

## **"Real-Deal" Goopy Butter Cake**

Looks aren't everything when it comes to goopy butter cake. It isn't tall and pristine, like layered cakes. You may be familiar with goopy butter cake, but it's probably the newer, convenient recipe that uses a cake mix and cream cheese. Goopy butter cake is a flat and dense cake made with flour, butter, sugar, and eggs. It is dusted with powdered sugar. While sweet and rich, it is somewhat firm and can be cut into pieces. Goopy butter cake is typically served as a type of coffee cake, rather than as a formal dessert cake.

The popular St. Louis goopy butter cake has been a regional favorite since the 1930s. Legend has it that the cake originated by accident when a baker mixed up the proportion of butter in one of the coffee cakes. Rather than throw it out, he sold it by the square, and the sugary, sticky confection became a phenomenon all over St. Louis. It is characteristically crispy around the edges and goopy in the center and is more like a bar than a cake. There are multiple families of bakers who claim to be the originators of this treat, and the truth is that the exact story of who invented it will forever remain a mystery.

There are two methods for making goopy butter cake. The original goopy butter cake featured a sweet yeast dough base topped with a mixture of corn syrup, sugar, vanilla, and, of course, butter. There is not a drop of cheese in sight! The result is chewy, rich, and creamy, almost like a vanilla pudding that's been nestled into a blondie. This is the version that most local bakeries make. A variety of flavors may appear in St. Louis stores throughout the year (such as pumpkin and chocolate), but the original flavor remains simple: buttery, goopy goodness. If you'd like to try a chocolate version, simply add a couple of ounces of melted semisweet chocolate to the filling before baking.

Many home cooks use a simpler method, which involves a store-bought cake mix crust (that doesn't require proofing) and a cream cheese-based filling. The cake mix recipe will yield something quite different. The shortcut version lacks the chewy quality.

### **Tips For Success**

- The sweet, yeasted dough is pressed into a baking dish. It will take about 2 to 2 1/2 hours for the dough to rise and will double in size.
- The dough will go from firm to soft as it proofs in the pan. It'll feel squishy and will stay indented when you poke it with a finger.
- Corn syrup is key to gooeyness. Do not replace it with another ingredient or omit it.
- A paddle attachment, not a dough hook, is all you need to ensure the mixture comes together.
- The top edges should be golden brown and slightly pulled away from the dish when the cake is done. The center will be jiggly when you move the dish back and forth.

In St. Louis, goopy butter cake is everywhere. There are also versions available nationwide. I hope you'll try baking one soon and let your family discover what folks in St. Louis have known

for more than eighty years —the gooey butter cake is one mistake worth making. Gear up for a treat that is about to become a staple in your household!