



Vegan Coconut Cake

Write-Up by Chelsea Rose

ABOUT THE DESSERT

Just like the great Marie Antoinette said herself, "Let them eat cake!" But would you have ever imagined her saying (in her french accent), "Now, ladies and gentlemen. Let them eat dairy free, egg free, cake with a plant based buttercream... cake!" You could imagine all of Marie Antoinette's guests would be very confused. Even the angry mobs outside would've had to stop screaming to understand what she had just said.

Well today, I want to share the spin I took on creating a coconut cake with a coconut buttercream, except- you guessed it. This cake is completely vegan. My inspiration for this cake was simply my family. I come from an abode where I grew up eating meat, and A LOT of it. My father was born and raised in the islands of the Bahamas, and my mom grew up in Southern California, with a mother who was Mississippi-born. You can imagine, there was a lot of chicken in my diet as a little girl. But as the household began to grow older, and the children began to form their own opinions on food, terms like pescetarian, vegetarian, gluten-free, and vegan/dairy-free began to float around the household. 2016 was the first time anyone in my family ever changed their diet. Even today, I'm plant-based, my brother is vegan, and a close family friend and dairy-free. It was only fair to make a dish that would be inclusive to the different diets that exist in my family, and that would be equally as tasty :) Even down to the plate that I chose for the final product. I used a shiny golden cake board as a plate because one, it reflects all of the goodness and joy of this cake back into the room and two, the cake was eaten within two days, between three people, and was always directly eaten off of the cake board. They always said it tasted better that way.

I chose to go for a coconut flavored cake because of my Caribbean origins. The Bahamas is home to a plethora of coconut trees, to the point where one could simply climb a coconut tree (given they had the strength to do so), and harvest a coconut. I've seen my cousin do it, and it's pretty cool. Coconut cakes are also typically made with a hint of almond flavor! Growing up, my father's favorite cake to order from the local bakery was an almond cake. Ooh! He also loved my grandmother's almond pound cake!! All this is to say that this coconut cake is also an homage to my father's sweet tooth.

This vegan coconut cake is for the indulgent and unashamed. It's fluffy, moist, and so sweet! If you've never made anything like this, you'll be introduced to ingredients used as common substitutes in vegan baking, such as applesauce, plant-based butter, and plant based milk. As I mentioned before, we're going to flavor our batter with coconut, with a hint of almond. What's special about almond extract is that it's very potent, and truly brings out the sweetness of anything it's added to, even when it's used in small quantities. The coconut extract is going to be just as important, to give the cake that rich coconut flavor.

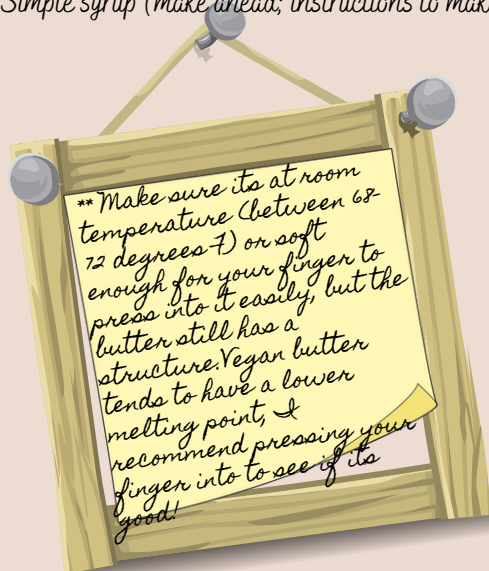
Today, we're going to make a cake. As amazing as it's going to taste when it's all done, today we're also going to focus on how to make the cake your own while using what you have on hand, how to best combine your ingredients for the best product, and we're going to learn some quick science tips that will help you understand what each step does for the cake. Most importantly, let's think about our families and/or loved ones as we're making this cake, by making love the greatest ingredient.

