direction to spread the ganache evenly around the sides, about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick. As you work your way around the circumference of the cake, add more ganache as needed to achieve a thin, even primer coat, but do not backtrack or you may pull crumbs back on top of the frosting instead of enveloping them within. The crumb coat doesn't need to look finished; just make sure the sides are straight. Nudge the layers into position if needed. As you frost the sides, push the ganache up over the top edge of the cake to make sure the coverage is complete, then use this excess to crumb-coat the top, using the spatula to pull the ganache across the cake toward the center. There should be enough extra ganache from the sides to cover the top, but if necessary, add another small scoop and spread smooth to coat.
10. Place the cake, on the cake board, in the refrigerator until the crumb coat has hardened into a thin crust and the layers are firmly attached, 30 minutes to 1 hour. Cover and refrigerate the remaining ganache alongside.
11. When you are ready to finish frosting, reheat and remix the remaining ganache: Place in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave on high for 30-second intervals, stirring in between each, until the ganache is soft, smooth, and spreadable, without any lumps, 30 seconds to 1 minute. Or, reheat in a bain-marie or double boiler (see Step 6).
12. Transfer the warmed ganache to a clean bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Beat at low speed just until the frosting is smooth and very shiny, 1 to 2 minutes. Do not use a whisk and do not beat at too high a speed or for too long—any of these will add too much air and produce bubbles that will make the presentation layer look porous and pockmarked.

continued



13. When the crumb coat is set, transfer the cake from the refrigerator back onto the turntable, with the nonslip pad or a damp paper towel underneath. If a frosting crust has formed on the cake board, gently scrape it off using the offset spatula. Add the presentation layer of ganache: Using the offset spatula, apply a scoop of the warmed and remixed frosting on one side of the cake and, again keeping the spatula in front of you, rotate the cake stand to spread the frosting in a smooth coat,  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick. Continue to add ganache to the sides of the cake, smoothing with the spatula as you make your way around it.
14. For extra-smooth sides, using a 4-inch spackle blade (see page 217), go around the frosted sides of the cake again, holding the edge of the blade perfectly straight up and down. Let the rotation of the stand do the work.
15. To finish the top, pull the excess ganache up and over the edges and across the top toward the center, as you did with the crumb coat, working evenly around the cake. Finally, still using the offset spatula, add a small scoop of ganache to the center of the cake and, holding the spatula flat in the center of the cake, rotate the cake stand clockwise, moving the spatula to the edges in gradually widening circles while applying gentle pressure to make a smooth, even coat. Since you are going to sculpt around the perimeter, you don't need to worry about the seam at the rim being pristine. Return the cake to the refrigerator and let set until firm, about 30 minutes.
16. To sculpt the edging detail, hold an offset spatula against the bottom edge of the cake at a 20-degree angle. Rotate the cake stand a few times. This should create a rough ruffle. Wipe the stand clean of all ganache streaks. Top with the candy rose, if desired.
17. This cake needs to be served at room temperature. Serve at once, or hold at room temperature for up to 4 hours. For longer storage, refrigerate for up to 2 days and remove from the refrigerator 4 hours before serving.



# DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CAKE

**makes two 6-inch cakes**

Made with both melted dark chocolate and cocoa powder, this chocolate cake is rich, complex, and bittersweet—a perfect match for sweet frostings, which is how you'll find it paired in our Tomboy Cake (page 66), Bittersweet Ganache Cake (page 63), and Old-Fashioned Cake (page 59). As with the other base cakes, this recipe yields two 6-inch cakes, so you can have one on hand in your freezer to decorate anytime.

This cake is infallibly moist. Part of the reason for its fine-crumb texture is that we strain the batter through a sieve to remove any lumps before pouring it into the pans. Straining out the lumps rather than trying to stir them into the batter prevents overmixing and leads to a dense cake. We also sift the cocoa before dusting the pans, a technique that will give the exterior finish of your cakes a lovely smooth patina.

For the Old-Fashioned Cake, we bake this cake in a contour pan, a special design with a beveled edge around the bottom that yields an elegant cake with an almost seamless form. Contour pans come in standard sizes, including 6-inch, and are easily found online (see Sources, page 218).

## ingredients

- 1½ CUPS (7½ OUNCES) ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- 1¼ CUPS (4½ OUNCES) NATURAL UNSWEETENED COCOA POWDER (SEE NOTE)
- 1½ TEASPOONS BAKING SODA
- ½ TEASPOON BAKING POWDER
- ¾ TEASPOON KOSHER SALT
- 2 OUNCES 70 PERCENT CACAO CHOCOLATE, COARSELY CHOPPED
- 1 CUP BOILING WATER
- 1 CUP BUTTERMILK
- ½ TEASPOON VANILLA EXTRACT
- 2 LARGE EGGS, AT ROOM TEMPERATURE
- ½ CUP VEGETABLE OIL
- 2¼ CUPS (15 OUNCES) SUGAR

## preparation

1. Read through or review the "Cake-Baking Essentials" section beginning on page 18.
2. Liberally butter two 6-by-3-inch regular or contour cake pans and dust with sifted cocoa powder. Tap out the excess cocoa.
3. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
4. Sift together the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, and salt into a bowl and set aside.

