

Carrot Cake

1 3/4 cup pastry flour

2 tsp cinnamon

1 tsp pumpkin pie spice

1 tsp baking soda

1/2 tsp baking powder

1/2 tsp salt

1 cup granulated sugar

1 cup vegetable oil

2 large eggs

1 1/2 cups grated carrot

3/4 cup crushed pineapple with juice

1/2 cup unsweetened shredded coconut

1/2 cup walnuts, chopped

Cream Cheese Butter Cream

1 cup butter, room temperature

1/2 cup cream cheese, room temperature

4 cups icing sugar

1 tbsp vanilla paste

Butter cream for Cabbages & Carrots

1/2 cup butter, room temperature

3 cups icing sugar

1 tsp vanilla paste

2 tbsp cream

green & orange food colouring

Makes: 1 8-inch layer cake, 8 to 12 slices

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees

Butter two 8-inch cake pans and line with parchment circles.

Onto a large piece of parchment paper, sift the flour, cinnamon, pumpkin pie spice, baking soda, baking powder and salt. Set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together the sugar and vegetable oil. Add the eggs and continue to whisk until the batter is pale in colour. Add the carrots, crushed pineapple with juice and whisk to incorporate.

Sprinkle the dry ingredients over the batter and use a rubber spatula or wooden spoon to blend. Stir in the coconut and walnuts. Divide the batter evenly between the prepared pans.

Bake in the preheated oven for 20 to 25 minutes, or until a wooden skewer inserted into the center comes out clean.

Remove the cakes from the oven and allow them to cool for about 10 minutes before inverting them onto wire cooling racks. Once the cakes have cooled completely use a large serrated knife to cut each cake in half on the horizontal to create four layers.

While the cakes are baking prepare both the cream cheese butter cream and the butter cream for the cabbages and carrots. In a stand mixer beat the cream cheese and butter on high for 3 to 5 minutes. Make sure to scrape down the sides of the bowl a couple of times during this process to ensure the butter and cream cheese are well combined. Turn the mixer to low and carefully add the icing sugar...we don't want any icing sugar snow storms in the kitchen. Once the icing sugar has been incorporated, add the vanilla paste and turn the mixer too high. Continue to beat until the icing is light and fluffy.

To make the butter cream for the vegetable decoration use the same method as above but add the cream sparingly, stopping when it is fluffy but still stiff. You don't want the butter cream to be too loose when using it for piping, as it has to hold its shape. Once made, divide it between three small bowls and use food colouring to create orange, green and a slightly darker green shade.

To create the carrots fill a piping bag fitted with a small plain tip with the orange butter cream and fill another piping bag fitted with a small leaf tip with the darker green butter cream. Line a baking sheet with parchment and pipe a bunch of carrots about 1 to 2-inches in length. Then top each one with a little spring of green butter cream. Pop the cookie sheet in the freezer until you are ready to decorate the top of the cake.

To create the butter cream cabbages fill a piping bag fitted with a large plain tip with half of the other green butter cream and fill another bag, fitted with a small rose petal piping tip, with the remainder. Holding a flower nail upright, place a small square of parchment paper on top (you can affix it with a wee smear of butter cream). Using the bag fitted with the larger plain tip, pipe a small ball of butter cream in the center of the nail. Switch to the bag fitted with the petal tip and pipe three overlapping leaves across the ball, turning the nail as you go. Repeat this step but hold the tip slightly more upright to allow the leaves to flare off the ball a little. Repeat one more time to complete the cabbage. Lift the piece of parchment off the nail head and place it on the cookie sheet in the freezer with the carrots to set up nice and firm. This makes placing them on the cake top sooooo much easier!

To ice the cake, place a cake board or plate on a rotating cake stand (again, a little bit of an investment but a total game changer when it comes to icing your cakes...I promise!). I like to place a small damp cloth under the cake plate to prevent it from sliding around. I also place three or four larger pieces of parchment around the edge of the plate before placing my first layer on top. This keeps the plate clean while I'm icing and then I simply pull them out from under the cake when I'm done.

Place a large dollop of cream cheese butter cream in the center of the first layer and use a large offset spatula to spread it evenly across the cake. Repeat this step with the next two layers and then top with the fourth layer. Place a generous amount of the butter cream atop the cake and continue to use the offset spatula to coat the sides and the top. Once you have finished icing the cake you can go about decorating it with your little cabbages and carrots.