

Texas sheet cake

BY BRIAN MEDFORD

I'm attempting to scale down several aspects of my life: my junk drawer, my pant size and the number of guesses it takes me to crack the daily Wordle. Simultaneously, I'm trying to scale up other things: the number of minutes I brush my teeth, my water intake and my patience. It's a battle that I'm not always very good at, but I do what I can.

I do not believe in scaling down dessert, though. I always want to scale up, which is why I'm failing at scaling down my pant size. Sometimes a big dessert is needed to feed a mess of people or just to feed a hunger of the heart for one. When this is the case, think of Texas sheet cake.

Why Texas? I don't know exactly. Surely it has something to do with the size of the state, but if that's the case, shouldn't it be Alaska sheet cake? It doesn't quite have the same ring, though, so call it what you will.

A Texas sheet cake is a quick, single-layer chocolate cake, topped with a chocolate fudge icing and chopped pecans. It's a big cake, baked in a 10 by 15-inch sheet tray. It's perfect for a family gather-



Brian Medford

A Texas sheet cake, topped with pecans.

ing, or an accompaniment for a really sad movie marathon for one.

Texas sheet cake

Serves a mess of hungry people. Slightly adapted from Julie Richardson.

Cake

- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa, lightly-packed

- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Frosting

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa, lightly-packed, preferably Dutch-processed
- 1/3 cup whole milk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 3 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1/2 cup toasted pecans, chopped

Preparation

Grease a 10 by 15 by 2-inch baking pan. Center in an oven rack and preheat to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.

Melt butter in a large saucepan over medium heat, then whisk in cocoa. Add oil and water and bring to a rolling boil for 30 seconds. Remove the pan from the heat and set it aside to cool slightly.

Meanwhile, sift together the flour, sugar, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl, then whisk the ingredients thoroughly. Pour the warm cocoa mixture into the sifted ingredients and whisk until combined.

In a small bowl, whisk together eggs, buttermilk and vanilla. With a rubber spatula, stir the buttermilk mixture into the batter. Pour the batter into the greased pan and place in the center of the oven. Bake until the top is firm, or until a wooden skewer inserted in the middle of the cake comes out with moist crumbs, about 32 to 34 minutes.

While the cake is in the oven, make the frosting. First, melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in cocoa and bring the mixture to a rolling boil for 30 seconds. Remove from heat and whisk in the milk and vanilla. Add the confectioners' sugar while whisking continuously.

Pour frosting over the hot cake and sprinkle with nuts immediately after removing from the oven. Allow to cool before cutting into squares.

Brian Medford is a baker, teacher and the owner of The Rusty Cup in Astoria. He has lived in the Northwest for more than 20 years and delights in Southern cooking. Contact him at blmedford@gmail.com.

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