

A Beginner's Lesson in Gluten Free Cakes

CAKE! So, you may not realize it, but I have very little self control around desserts. For that reason, I try not to keep sweets in the house, especially non-gluten free sweets. My former coworkers were not so accommodating. Every birthday and holiday (and I mean every holiday – St. Patrick's, Fat Tuesday, etc) were celebrated with cake. After walking by those cakes 15 times a day (and not being able to eat them because of the gluten) I would be one grouchy chickadee.

The only solution was to learn to make delicious, moist, tender gluten free cakes for myself. Thus began my foray into gluten free cakes. After much reading and much experimentation, it is time to impart some of my knowledge to you. This course is a course for beginning cake bakers. You'll learn the basics of what makes a cake a cake, how to mix a cake, and how to troubleshoot some common issues. I'll show you two different methods for mixing a cake, and then you can try some of the cake recipes that I've converted to gluten free flours.

Homemade caking icing, converting non-gluten free cake recipes, and specialty cakes will be dealt with in a more advance coursed at a later date. After all, John and I are trying to lose weight, not gain it, so we need to space the cake consumption out a bit =)

This class is made up of articles, videos and recipes. I've arranged the sections of the course in the order in which I think you should work through them. You'll start off with a couple of articles, then dive into the videos. After that feel free to start baking using some of the recipes that I've included. I hope you'll be as happy as Lucy was with her gluten free birthday cake.



Learning to Bake:

Lately I've been considering what it takes to learn how to bake (or really to learn how to do anything). I don't think that you can truly say that you've learned how to bake something if you've just done it once. To truly learn, you need to repeat what you've done several times at least. Even when you're using the same recipe, you'll learn something new from each repetition. It's only after you've had a few successes, a few failures, and tried a few variations that you can begin to truly understand the recipe.

For example, this weekend I made pate a choux dough and used it to make eclairs. This was my first time to make gluten free eclairs and the dough turned out wonderfully. The results were definitely blog-worthy, and I have no problem sharing my recipe at this point. But since I've only made pate a choux once, I'm definitely not ready to teach a class on it.

Why?

Because I haven't messed it up yet! I need to keep trying the recipe and learn all of the nuances. When I mess it up (and I'm sure to at some point) I'll need to try to figure out what I did that messed it up. I'll also need to make something other than eclairs with the dough. Beignets, churros, gougères...they all start from the same dough. After all that, maybe, I'll know something about making pâte à choux.

So, in this lesson, I'm giving you an assignment that I haven't before. Bake these cakes, but bake them several times. In the Yellow Gold Cake recipe, I've given you suggestions for recipe variations and different creaming methods so that you can try all of them and see how the each variation makes the cake different (or not). Learning is experiential and experimental. My goal is remove as many possible pitfalls and stumbling stones from your step. But the learning process is still yours to go through...so keep baking =)

Start with these articles and videos:

Ingredients and Substitutions for Gluten Free Cake – Page 3

How To Mix Cake Batter And Why It Actually Matters – Page 5

[Cake Mixing Demonstration – Creaming Method](#) (URL Link)

[Cake Mixing Demonstration – Dissolved Sugar Method](#) (URL Link)

Pick one of these recipes to bake:

Mary's Yellow Gold Layer Cake – Page 7

Mary's Black Chocolate Layer Cake – Page 10

Mary's Red Velvet Cake with Cream Cheese Icing – Page 12

[Gluten Free Crazy Cake \(also casein, egg, and soy free\) from Art of Gluten Free Baking](#) (URL Link)

Then read this article and try one of the other cake recipes or one of the variations of Yellow Gold Layer Cake:

Troubleshooting: 10 Cake Baking Tips – Page 14

Ingredients and Substitutions for Gluten Free Cake

I hope that you are ready to dive into the world of cake baking. I've had a lot of fun researching and experimenting for this class, and I've also enjoyed eating the delicious cakes. This first article in the lesson will cover the basic ingredients that are common to all cakes, as well as potential issues for those of you with multiple intolerances/allergies.

Cake ingredients fall into three categories which I will call "Basic", "Tweaks" and "Fancifications". A cake in its simplest form is a combination of four Basic ingredients: flour, eggs, sugar, and fat. The flour and eggs give the cake structure; the fat and sugar make it taste good (and also weaken the structure). A balance of ingredients is required.