**continued**



5. Put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl and pour the boiling water over it. Whisk until the chocolate is melted. Let the mixture cool for 15 minutes.
6. In a separate bowl, whisk together the buttermilk and vanilla. Set aside.
7. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whisk the eggs on high speed until foamy, about 2 minutes. Reduce the speed to low and slowly pour in the oil, whisking until combined, about 30 seconds. Raise the speed to medium and whisk until fully incorporated, about 30 seconds longer.
8. Reduce the speed to low and slowly pour the cooled chocolate mixture into the egg mixture. Slowly pour in the buttermilk and vanilla mixture. Add the sugar and whisk until the batter is smooth and liquid, about 2 minutes.
9. Stop the mixer. Remove the bowl and add the sifted dry ingredients and mix until just incorporated, preferably by hand, lifting and folding in from the bottom center. Using a rubber spatula, scrape down the sides of the bowl and mix again just briefly by hand. The batter may still look a little lumpy, but stop mixing.
10. Pour the batter through a medium-mesh sieve into a large measuring cup or bowl to remove any lumps. Press against the solids in the sieve with a rubber spatula to push through as much batter as possible, then discard the lumps. Divide the batter between the prepared pans. Bake until the tops spring back when lightly pressed and a tester inserted in the centers comes out clean, about 45 minutes.
11. Transfer to wire racks and let cool in the pans for about 20 minutes. When the cakes are cooled enough to handle the pans but still a tad warm to the touch, carefully run an offset spatula around the edges of the pans to loosen them, then invert the cakes onto the racks and remove the pans. (Note: If you are making the Old-Fashioned Cake and therefore using a contour pan, just invert the pans and drop them sharply onto the racks; they should fall out cleanly. Using an offset spatula in a contour pan will mar the edges of the cake.) Let cool for about



20 minutes longer. Wrap the cakes tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate to ensure that the interiors are completely cooled before decorating, at least 1 hour or for up to 3 days. To freeze, wrap tightly in a second layer of plastic and store in the freezer up to 2 months.

**note**

We use natural cocoa powder not Dutch-processed, as the Dutch-processed cocoa has been treated with an alkalizing agent that heightens the color but gives it a milder flavor. For this recipe, it is important to use natural product such as Scharffen Berger to attain a deep, dark chocolate flavor.

## DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

Line two standard muffin tins with paper liners. Fill each cup two-thirds full with batter. Bake at 350 degrees F until the tops spring back and a tester inserted in the center of a cupcake comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer the pans to a wire rack and let cool completely in the pan. Makes about 2 dozen cupcakes.







# OLD-FASHIONED CAKE

makes one 6-inch cake

This cake evolved from a desire to bring together our beloved Double Chocolate Cake and Boiled Icing; the dense bittersweet cake is offset deliciously by the soft, marshmallow-like icing. When we first tried to apply the icing to the sides of the cake, however, it just rolled off like a small, sweet avalanche. Our solution was to mound the icing on top like a big puffy cloud; then we topped it with a bright red cherry for a simple stroke of contrast. We named the cake the “Old-Fashioned” because of its beautifully simple American flavors and aesthetic. It is our fastest and easiest cake to make.

To make this cake, you need to bake the chocolate layer cake in a contour pan—a specialty pan with gently sloped sides and round edges at the bottom that produces a cake with a subtle dome shape (see Sources, page 218). The icing must be made the same day that you are going to assemble and serve the cake.

