

## TRADITIONAL POUND CAKE

March 4 is designated to celebrate National Pound Cake Day. But what exactly is a pound cake? A pound cake is dense, with a rich texture. The flavor of pound cake can be plain, or have flavoring extracts or citrus rind added to it for more dimension.

The traditional recipes for pound cake call for only equal parts of one pound each of butter, eggs, sugar, and flour. Can you believe the recipe required eight (2 ounce) eggs to create the pound of eggs? Each ingredient having equal parts of one pound each is where the name “pound cake” is derived. There are no leaveners such as baking powder added to the traditional version of the cake, but it is not a mistake in the recipe. The only thing that makes pound cake rise is the air whipped into the cake when it is being mixed. Creaming the butter and sugar together is essential to incorporate lift with air.

France is notorious for its pound cake. The French words for pound cake are “quatre quarts,” which means “four fourths,” which also describes the four equal portions of butter, eggs, sugar, and flour used in the recipe. Remember, the French don’t use the standard unit of a pound for measurement.

The English version of a pound cake uses whole eggs, while the French recipes call for egg whites that are beaten separately and then added to the other ingredients. Beating the egg whites separately creates a lighter cake, but it is drier than if whole eggs are used. Regardless of the method used, the baker should use room-temperature eggs because they will contain more air.

The traditional measurements of ingredients used in pound cake made a cake the size to serve multiple families. Today most people prefer a smaller cake, so the original recipe has been modified over time as per the requirements. Many recipes now use smaller quantities of each ingredient, yet maintain the 1:1:1:1 ratio.

Traditionally, in the United States, pound cakes are prepared in a loaf or Bundt pan, but in other parts of the world, the pound cakes are made in round pans. Most pound cakes are served either dusted with powdered sugar, lightly glazed, or sometimes with icing.

### Pound Cake Tips (from King Arthur Baking)

1. Always use room temperature ingredients.
2. Cream the butter and sugar mixture until very light and fluffy.
3. Measure the flour correctly. Creating a perfect pound cake is all about using the correct ratio of ingredients.
4. Use the proper pan. It should be a 9X5 loaf pan. Metal pans are preferred because they warm up quickly, conduct heat well, and produce evenly baked products.
5. Do not overbake. The pound cake should develop a slightly golden crust around the edges.
6. Use a cake soak after baking. Using a brush, apply a cake soak to add moisture and also flavor.
7. Serve with style. Use fruit, whipped cream, caramel, or any toppings of your choice to dress up the pound cake and add unique flavors.

A pound cake will keep at room temperature for around 4 or 5 days. Just keep it tightly wrapped, so it doesn't become dry or stale. You can prolong the shelf life by chilling it in the refrigerator. It should last a week to 10 days. In addition, a pound cake keeps very well frozen. Wrap it tightly, seal it in a zip-top bag, and keep it in the freezer for a couple of months. Thaw it in the fridge or at room temperature, slice, and serve!

Anyone can mix together the simple combination of butter, flour, sugar, and eggs to create a delicious cake. Try a tried and true pound cake that stands the test of time!

### **Golden Vanilla Pound Cake** (from King Arthur Baking)

Ingredients:

#### Cake

12 Tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature  
3 ounces cream cheese, room temperature  
3/4 teaspoon salt (1/2 teaspoon if using salted butter)  
1 1/2 cups sugar  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
1 teaspoon almond extract  
5 large eggs, room temperature  
3 Tablespoons milk  
2 Tablespoons Cake Enhancer, optional  
1 3/4 cups + 2 Tablespoons (220g) unbleached all-purpose flour

#### Topping

2 Tablespoons (25g) sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1 teaspoon water

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a 9" x 5" x 2 3/4" loaf pan, or a 12" x 4" x 4" tea loaf pan. To avoid overflow, use the correct size pan!

To make the topping: Combine the sugar, vanilla, and water. Stir until the mixture is syrupy. At first, it'll seem very stiff but will become "drizzle-able" as you stir. Set the topping aside.

To make the cake: In a medium-sized mixing bowl, beat together the butter, cream cheese, salt, sugar, baking powder, vanilla extract, and almond extract until well combined.

Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition; the mixture may look slightly curdled/grainy. After you've added the final egg, beat at high speed for 3 minutes, then stir in the milk.

Add the cake enhancer, then sprinkle in the flour gradually, with the mixer going at low speed. Mix just until combined. The batter will be smooth and thick, but still pourable. Pour and scrape the batter into the prepared pan.

Set the cake on a baking sheet, for the easiest handling and as a precaution against potential overflow (which shouldn't happen if you use the correct size pan). Bake it for 55 minutes (for either size pan).

Remove the cake from the oven, and brush/drizzle with the sugar mixture. Return the cake to the oven for an additional 15 to 20 minutes. Remove the cake from the oven, and set it on a rack. Insert a toothpick into the center; it should come out clean. If you use an instant-read thermometer, the center should register about 200°F to 205°F. The very top, right under the crust, will still be kind of soggy; don't worry about it.

After 5 minutes loosen the cake's edges and turn it out of the pan to cool completely on a rack.

Store wrapped at room temperature for two days, or freeze for longer storage.

Sources: ([cooksinfo.com](http://cooksinfo.com); [kingarthurbaking.com](http://kingarthurbaking.com); [whatscookingamerica.net](http://whatscookingamerica.net))