Tweaks are non-essential cake ingredients, though in this case non-essential means that it's possible to make cake without them, though not necessarily recommended. The tweaks include additional liquids such as milk and cream, flavorings like vanilla or lemon extract, and leavening agents like baking powder and baking soda.

Fancifications would be ingredients such as nuts, grated fruits, and chocolate chips. These ingredients add variety to cakes, but if you're allergic to Fancifications you can generally leave them out of the recipes without any serious consequences.

The Basics:

The flours used in this lesson's recipes include brown rice flour, tapioca starch, and sorghum flour. I get very few requests for ingredient substitutions for tapioca and sorghum, so I'm hoping that most of you will be able to use those flours. For those of you with rice allergies, try substituting a mild white bean flour (check with Bob's Red Mill).

Eggs are essential to most cakes, and I haven't done any experiments with egg substitutes for the cake recipes include with the lesson. However, if you need to be egg-free as well as gluten free, you can still eat cake. During the Great Depression and the rationing of the World Wars, cooks developed eggless cake recipes called Crazy Cakes or Wacky Cakes.

These cakes are mixed up in the baking dish using a rather crazy method. The method is essential though as it allows the water to get to the flour before the oil does. Usually this would create an undesirable toughness in the cake, but without the eggs it works out perfectly.

I've included a link to a gluten free Crazy Cake recipe with the recipes in this lesson. The recipe uses sweet rice flour (glutinous rice flour) which is made from a short-grained Asian rice. This rice flour provides a lot of structure and makes the Crazy Cake recipe work, even without gluten, eggs, or added gums.

Sugar makes cakes sweet, but the physical and chemical properties of sugar are also part of what makes the cake recipe work. In these recipes I've used granulated white sugar and light brown sugar. I haven't found many good non-sugar sweeteners that will work in cake recipes. If you can use Splenda, then the Splenda Sugar Blend does work reasonably well for baking. If you can't use sugar at all, then it may be time to gently admit to yourself that cake is not going to be an option for you and start that grieving process. (I'm not being sarcastic! There really is a grief process that you go through when you lose a favorite food).

Fat. It's really such an unpleasant word. I'd much rather say butter, but you can also use shortening and oil in cakes, so fat is good word to cover the entire group of options. If you're measuring your

ingredients by weight, you can substitute equal weights of the different fats in recipes. Choose the fat that works for your dietary needs. If you cannot do dairy, then perhaps shortening, oil, or Vegan Buttery Sticks will work for you. If you cannot do soy, then butter and the Soy-Free Vegan Buttery Sticks may be suitable. If corn is an issue, then you may need to be careful of cross-contact issues with oils, so butter may be your best choice.

Tweaks:

If you are dairy-free, then some of the tweak ingredients may be a problem for you. All of the cake recipes that I've included with this lesson are dairy free, but you're bound to come across recipes that include milk or whipped cream. When you do, either use a dairy alternative that's suitable for your diet, or substitute an equal amount of water.

Baking powder and baking soda are the most common tweak ingredients in cakes. Theoretically, you can get enough rise from whipping air into the cake during the mixing process, but most cooks help the cake out with chemical leaveners. I have to give Shirley Corriher credit because everything I've learned about baking powder and baking soda, I learned from her book, *Bakewise*.

The most important thing to know about baking powder and baking soda is the correct amount to use in a cake recipe. I'll mention this elsewhere, but for each cup of flour you should have either 1 tsp of baking powder or 1/4 tsp. baking soda. Anymore than that and you run the risk of a dense and heavy cake. (If you add too much leavening, the cake rises too quickly and all of the air bubbles pop before the cake sets and the cake sinks).

If you're trying a new gluten free cake recipe and see that it's overleavened, feel free to adjust the amounts of baking powder and baking soda. Baking powder is the leavening of choice; baking soda should be avoided or used as little as possible. Some cake recipe writers include a good bit of baking soda when the recipe also includes acidic ingredients like buttermilk. A little bit of baking soda is okay in this case, but be sure to decrease the baking powder so that the total amount of leavening is correct.