## ingredients

**1 DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CAKE (PAGE 55) BAKED IN A CONTOUR PAN**

**ABOUT 1½ CUPS FRESHLY MADE BOILED ICING (PAGE 192)**

**1 LARGE MARASCHINO CHERRY, WITH STEM INTACT**

## preparation

1. Read through or review the “Cake Assembly and Decorating Basics” section beginning on page 21.
2. Make the Double Chocolate Cake as directed, and make sure it is cool inside and out. (If frozen, let thaw in the refrigerator, 3 to 4 hours. If time demands, you can thaw on the countertop, 1 to 2 hours, but be careful not to let it sit too much longer before you begin working with it, as the texture will lose quality.)
3. Center the cake on a presentation plate or platter, dome-side up. Clear a space in your refrigerator large enough for the cake on its platter.
4. Fit a pastry bag with a medium (½- or ⅝-inch) round tip and fill halfway with the icing. Pull up the cuff and twist it to seal and tighten the icing down into the cone. Purge the bag of air bubbles by squeezing the bag until there is a burst of air and icing sputters out of the bag. Keep the bag tightly twisted so that the icing doesn’t come back up on your hands. Holding the piping tip at a 90-degree angle about 1 inch above the center of the cake, squeeze firmly to release a large mound of icing. Keep the tip slightly submerged in the icing and continue. Begin to slowly squeeze the bag again, more gently this time, so that the icing continues to flow outward (like lava) and move the bag slightly in tiny, smooth, uniform circles to increase the flow until you make a mound

continued





that tops the cake, 2 to 3 inches thick. Stop about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the edge to show off the contour of the cake. When the icing process is complete, pull the tip straight up the center to make a point in the middle for the final flourish.

5. Gently squeeze the maraschino cherry to drain it of any excess syrup, and wrap it in a paper towel for about 10 minutes. This will keep it from bleeding on the icing.
6. Place the cherry in the center of the cake with the stem raised attractively at a 45-degree angle. Serve immediately or refrigerate the cake for up to 8 hours. Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before serving. It is best to eat the cake the same day you make it.

## OLD-FASHIONED CUPCAKES

To decorate Double Chocolate Cupcakes (page 57) Old-Fashioned style, fit a pastry bag with a medium ( $\frac{1}{2}$ - or  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch) round tip and fill the bag halfway with icing. Pull up the cuff and twist it to seal and tighten the icing down into the cone. Purge the bag and icing of air bubbles by squeezing the bag until there is a burst of air and icing sputters out of the bag. Starting at the center of a cupcake at a 90-degree angle and about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the top, pipe a dollop of icing. To complete, swiftly pull the pastry bag straight up in a snapping action to make a peaked finish. Repeat to frost the remaining cupcakes. Place a decoration, such as a candied Boston baked bean, in the center of each cupcake.











# BITTERSWEET GANACHE CAKE

makes one 6-inch cake

This moist, dense chocolate cake, poured over with a bittersweet chocolate ganache, is the best thing you've ever eaten. We pair chocolate with chocolate but with such surprising variation in texture and flavor it never becomes overwhelming.

The glaze on this cake is so glossy it rivals the sheen of patent leather. To get the same finish as we do at Miette, you need an immersion blender—and a bit of practice with glazing. Don't worry about using too much ganache; it's extremely reusable, so you can always reclaim the extra that rolls off the cake. It's better to pour too much than not enough.

Although I have said that I strongly prefer most of our cakes in the 6-inch size, this is one cake that is just as elegant made in a 9-inch pan. I've even made it as large as 14 inches without losing any of its appeal; in fact, it becomes grand. I love to serve it topped with lightly whipped cream or any ice cream.

## ingredients

1 DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CAKE (PAGE 55) BAKED IN A COUTOUR PAN

ABOUT 2 CUPS CHOCOLATE GANACHE (PAGE 195)

20 INCHES BROWN STRIPED SATIN RIBBON,  $\frac{3}{8}$  INCH WIDE

## preparation

1. Read through or review the "Cake Assembly and Decorating Basics" section beginning on page 21.
2. Make the Double Chocolate Cake as directed, and make sure it is cool inside and out. (If frozen, let thaw in the refrigerator, 3 to 4 hours. If time demands, you can thaw on the countertop, 1 to 2 hours, but be careful not to let it sit too much longer before you begin working with it, as the texture will lose quality.)
3. Place the cake on a wire rack set over a rimmed baking sheet or jelly-roll pan. Clear a space in your refrigerator large enough for the cake on the baking sheet.
4. Read this step very carefully, paying special attention to every detail, most of which are designed to prevent air from entering the ganache; it is the most important step for this cake. Scoop the ganache into a microwave-safe bowl. (If the ganache was made earlier and has been chilled to a solid, first microwave on high for 1 minute. Stir very gently so as not to agitate the chocolate, which would introduce air.) Microwave at 10-second intervals, gently stirring between each, until the ganache is mostly liquid. Have ready an immersion blender, which you will use to make the glaze very smooth and pourable. Add about

continued



2 tablespoons very hot water to the ganache, and let the water sit on top. Insert the head of the blender, while it is off, into the ganache very slowly at a 30-degree angle; you do not want to trap any air in the compartment of the head. When the head of the blender is submerged, upright the blender to a 90-degree angle and turn it on. Begin to make gentle circles, never up and down and never breaking the surface, until the chocolate is very shiny and smooth, 3 to 5 minutes. Be patient, as you will need more time than you think. When you begin to see a shine develop, you think you are done, but go on a little longer.

