

## LAYERED RED VELVET CAKE WITH CRÈME FRAÎCHE FROSTING RECIPE

For cake layers:

- 1/4 cup dark unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tablespoons red (no taste) gel food coloring
- 1/4 cup boiling water
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened, cut into small pieces
- 2 tablespoons vegetable shortening, at room temperature
- 1 2/3 cups sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 1/2 cups cake flour
- 1 teaspoon fine salt
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

### Raspberry or Cherry Preserves

For frosting & glaze:

- 36 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 2 1/4 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 3 cups heavy cream
- 1 1/2 tablespoons pure vanilla extract
- 2 1/4 cups (18 ounces) crème fraîche
- 1 1/2 cups fine sanding sugar

Prepare cake. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Butter three 8-inch round cake pans, or two 9" round pans or one 18"x12" Jelly Roll sheet pan. Line the bottoms with parchment paper, and butter the parchment. Dust with flour, and knock out the excess flour.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the cocoa powder, food coloring, and boiling water. Set aside to cool. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter and shortening until smooth. Scrape down the bowl and add the sugar. Beat until the mixture is light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition.

Stir the buttermilk and vanilla into the cooled cocoa mixture. Sift the flour and salt together into another medium bowl. With the mixer on low, add the flour mixture, alternating with the cocoa mixture, to the egg mixture in three separate additions, beginning and ending with the flour mixture. Beat until incorporated. In a small bowl, combine the vinegar and baking soda and stir until the baking soda dissolves; the mixture will fizz. Add to the batter and stir until just combined.

Divide the batter among the prepared pans and smooth the tops. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center of each cake comes out clean, about 20-to-30 minutes, rotating the pans halfway through the baking time. Transfer the cakes to a wire rack and let cool for 20 minutes. Invert the cakes onto the rack, remove the pans, and let cool completely. Remove the parchment. (Cakes can be wrapped in plastic and refrigerated overnight.)

Prepare frosting. Beat cream cheese with a standing mixer on medium-high speed until soft, 3 to 4 minutes. Reduce speed to low, and beat in confectioners' sugar. Raise speed to medium-high, and beat until fluffy, about 3 minutes. Switch to the whisk attachment. With mixer on low speed, beat in 1 1/2 cups cream and the vanilla. Add crème fraîche, and beat until smooth, scraping sides of bowl as needed. (Frosting is best used the day you make it; refrigerate it in an airtight container until needed.)

To assemble: Place 4 1/2 cups frosting in a large bowl, refrigerating remainder for glaze. Whisk until very stiff peaks form.

If you used a Jelly Roll sheet pan, trim the edges and divide cake vertically into three or four equal layers. For round cakes, trim tops if required and further divide layers if desired.

Place 1 cake on an inverted baking sheet lined with parchment. Brush with preserves. Using an offset spatula spread 3/4 cup frosting over preserves. Repeat with second cake, more preserves, and 3/4 cup frosting. Top with remaining cake. Refrigerate remaining 3 cups frosting. Freeze cake for 1 hour.

Spread remaining 3 cups frosting over top and sides of cake, smoothing with an offset spatula. Freeze for 1 hour.

For the glaze: Add remaining 1 1/2 cups cream to the refrigerated frosting, and whisk until combined. Place cake on a wire rack set on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Using a ladle, spoon glaze over cake, allowing it to drip down sides, until cake is covered. (You will have a generous amount of leftover glaze. The glaze on the cake will appear slightly translucent but will become more opaque when chilled.) Refrigerate, uncovered, at least 4 hours or overnight.

Using 2 spatulas, transfer cake to a serving platter or a cake stand. Sprinkle sanding sugar over top, and gently toss it onto sides to coat entire cake.

\* Red Velvet cake recipe source: Baked: New Frontiers in Baking by Matt Lewis and Renato Poliafito, copyright © 2008 Stewart, Tabori & Chang; via: the February 2009 issue of O, The Oprah Magazine.

\*\* Crème Fraîche frosting recipe source: the December 2007 issue of Martha Stewart Living Magazine.