Also, make sure that your baking powder is gluten free. Baking powder contains cornstarch and cornstarch may contain gluten if it was produced in a facility that also processes wheat. I only use baking powder that has a gluten free label.

Now that we've discussed the ingredients in cake, it's time to go on to the next article and learn how to mix up the ingredients into a cake batter.

How To Mix Cake Batter and Why It Actually Matters

So, we've talked about the basic ingredients of a cake, but the way you mix up the ingredients is the key to baking a light, tender and delicious cake. There are at least five different methods for mixing the cake, but I'm going to focus on two. The first is the creaming method and it is the method that you see the most often in recipe instructions. The second is the dissolved sugar method, which is not commonly seen, but is less finicky than the creaming method.

Creaming Method

So here are the steps to the creaming method. Remember the basic ingredients in the cake are flour, sugar, fat, eggs and liquids.

1. Cream the fat.
2. Cream the fat and sugar.
3. Cream the fat, sugar, and eggs.
4. Add the flour and liquids, starting with the flour.

Many recipes tell you to cream butter and sugar, but few tell you exactly what that means. Yet, properly creaming the fat and creaming the fat and sugar are essential to the success of this cake mixing method. First off, "creaming" is simply another way of saying "whipping air into". When you cream butter, you whip air into it. The creaming method is typically used when the recipe calls for solid fats, such as butter and shortening. After all, it's impossible to whip air into oil.

To cream butter you need to start off with butter that is approximately 65 degrees F. Many recipes will tell you that the butter should be room temperature. However, unless you try not to use your furnace in the winter, your room temperature is probably too warm. Melted butter cannot hold air bubbles, and butter melts somewhere between 67 and 68 degrees.

How do you know if your butter is 65 degrees? The easiest way is to insert a candy/frying thermometer into the stick of butter and take its temperature. I tried this with a stick of butter that I'd just taken from the refrigerator and the temperature was 45 degrees. An hour later the temperature was 62 degrees. The temperature of your home and your fridge will both affect the amount of time it takes the butter to warm up.

Mixing the butter will raise its temperature, so it is good to use a chilled mixing bowl and chilled beaters. While you are creaming the butter, periodically touch the bowl with your hand to make sure it's still cool to the touch. If it's not, then put the bowl into the freezer for 5 minutes before continuing the creaming process.

To cream butter or shortening, place it in a mixing bowl and mix it with either a hand or stand mixer set on medium speed. The color of the butter will lighten as the air is mixed in. Once the color has lightened, then you can add the sugar and continue to mix at medium speed. The creaming process may take anywhere from 5 – 10 minutes; shorter if you use a stand mixer, longer if you use a hand mixer. I like to cream the butter and sugar together until it is very difficult to feel the sugar when you taste the creamed mixture.

After creaming the butter and sugar, the eggs should be added in. The eggs should be at room temperature; you can place un-cracked eggs in a bowl of warm water to quickly bring them to room temperature. Add the eggs one at a time, and stop mixing immediately after they have been incorporated into the batter. Too much mixing at this stage can decrease the volume of your cake.

Now it's time to add the flour and liquids. You are supposed to add the flour first, so that most of the flour is added to the batter before the liquids. Why is this important? Well, when you're baking with wheat flour it's important because it helps prevent gluten from forming and creating a tough cake. The order of adding the flour and liquids may not be at all important when working with gluten free flours. However, I hate to say that there's absolutely no impact since I haven't tested it myself and I am no expert on the proteins that are in gluten free flours.

So, to sum this up. You can use the creaming method when the fat in the cake recipe is butter or shortening. Be sure to cream the butter and the butter and sugar long enough. But, if you're using butter be sure to not let it get to warm.

Dissolved Sugar Method

Until I started doing research on cake baking, I didn't realize that there was any cake mixing method other than the creaming method. All of my knowledge of the dissolved sugar method is from the book *Bakewise* by Corriher, so if you'd like some additional reading, that's where you should go.

So, why should you consider using this method? Corriher states that compared to the creaming method this method is less likely to fail; there are simply less things that you can do wrong. I think that is important when you're gluten free. If you're making a gluten free cake for a special occasion, you can't just run out to a bakery shop for a replacement if your cake is a flop. I also hate to waste gluten free flours on anything that is less than supremely amazing, so no heavy, dry, dense cakes for me please.