5. Pour the glaze over the cake, beginning at the edges and spiraling to the middle. This helps to ensure an even coat all over the cake. Rap the tray lightly on the table to settle the glaze. Refrigerate until set, about 45 minutes.
6. Repeat the glazing step once more, scraping up the extra ganache from the baking sheet and making sure to repeat the process above to restore the glaze to its shiniest level. Be sure the cake is thoroughly and evenly coated with glaze. Refrigerate as before to set up and harden, approximately 45 minutes. Make sure you let the first layer set thoroughly. If not, the second coat will cause the first to ripple. To transfer the cake to a cake board and then onto the presentation plate or platter, heat the blade of a knife in hot water and carefully go around the outside perimeter of the cake, then insert a large spatula under the cake edge and lift, making sure not to rip the chocolate from the rack before transferring the cake to the cake board and the presentation plate or platter. Use the sharp knife to carefully trim off the excess ganache around the outside perimeter of the cake, wiping down the cake board with the edge of a damp cloth. (Scrape any remaining ganache off the baking sheet and save it for another use.)
7. Wrap the ribbon around the base of the cake, and secure one end to the other with a dot of ganache. Wipe the board clean of all ganache streaks. This cake needs to be served at room temperature. Serve at once, or hold at room temperature for up to 4 hours. For longer storage, refrigerate for up to 2 days and remove from the refrigerator 4 hours before serving.





#### note

To make a 9-inch cake, prepare a 9-inch contour pan as directed for the 6-inch pan. Pour the Double Chocolate Cake batter into the pan until it comes up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the edge of the pan. (You will have some leftover batter; discard or use for a few Double Chocolate Cupcakes or mini cakes in ramekins.) Bake at 350 degrees F until the top springs back when lightly pressed and a tester inserted in the center comes out clean, 55 to 60 minutes. Assemble as directed, using about 3 cups ganache.

# TOMBOY CAKE

**makes one 6-inch layer cake**

This cake was on its way to becoming a conventionally frosted layer cake when I noticed how unexpectedly voluptuous the bare sides looked with the frosting poking out between the layers. This cake has a gamine quality, a little rough around the edges—a bit of a tomboy with a little rose on top.

The expression “tomboy” has become part of the Miette vocabulary for a particular decorating style; any cake and frosting combination can become a Tomboy. The Double Chocolate Cake is the perfect candidate because its layers are so moist that they do not dry out even when exposed to the air. You’ll notice a lot of attention to crumb control in this recipe; to achieve the finished look and keep the buttercream pristine, you need to guard against every fleck.

I especially like the Tomboy’s proportion of frosting to cake; just a bit of each per bite, and never too much frosting. Key to the look of this cake is the star tip, used to pipe the frosting borders that give the frosting its slightly frilly edge.

## ingredients

**1 DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CAKE (PAGE 55)**

**ABOUT 3 CUPS RASPBERRY BUTTERCREAM (PAGE 187) OR FLAVOR OF YOUR CHOICE**

**1 ICING ROSE AND SMALL GREEN LEAF (OPTIONAL; SEE SOURCES PAGE 218)**

## preparation

1. Read through or review the “Cake Assembly and Decorating Basics” section beginning on page 21.
2. Make the Double Chocolate Cake as directed, using a regular cake pan, and make sure it is cool inside and out. (If frozen, let thaw in the refrigerator, 3 to 4 hours. If time demands, you can thaw on the countertop, 1 to 2 hours, but be careful not to let it sit too long before you begin working with it. This cake needs to be scrupulously crumb free, so make sure it is still cold when you begin to work.)
3. Clear a space in the refrigerator large enough for the cake on a cake board (see page 215). If you made the buttercream previously and it has been refrigerated, follow the instructions on page 23 to reheat and remix the frosting.
4. Set a revolving cake stand on a clean, dry work surface and place the cake, top-side up, on the stand. Using a serrated knife and holding the blade perfectly horizontal, cut the cake into three equal layers. While you saw gently with the knife, use your other hand to rotate the stand gradually and bring the cake toward you. Get eye level to the cake as needed to make sure you are holding the knife exactly level. (You do not need to level the top of the cake.)

