

Take a Break with Coffee Cake

Coffee cake is made with just a few standard ingredients most can find in their cupboards. It is a delicious treat with your morning coffee and is easy to make at home.

What Is Coffee Cake?

Coffee cake is a butter-based cake that does not contain coffee, contrary to what the name implies. It's not supposed to be over-the-top sweet and is meant to be paired with a cup of coffee- hence the name!

Coffee cake, or kaffekuchen, is a sweet, cinnamon-flavored single-layer cake with a streusel top made from flour, butter, and sugar. Streusel can also be layered inside of the cake like a filling. Fruit variations are prevalent, with blueberry being the most common. Nuts and additional spices are often added to create deeper flavor and texture.

Coffee Cake Origin

When coffee became popular in Europe during the 17th century, Europeans wanted sweet breads to pair with the beverage. A social activity known as kaffeeklatsch began, where friends and neighbors gathered to enjoy sweets, coffee, and community. This tradition was brought to America with the European immigrants, and today there is still a coffeehouse culture.

Making Coffee Cake

Coffee cake is made with basic ingredients found in most kitchens, such as brown sugar, flour, and baking powder. Some coffee cake recipes incorporate dairy such as sour cream or milk to add moisture and create soft crumbs. Instead of frosting or glaze, coffee cake is topped with streusel crumbs made from butter to create a crisp top layer. Making a coffee cake is inexpensive and easy to make ahead of time.

Coffee cake evolved from a variety of different types of cakes. As a result, it can be adapted in many different ways. For variety, soft fruit such as berries or jam can be used as a layer inside the cake. A streusel topping is another natural addition. Nuts are often added to the topping. The cake may also be drizzled with icing or dusted with powdered sugar. It is also possible to use coconut oil for the butter and non-dairy milk or even orange juice for the milk.

In the 1950's, it became popular to have a hole in the center of a coffee cake by using a bundt pan. It was invented to allow heavier batters to get cooked all the way through without any dough left unbaked in the center. However, you can adapt a bundt pan recipe to the more common and versatile 9-by-13 pan.

The change in a pan requires no adjustment to the ingredients, so here's today's lesson: Pay attention to pan volume, not area. Consulting the handy chart on JoyofBaking.com, I realized the difference in volume between the Bundt (12 cups) and 9x13 pan (14 cups) was minimal. Just adjust the baking time to a few minutes less than needed to bake with the Bundt pan. It is possible to make adaptations to almost any cake recipe if you plan ahead and make needed adjustments.

A baked cake can be stored tightly wrapped in plastic or in a sealed, airtight container at room temperature for up to three days. However, it will last longer, up to a week in the refrigerator. You can also freeze the cake for up to 3 months.

Coffee cake is pure decadence, from its topping to its supremely moist, dense crumb. Having coffee cake on the table at breakfast or coffee break time is always a delight. Coffee cake is a treat that asks nothing of you other than to slow down and enjoy a nice hot mug of coffee and a bite of something sweet.