This recipe was inspired by Make it Dairy Free. All pictures were taken by Makaiya Edwards.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

for the cake

- 3 cups cake flour + extra for the cake pans
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 cups pure cane granulated sugar + 1/2 cup
- **Room temp. 3/4 cup vegan butter (I LOVE and recommend Earth balance Soy Free)+ extra for the cake pans
- 1 cup + 1 tbsp unsweetened applesauce
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp almond extract (*If almond allergy, omit)
- 1 tsp coconut extract
- 1 can unsweetened full fat coconut milk
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 cup of unsweetened or sweetened coconut flakes
- Simple syrup (make ahead; instructions to make it below)



for the frosting

- 6 cups powdered sugar (have more hand; to taste)
- **1.5 cup room temperature vegan butter, softened (I LOVE and recommend Earth balance Soy Free Sticks)
- 2-4 tbsp dairy free milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp coconut extract
- 1/2 tsp almond extract
- 12 oz coconut flakes (may not use all)

supplies

- (3) 6-inch cake pans or (2) 9-inch cake pans **
- Turntable or lazy susan
- Offset spatula
- Spatula for scraping batter ;)
- Bench scraper
- Plate of your choice or cakeboard
- Serrated knife
- Edible marker or pencil
- Stand Mixer or hand mixer
- Piping bag



**** this recipe can be used for cupcakes as well. You'll need cupcake liners, enough cupcake baking tins for 18-24 cupcakes, and increase baking powder by 1/2 a teaspoon

FOR THE CAKE

step 1

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. While its pre-heating, take your parchment, and trace the bottom of your cake tins with an edible marker or pencil onto the parchment paper. Cut out the beautiful circles you've traced out onto the parchment paper with some kitchen scissors or another pair of clean scissors. Set your arts 'n craft project to the side, ensuring that you have enough circles for all your cake pans!

step 2

Spread 2-3 tablespoons of vegan butter and brush or spread it along the bottom and sides of your cake pans, making sure not to leave a single space left uncoiled. Use more butter if needed! Your pans should smile back at you by the time you're done :)


Then, take a spoonful or two of your flour and tap it all around your cake pans. What I love to do, is to put the flour in the center of the bottom of the cake pans, then over a sink, hold the cake perpendicular with both hands, and while rotating it, tapping it simultaneously to get the flour to coat all the areas inside the pan. After flouring all of your oiled baking pans, take your arts n craft parchment circles, and press them on the bottom of the baking pans.


step 3


In a bowl, sift together your dry ingredients; cake flour, salt, baking powder, and baking soda. Whisk those ingredients together to slightly combine them. Set that bowl aside

step 4

Place your room temperature butter and sugar in the bowl of your stand mixer, with the paddle attachment. If you're using a hand mixer, make sure your bowl is big enough so that if you were to give it a big ole' hug, your hands are no further than your forearms. If your hands are touching your biceps, the bowl is too small! I know we love ourselves, but we definitely shouldn't be able to fully hug ourselves with the bowl :) Cream your $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of butter and 2 cups of sugar together for 4-6 minutes on medium/high for a light and fluffy mixture. If you're using a certified vegan / organic sugar, it may take a little longer to fully combine the butter with sugar because of its coarseness. So, sprinkle some patience in the bowl as well <3

 ** if you don't have an edible marker, that's okay! Please use a pencil :) Just make sure to place the side you used the pencil on is facing down in the cake pan so that the pencil lead isn't touching the cake! Icky!

 ** You can also use coconut oil if you want :) If you're using a microwave to melt your butter, put it in the microwave for about 30-45 seconds on half power. If you're in a rush, don't leave your butter unattended! Or else, she'll dance around your microwave and leave you with a performance that'll require some cleaning.