**continued**







5. Arrange all three cake layers on the work surface. Using your hands, tap off and brush away excess crumbs. Turn the original bottom layer flat-dark-side, or pan-side, down; reserve this to be the bottom layer of the assembled cake. (This is the reverse of the usual method of using the flat side for the top of a finished cake, but here the smooth edges from the cake pan give a nice finished look to the unfrosted base of the Tomboy.) Tap any crumbs off the cake stand as well, and brush the work surface clean.
6. Place a nonslip pad or damp paper towel on the cake stand to prevent slipping and center a cake board on top. Take up the reserved bottom of the cake and center it on the board, first double-checking it for crumbs and brushing any off or pressing them into the sides.
7. Fit a pastry bag with a medium ( $\frac{1}{2}$ - or  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch) star tip and fill about halfway with the buttercream. Pull up the cuff and twist it to seal and tighten the frosting down into the cone. Purge the bag of air bubbles by squeezing the bag until there is a burst of air and frosting sputters out of the bag. Keep the bag tightly twisted so that the frosting doesn't come back up on your hands. Holding the bag at a 90-degree angle, pipe a ring of frosting around the outer edge of the cake, keeping a  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch border at the very edge. Starting at the inner edge of the border, spiral inward filling in the center of the ring to make an even layer of buttercream. Holding an offset spatula flat on the inside ring of frosting, with the spatula centered on the cake, smooth the inside of the ring, leaving the piped edges untouched.
8. Double-check a second cake layer for crumbs, then place it on top of the buttercream layer. Using your fingertips, gently center the cake on top. Be sure not to press too hard so that the buttercream spreads over the edge. Repeat with a layer of buttercream just like you did on top of the first cake layer.
9. Double-check the third and final cake layer for crumbs, then place it on top. Using your fingertips and gentle pressure, press down in the center and out to the edges to coax the frosting to align with the cake edge, but not beyond, on all sides.





**STEP 7a:** Starting at the inner edge of the frosting border, pipe a spiral of buttercream inward.



**STEP 7b:** Smooth the inside frosting, leaving the edges untouched.



**STEP 10a:** For the top layer, pipe a ring of buttercream around the edge, leaving a  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch margin.



**STEP 10b:** Fill in the center with slightly more frosting than the inner layers.

10. For the top layer, pipe a ring of buttercream around the edge, leaving a  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch margin. Fill in the center with slightly more frosting than the inner layers. Using a small offset spatula, smooth the center first by rotating the cake stand, then gradually work out to the edges, pushing the frosting out very slightly as you go.
11. If desired, in the center of the cake, scoop out a little hole in the frosting to make a setting for the rose. Nestle the rose in the hole and arrange the leaf next to it at a 45-degree angle. Very carefully transfer the cake on the board to a presentation platter.
12. This cake needs to be served at room temperature. Serve at once, or hold at room temperature for up to 4 hours. For longer storage, refrigerate for up to 3 days and remove from the refrigerator 4 hours before serving.

## CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

To decorate Double Chocolate Cupcakes (page 57) Tomboy style, fit a pastry bag with a medium ( $\frac{1}{2}$ - or  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch) star tip and fill the bag half-way with buttercream (see pages 185-189). Purge the bag and frosting of air bubbles by squeezing the bag until there is a burst of air and frosting sputters out of the bag. Starting at the edge of a cupcake at a 90-degree angle and about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the top, pipe a rosette of frosting, then continue squeezing while moving the bag in smooth, uniform, concentric circles to make a layer 2 to 3 inches thick almost to the edges of the cupcake. To complete, swiftly pull the pastry bag straight up in a snapping action to make a peaked finish. Repeat to frost the remaining cupcakes. Top cupcakes with sprinkles or with a candied flower and a leaf (see Sources, page 218).







# CHOCOLATE CHIFFON CAKE

**makes one 11-by-17-inch jelly-roll cake**

I think of chiffon cake as the “king of cakes” because it is easy to make—practically infallible—and infinitely versatile. The texture of the cake is fluffy and “downy,” like the gossamer fabric it is named for. We use this cake in the *Bûche de Noël* (page 74).

Made with oil instead of butter, this hybrid between a sponge and a butter cake won’t harden when cold, which makes it ideal for pairing with fillings, like mousse, that need to be refrigerated to set up properly. And unlike a sponge cake, the chiffon cake is moist without syrup.

## ingredients

- ¾ CUP (3 OUNCES) ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR**
- ¼ CUP NATURAL UNSWEETENED COCOA POWDER (SEE NOTE, PAGE 57)**
- ½ TEASPOON BAKING POWDER**
- ½ TEASPOON BAKING SODA**
- ⅛ TEASPOON KOSHER SALT**
- 6 EGGS SEPARATED, PLUS 1 WHOLE EGG**
- ⅓ CUP (2½ OUNCES) SUGAR, PLUS ¼ CUP (2 OUNCES)**
- ¼ CUP VEGETABLE OIL**
- ⅛ CUP WATER**
- 1 TEASPOON VANILLA EXTRACT**
- ⅛ TEASPOON CREAM OF TARTAR**

## preparation

1. Read through or review the “Cake-Baking Essentials” section beginning on page 18.
2. Liberally butter the bottom of an 11-by-17-inch jelly-roll pan and fit the bottom with parchment paper. Do not grease the sides of the pan.
3. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
4. Sift together the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, and salt into a bowl and set aside.
5. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, combine the egg yolks, whole egg, and the ⅓ cup sugar and whisk on high speed until light colored and ribbony, about 5 minutes. Drizzle in the oil slowly and whisk until fully combined.



6. In a measuring cup, stir together the water and vanilla. With the mixer on low speed, pour the liquid into the batter in a thin stream. Whisk until very smooth, about 3 minutes.
7. With the mixer still on low speed, add the sifted dry ingredients in three additions, beating until just combined after each addition. Do not over-mix. Remove the bowl from the mixer and transfer the batter to another bowl. Set aside.
8. Combine the egg whites and cream of tartar in a clean bowl. Using the stand mixer or an electric mixer fitted with the whisk beaters, whisk the whites on medium speed until foamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Slowly add the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar and continue to whisk until medium-stiff peaks form. Using a rubber spatula, fold the whites into the batter in three additions, until no streaks remain. Coax the batter very gently into the prepared pan and gently smooth the top with the spatula. Bake until the cake springs back when touched, 30 to 35 minutes.
9. Transfer the jelly-roll pan to a wire rack and let cool. With a serrated knife, cut the perimeter of the cake. Lift the cake by picking up the corner edges of the parchment and moving the cake to a clean work surface. (For the Bûche de Noël, leave the parchment paper on the cake.) If not using the cake immediately, tightly wrap the cake and pan in plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator for up to 2 days or in the freezer for up to 2 months.



# BÛCHE DE NOËL

**makes one 11-by-4-inch bûche de Noël**

Growing up, our family's Christmas Eve dinner was always followed with a Yule log, and it seemed only fitting to create this Francophile version for Miette. I love that the bûche de Noël is a celebration of winter and our cake looks like a quiet woodland scene, complete with pinecones, holly leaves, and meringue mushrooms.

This cake is difficult to assemble so you must space out the process. You start at the end: Make your decorations first and store them in an airtight container for up to 1 month. Then, bake the cake, make the mousse, and roll it all on the same day. Wrap tightly with plastic wrap and keep in the freezer (protected from anything that might damage the shape) overnight or for up to 2 weeks.

## ingredients

**1 CHOCOLATE CHIFFON CAKE (PAGE 72), STILL ATTACHED TO PARCHMENT**

**ABOUT 3 CUPS CHOCOLATE MOUSSE (PAGE 197)**

**ABOUT 2 CUPS CHOCOLATE GANACHE (PAGE 195)**

**MERINGUE MUSHROOMS (PAGE 174) FOR GARNISH**

**OPTIONAL DECORATIONS: MARZIPAN HOLLY LEAVES AND BERRIES, SANDING SUGAR, CHOCOLATE PINECONES (SEE SOURCES, PAGE 218)**

## preparation

1. Read through or review the "Cake Assembly and Decorating Basics" section beginning on page 21.
2. Make the Chocolate Chiffon Cake as directed and make sure it is cool inside and out. (If frozen, let thaw in the refrigerator, 3 to 4 hours. If time demands, you can thaw on the countertop, 1 to 2 hours, but be careful not to let it sit too much longer before you begin working with it, as the texture will lose quality.)
3. Clear a space in the freezer large enough for a baking sheet to hold the rolled 11-by-4-inch bûche, giving it plenty of space to lie flat and keep its nice round shape. Make the mousse as directed.
4. Position the rectangle of chiffon cake so that the long edge is perpendicular to the edge of the counter. Using an offset spatula, spread the mousse in an even layer across the cake, leaving a 1-inch border uncovered around the edges.

5. With the parchment paper still attached, starting with the short edge closest to you, start to roll the cake away from you, tucking it into the mousse and creating a tight first turn. The first tuck is important because it determines the shape of the finished roll. Once you are happy with the positioning of the first turn, peel back the exposed parchment and use it to lift the cake into the next turn. You should be about two-thirds of the way to the end of the cake. Now, grab the far end of the cake and pull it toward you, keeping the parchment intact. Tuck it snugly against the bottom of the cake. Push the roll away from you a bit as you hold on to the exposed piece of parchment, creating tension. This makes your roll nice and tight. Take up the exposed/ excess parchment and wrap it tightly around the chiffon *bûche*. Roll the log in plastic wrap, twisting the ends to hold its shape. Place on a baking sheet and carefully transport to the freezer and let set up overnight, or for up to 2 weeks.
6. The day you plan to serve it, remove the *bûche* from the freezer. The cake is easiest to decorate when frozen and will have defrosted by the time you are ready to serve it. Place on a wire rack set over a rimmed baking sheet or jelly-roll pan. Clear a space in the refrigerator large enough for the *bûche* on the baking sheet.
7. Scoop the ganache into a microwave-safe bowl. (If the ganache was made earlier and has been chilled to a solid, first microwave on high for 1 minute. Stir very gently so as not to agitate the chocolate, which would introduce air.) Microwave at 10-second intervals, gently stirring between each, until the ganache is mostly liquid. Have ready an immersion blender, which you will use to make the glaze very smooth and pourable. Add about 2 tablespoons very hot water to the ganache, and let the water sit on top. Insert the head of the blender, while it is off, into the ganache very slowly at a 45-degree angle; you do not want to trap any air in the compartment of the head. When the head of the blender is submerged, twist the blender to a 90-degree angle and turn it on.