 ** A tip for speeding up prepping your pans for cake batter, is to place your cake pans in the oven when it's pre-heating to warm the cake pans up a little! Then you can apply your vegan butter or coconut oil in whatever state they're in because it's going to melt all over the pan! To ensure even application, you should still brush or spread the oil around :)

TIPS

It's important that the butter is at room temperature or soft enough to put your finger in it and it still keeps its structure. Why is this so important? I'm so glad you're curious! If your butter is too warm or it's melted, it won't be able to hold its structure when we add sugar to it and we'll also have a hard time incorporating air into our butter. Melted butter will melt our sugar too fast! Melted butter and sugar isn't always bad.. just for cake :)

On the other side of this, if our butter is too hard, it won't even want to mix with the sugar. That makes me sad :(Not only can't we mix it with sugar, but we won't even be able to whack the butter around enough to get the desired amount of air we need in the butter-sugar mixture. We're looking for a happy, hopeful medium of the two extremes. With room temperature butter, we can combine the sugar and our mixture will keep it's structure while pockets of air are created. Air = fluffy cake!

***The applesauce is acting as our binder. A binder is the thing that keeps the cake from crumbling into pieces, like my heart when I see Krispy Kreme throwing their donuts away at night. Sad. Usually eggs are used as binders, but today, we keepin' it vegan funky and fresh. With that said, it's equally important for your applesauce to be unsweetened and not flavored. The cake already has a set amount of sugars that come from the added sugar inside the cake, and we don't want to add more sugar than the recipe calls for :) Or else you'll end up with a sugar overload and you'll crash like a baby.*

Once the butter and sugar is creamed and the sugar is no longer easily visible, add your apple sauce. Mix until just combined. Then add all your coconut, vanilla, and almond extracts to the bowl, and mix until just combined. Just combined...? All it means is right when you see the ingredients come together. We want to stay away from over mixing :)

step 5

step 6

In a small bowl, combine your can of unsweetened coconut milk with the apple cider vinegar. If it curdles or clumps, that's okay! It's science happening in front of you, and it means some protein and acidic components want to become besties and show off what they can do together!

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step 7

Grab your stationary, but not forgotten, bowl of dry ingredients, and alternate adding them with the coconut milk and apple cider vinegar mixture, starting with the dry ingredients. Is it SOOOO important that you don't add all your flour at once and alternate adding it with the wet ingredients? And here's why: avoiding the overproduction of gluten.

After you add the last of the dry ingredients, make sure it's just combined. Then take a spatula, and make sure to scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl, to ensure any remaining stingy flour that didn't want to get combined, can be mixed in! Then, mix the ingredients one last time. Then play One Last Time by Ariana Grande, to jam to, as the ingredients mix together one last time :)

TIPS

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, or rye. For the purpose of simplicity, protein is the macronutrient that gives structure to our foods. When you work glutinous things, like breads, cakes, pastries, etc., you'll end up with more structure in the baked good, depending on how much it was mixed or manipulated. Breads and doughs are worked more, so they're harder on the outside, and are typically paired with yeast, which makes them more airy inside. Cakes, cupcakes, and pasties should be light and fluffy, which is why their ingredients are added the way that they are! Also, that's why their ingredients are just combined, because if we over mix a batter, that means more gluten, which means harder, tougher cake/pastry. I don't know about you, but personally, I don't want to eat a cupcake like my father eats his steak.

step 8

Remove the bowl from the stand mixer and fold in your coconut flakes! Think of this movement as a majestic scraping of the sides, and plopping them on top, with you elbow leading the movement. Scrape n' plop! Now I know the whole world say's what I'm about to say is barbaric, but go head and taste the batter! Are you missing a flavor? Is it delectable and scrumptious? Is it the perfect recipe? Yes! I already know it is!

step 9

Take your prepared cake pans, and evenly divide the cake batter among them. Make sure to leave at least $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of space in the cake tin, to give your cake the space to rise.

*** If you have extra cake batter like I did, make some cupcakes! Line your cupcake tins with cupcake liners/baking cups, and using an ice cream scooper or $\frac{1}{3}$ cup, fill each cupcake liner with delicious batter!*

Place your cake tins of batter into your pre-heated oven on the middle rack. If you cant fill all the cake pans on a single rack, put the extra pan on the rack elbow. Make sure the pans are super close to each other in the oven though, even if their among two racks! You want to space them so that the air in the oven can circulate well enough to cook everything well enough!