continued



Begin to make gentle circles, never up and down and never breaking the surface, until the chocolate is very shiny and smooth, 3 to 5 minutes. Be patient, as you will need more time than you think. When you begin to see a shine develop, you think you are done, but go on a little longer.

8. Slowly pour the glaze over the log, beginning at one end and working toward the other. This helps to ensure an even coat all over the cake. Rap the tray lightly on the table to settle the glaze. Refrigerate until set, about 30 minutes.
9. Repeat the glazing step once more, scraping up the extra ganache from the baking sheet and making sure to repeat the process above to restore the glaze to its shiniest level. Return to the refrigerator for about 15 minutes.
10. Place a long serrated knife in a tall container of hot water. Remove the bûche from the refrigerator and run the backside of the tines of a fork along the cake lengthwise in a slightly wavy pattern. Repeat all over the cake so that it looks like bark. Dry the heated knife and use to trim ½ inch off both ends of the cake, wiping the blade clean between cuts.
11. Carefully transfer the cake to a presentation platter or plate by first running a knife around the perimeter of the cake and then inserting a large spatula under the cake edge to lift, making sure not to rip the chocolate from the rack. Transfer to the refrigerator and let set for 30 minutes or up to overnight. (Scrape any remaining ganache off the baking sheet and save it for another use.)
12. Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before serving. Decorate with the mushrooms. Add any additional decorations, as desired. (The sanding sugar creates a charming snow effect.)

# YELLOW CUPCAKES

**makes 18 cupcakes**

All the other cupcakes at Miette are made from the same batters that go into the larger cakes. This recipe, however, was developed just to be a cupcake.

And of all the recipes at Miette, the innocent-seeming yellow classic cupcake took the most time to figure out. I had just hired a new head baker, and I am very surprised she didn't quit in her first week because of this recipe. The challenge was to produce a moist yellow cupcake with lots of flavor but also enough body to hold up to a rich buttercream frosting. I wanted the flavor of butter to shine but when we tried to make cupcakes from our Butter Cake batter (see page 48) the cupcakes came out with a dense crumb, and when paired with buttercream, the combination was simply too rich. We finally solved the mystery: replace a portion of the all-purpose flour with potato starch. The starch sustains the structure of the cupcake while providing a fine crumb, creating a light, fluffy cake that still tastes buttery.

At the bakery, we pair this cupcake with strawberry, chocolate, lemon, and vanilla buttercreams and decorate with candied flowers.

## ingredients

**1 CUP (8 OUNCES) UNSALTED BUTTER**

**½ CUP MILK**

**3 LARGE EGGS**

**2 TEASPOONS VANILLA EXTRACT**

**1½ CUPS (7½ OUNCES) ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR**

**1½ CUPS (8½ OUNCES) SUGAR**

**¼ CUP (1½ OUNCES) POTATO STARCH**

**2 TEASPOONS BAKING POWDER**

**1 TEASPOON KOSHER SALT**

**ABOUT 3 CUPS VANILLA, LEMON, RASPBERRY, CHOCOLATE, OR OTHER BUTTERCREAM (PAGES 185-189)**

**18 SUGAR LEAVES AND CANDIED FLOWERS FOR GARNISH (OPTIONAL; SEE SOURCES, PAGE 218)**

## preparation

1. Read through or review the "Cake-Baking Essentials" section beginning on page 18.
2. Line 18 standard cupcake cups with paper liners. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
3. In a saucepan over medium-low heat, combine the butter and milk and heat, stirring occasionally, until the butter is melted, 3 to 4 minutes. Alternatively, in a microwave-safe bowl, combine the butter and milk and microwave on high at 10-second intervals, stirring between each, until the butter is melted. Set aside and let cool to slightly above room temperature; an instant-read thermometer should register between 80 and 85 degrees F.

**continued**



4. In a microwave-safe bowl, whisk the eggs with the vanilla. Microwave on low for 30-second intervals, stirring between each, until the egg mixture reaches 80 to 85 degrees F on the thermometer. Alternatively, heat the mixture, whisking, in the top pan of a double boiler or in a bowl for a bain-marie placed over (but not touching) simmering water.
5. Combine the flour, sugar, potato starch, baking powder, and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Begin mixing on low speed, then slowly drizzle in the milk mixture. Beat until just combined. With the mixer set on low speed, add the egg mixture in three additions, beating until just incorporated between additions. The batter should be silky and smooth and very liquid.
6. Fill each cupcake liner two-thirds full with batter (it works well to use a ¼-cup measure; don't scrape it out each time, just drop the batter in). Bake until nicely risen and golden brown, 20 to 23 minutes. Immediately transfer the cupcakes from the pans to wire racks and let cool completely, about 30 minutes.
7. To decorate the cupcakes, fit a pastry bag with a medium (½- or ⅝-inch) star tip and fill the bag about halfway with the buttercream. Pull up the cuff and twist it to seal and tighten the frosting down into the cone. Purge the bag of air bubbles by squeezing the bag until there is a burst of air and frosting sputters out of the bag. Keep the bag tightly twisted so that the frosting doesn't come back up on your hands. Starting at the edge of a cupcake at a 90-degree angle and about ½ inch from the top, pipe a spiral toward the middle, ending with a point in the center. Add a sugar leaf and candied flower to the point, if desired. Repeat to frost the remaining cupcakes.

# CHEESECAKE

makes one 6-inch cake

For years, our customers asked me to make a cheesecake, but it took me a long time to figure out how to make a Miette version. Since cheesecake is greatly about the crust, the inspiration finally came when we created the graham cracker crust for our Lime Meringue Tart (page 111). To make the definitive Miette cheesecake, you must make our Graham Crackers, then crumble them into fine golden crumbs. You can make an equally delicious chocolate crust using our Chocolate Wafer Cookies.

The texture of the cheesecake filling is perfectly smooth and light without being airy—a quality we achieve with our mantra of “strain, strain, strain.” Simply pouring the batter through a sieve removes even small lumps of cream cheese and delivers a satiny texture. The other key to our cake is that we use high-quality organic cream cheese, which is denser than regular cream cheese and has a mellower flavor. As in many cheesecake recipes, the cake is baked in a bain-marie. If you have ever been daunted by this step or skipped it, do not; the time-tested

continued

## ingredients

**¾ CUP GRAHAM CRACKER CRUMBS (PAGE 152) OR CHOCOLATE WAFER CRUMBS (PAGE 127)**

**1 POUND CREAM CHEESE, AT ROOM TEMPERATURE**

**½ CUP (3½ OUNCES) SUGAR**

**2 LARGE EGGS**

**¼ CUP HEAVY CREAM**

**¾ TEASPOON VANILLA EXTRACT**

## GLAZE

**½ CUP (4 OUNCES) SOUR CREAM**

**1 TABLESPOON SUGAR**

## preparation

1. Read through or review the “Cake-Baking Essentials” section beginning on page 18.
2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
3. Put the graham cracker crumbs in a 6-inch springform pan and press in an even layer on the bottom. Bake the crust until dark golden brown and firm, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool. Leave the oven on.
4. When the crust is cool, wrap the bottom of the pan with plastic wrap and place in the oven for 3 minutes to shrink the plastic. (This will prevent the water in the bain-marie from entering the pan during baking.) Return to the wire rack to cool. Still leave the oven on.

continued



technique promotes even cooking and prevents the cheesecake from browning on the sides. The goal is a pristine, white, creamy cake.

5. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the cream cheese on medium speed until fluffy but without adding too much air, until smooth and creamy, without any lumps, 5 to 8 minutes. Gradually add the sugar and beat until smooth. Stop the mixer.
6. With the mixer set on low speed, drop the eggs, one at a time, into the cream cheese mixture. Beat each egg until thoroughly incorporated before adding the next. Slowly add the cream and then the vanilla and beat until smooth, 5 to 8 minutes.
7. Strain the batter through a medium-mesh sieve into a clean bowl, then pour into the cooled crust.
8. Bring a large kettle of water to a boil.
9. Place the filled cheesecake pan in a roasting pan. Carefully pour the boiling water into the larger pan to reach halfway up the sides of the cheesecake pan. Bake until the filling is set and just barely jiggles in the center, about 1 hour and 30 minutes. Remove from the water bath and place on the wire rack to cool completely.
10. To make the glaze: Add the sour cream and sugar to a small bowl and whisk to combine. Spread it over the top of the cooled cheesecake.
11. Wrap tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 8 hours. Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before serving.

To de-pan and serve, unlatch the springform pan and use an offset spatula to loosen the crust from the pan and transfer to a cake board.