Bake cake for 40-50 minutes, or until a toothpick is entered in the middle of the cake pan, and comes out with very few crumbs or clean. If youre baking cupcakes, bake for 18-22 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.



step 10

Once cakes are ready, remove them from the oven, and let them cool on any protected surface (because our pans are HOT!) Once cooled, remove cakes from their cake tins by flipping them into your hands like you're doing a magic trick, and gently tep them out the pan, to release them into your hand. Now think of these cakes as babies and carefully place them onto a cooling rack. Cupcakes should be place on to a cooling rack as soon as the baking tray cools down.

*** Because the baking trays and cake pans are so hot, the cakes that are in them are slightly still "cooking" when they come out the oven. So, the logner they stay in their tins, the better chanc of them drying out, and nobody loves dry cake. I dont. I think it takes like crunchy rice. So, as soon as it's safe to touch the cake pans/cakes, grab those babies and tranfer them to a cooling rack!*

And now.... *in a french accent* for the buttercream. But it's butter-FREE-cream.

FOR THE FROSTING

step 1

Combine your vegan butter in a mixing bowl, and beat on high for at least 5 minutes. Remember when we talked about incorporating air? We want a whole binch of that stuff in this step! After about 5 minutes, scrape n' plop the bowl to ensure any butter was left un-fluff-ified. Then mix again on medium-high for 2 minutes.

step 2

Take a large bowl, and sift your powdered sugar into the bowl using a sifter or sieve. If you don't these items on hand, that's okay! Take a small whisk and gently break up your powdered sugar, but be prepared for a couple of clumps in your frosting! A couple of clumps never hurt nobody ;)

step 3

After sifting your powdered sugar, add the sugar into the mixing bowl $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time. It's important to not add your sugar in all at once!

step 4

Once all the sugar is well combined, add your coconut, vanilla, and almond extract to the bowl, and mix until well combined.


step 5

Then, start by adding 2 tablespoons of a dairy-free milk of your choosing, then mix until well combined. You want to get the frosting to a consistency of your desire. If it's not creamy enough, keep adding milk, one tablespoon at a time.

Taste your frosting! If its perfect, eat the whole bowl! No, don't do that :) Give some to a friend or brother, and save the rest for the cake!

step 6

Pre-heat the oven to a low broil or broiling at 350 degrees F. Spread your remaining coconut flakes onto a baking sheet, lined with parchment paper. Flatten them out as much as you can so each little flake can get an equal amount of toasting. Toast them for about 5-10 minutes mixing them halfway through, or until your coconut coconut flakes are slightly browned. Remove them, and let them chill on the counter, or in the freezer if you want it to cool a little faster ;)

 ** Imagine a volcano erupting, but instead of molten lava arising, causing environmental distress, it's a cloud of a white powdery substance, that's sweet to the taste, and a pain to kill :(If you add all your sugar in at once, when you start beating it, it'll ERRRRuuUppTtt and leave the household trembling :) After every couple of times you add your sugar, make sure to scrape the sides of the bowl! Scrape... you know.. n' plop! Mix everything until well combined.



And now.... *in a french accent* for the buttercream. But it's butter-FREE-cream.

THE CAKE ASSEMBLY

step 1

Place one of your cooled cake rounds on a plate or cake board. Then place your cake board on top of a turn table. If you don't have a turn table or lazy susan, don't fret! You can use your hands to turn the plate.

*** If you're making cupcakes, skip to step 6.*

step 2

Grab a serrated knife, and level your cake. Please don't be scared by this step! Let's both take a deep breath, then complete our mission ;)

Above all else, you can **ABOSLUTLEY** skip this step if you don't have the energy, and that's okay my love! Go ahead and stack the cakes like normal, keeping the last cake layer leveled side down. Also, make sure to have enough frosting to fill in the sides.

step 3

Take your simple syrup and brush it onto your freshly leveled cakes. This will help trap the moisture in your cake, and will help discourage the cake getting dry as we continue to assemble.

***to make your simple syrup*

combine 1 cup of boiling water with 1 cup of sugar and stir until the sugar is completely dissolved. Store in a jar or container and refrigerate until ready for use :)

Repeat steps 1-3, with however many number of cake round you have.

step 4

Place a small dollop of your vegan buttercream in center of your plate or cake board. Then place one of your cake rounds, unleveled side down, onto the center of the plate. Then add a generous amount of buttercream onto the cake layer; about $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 inch high. Repeat this step with all your cake layers, but place your last cake layer leveled side down. Use your offset spatula to even out the layer of frosting. If you don't have any frosting, a spoon will do :)

** * take a step back and see if your cake is lopsided. If so, gently use your hands to adjust the cake layers to make them even, and apply frosting where needed. Then add frosting on the sides and on top of the cake. Use your offset spatula to evenly spread it along all sides of the cake, to cover up the sponge of the cake, using turning the cake to help ease your decorating.*

step 5

Take your benchscraper, and as you turn the cake, smooth out the sides and the top of the cake. You want to go for clean sides that are so sharp, you might cut your finger on them. Think back to 3rd grade geometry, and how clear a cylinder looked. That's what you're going for! Above everything, as long as you put some love into the cake, whatever shape it ends up will be beautiful.. and edible.

Repeat this step 20 minutes before you put the final coat of frosting has slightly hardened.

liberally adding frosting to create a thicker layer all around the cake. Add as much frosting as you want, because you're going to use the bench scraper and scrape off excess frosting. The more frosting, the merrier! Chill your cake.

TIPS

**** this is called a crumb coat! This layer of frosting "traps" all the crumbs that like to come off the cake when decorating it. We do this so that when we apply the final coat of frosting, no crumbs will show, and our cake will look like it's from a bakery! Oooo, real nice. You can completely skip this step if you want, if you don't mind some crumbs sticking out! All crumbs are beautiful. I certainly didn't trap all my crumbs, and that's okay!**

THE CAKE ASSEMBLY

step 6

Grab your piping bag, and your piping tip with the star opening (For wilton tips, you can use tip 21 or tip 1M). Cut about an inch from the tip of the bag, then insert your piping tip, tip facing down. Roll the sides of the bag down 2-3 inches so that it cups around your hand. Use a spoon or spatula to place the frosting inside the piping bag, scraping it on the sides of the bag. Once the bag is $\frac{3}{4}$ full, push the frosting towards the bottom of the bag, to get any air bubbles out. Twist the top of the bag, so that no frosting escapes while piping!

*** if you dont have a piping bag, here's what i would use. Grap a ziploc bag, and cut the corner of the bag. Still cup the bag around your hand, and place the frosting in the bag. Leave enough space for you to twist the top and comfortably pipe out frosting out the bag.*

step 7

Pipe final decorations and/or embellishments onto the cake! You can do whatever you want! You can pipe a boarder, make a swirlies, or even draw a simile face on the side of the cake. Just make it your own, because you have that creative ability. I believe in you. If you want to do what I did, I piped eight swirlies as equally spaces from eachother as possible, on the top boarder if the cake :)

*** how to pipe like a PRO*

Piping is all in the wrist. So grab your favorite vaseline and vegan butter, and oil up those bad boys for fluidity in your piping skills! Try to avoid have the center of your movements in your elbow when piping. You might risk not being able to control the details of your piping because your movement is too large. A tip I have is to practice a couple on a piece of parchment paper or foil. If you're worries about messing them up on the cake, dont worry! Mess up bestie! You have the space to do so. Just grab a small spoon, knife, or offset spatula and scrape the swirlie off the cake :)

step 8

Remember your those beautiful toasted coconut flakes? Well time to add them to the cake! Again, add these however you want! I added them on the sides by pressing up with my hands, and let the excess drop over a baking pan. I also sprinkles some on top of the cake and the swirlies for a final embellishments.



And that, my friends is how you make a Vegan coconut cake with a vegan coconut buttercream! I'm so proud of you! I hope you enjoyed making this delectable beauty as much a I did. You were so much fun to bake with! I hope you get to share this cake with some family or a friend :)