Here are the basic steps to the dissolved sugar method: 1. Dissolve the sugar into water (or other liquid in the recipe) 2. Blend the dry ingredients and fat into the sugar mixture 3. Add the remaining liquid, flavoring, and eggs

Unlike the creaming method, the dissolved sugar method can be used with any type of fat, including oil. This is a plus for those of you whose choice of fats may be limited due to specific dietary requirements. This method is also very easy. You don't have to worry about the temperature of the ingredients or whether you've creamed the butter and sugar long enough.

If you've been baking cakes using the creaming method for years, then this method will take some getting used to. The creaming method is second nature to me and when I tested this method it felt strange to mix the ingredients in a new order. However, I'm sure that I'll adjust once I memorize the order of the steps and make a few cakes.

The first step in this method is to heat the liquid of the recipe, usually water, to a simmer and then add it to the sugar. The amount of water used should weigh about half of the weight of the sugar. One cup of granulated sugar weighs approximately 7 oz, so use 3.5 fl. oz of water for each cup of sugar. Any additional water called for in the recipe will be added at the end.

After dissolving the sugar, the flour and fats are added to the sugar mixture. Be sure to mix your flours and leavening together before adding them in. Mix the flour and sugar mixture together for 5 minutes at medium speed.

Finally, add any remaining liquids, the flavorings, and the eggs. You can hand mix these ingredients in, or beat them in with a mixer set on low. You should not have to beat the batter for more than 1 minute to do this.

That's pretty simple, right? Dissolve the sugar, add the flour and fats, then add everything else. You can do this!

Mary's Gluten Free Yellow Gold Layer Cake



This is a cooking lesson after all, so let's try an experiment. First make this recipe with the Dissolved Sugar method and use 8 oz. of oil, then try it with same method using 8 oz. of butter. You don't have to do this all immediately, but take good notes about the finished cake so that you'll be able to compare and contrast the results later. Then try making the cake with all butter using the creaming method (directions included below. I've included baking instructions for both below.

Mary's Gluten Free Yellow Gold Layer Cake

4.6 oz (1 cup) brown rice flour
3.45 oz (3/4 cup) tapioca starch
3.45 oz (3/4 cup) sorghum flour
1 tsp. xanthan gum
2.5 tsp baking powder

10.5 oz (1.5 cups) sugar
8.5 oz (1 1/16 cup) water
8.0 oz (1 cup) oil
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/4 tsp salt
5.2 oz egg yolks (8 yolks from large eggs)

Cake with Oil – Dissolved Sugar Method

1. Place an oven rack in the lower third of the oven. Place a baking stone on it and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Start by mixing the flour, xanthan gum and baking powder in a large mixing bowl. Whisk by hand with a fork for 1 minute or at medium speed on a hand mixer for 30 seconds. Set the flour aside.
3. Put the sugar into a large mixing bowl. Heat 6 oz. of water (3/4 cup) to a simmer. Add the hot water to the sugar and mix to dissolve the sugar. Beat in the oil, vanilla, and salt at medium speed.
4. Add a third of the flour mixture to the sugar mixture. Mix at low speed just until incorporated and then add in remaining flour a third at a time. Total mixing time for this step should be approximately 5 minutes.
5. Add the last 4.5 oz of water, the egg yolks to the batter and mix until just combined.

6. Pour the batter into one 9" x 13" cake pan or two 9" cake pans. Be sure to grease and flour the pans first; or grease the pans and then line the bottoms of the pans with parchment paper. Drop the pan onto the counter from a height of 4" to remove any large air bubbles.

7. Place the cake in the oven on the stone and bake until the cake reaches an internal temperature of 209 degrees Fahrenheit. If you do not have a digital baking thermometer, the cake should spring back when touched and a toothpick inserted into the middle should come out clean, but moist. The cake should not pull away from the sides until after it is out of the oven.

Cake with Butter – Dissolved Sugar Method

1. Place an oven rack in the lower third of the oven. Place a baking stone on it and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

2. Start by mixing the flour, xanthan gum and baking powder in a large mixing bowl. Whisk by hand with a fork for 1 minute or at medium speed on a hand mixer for 30 seconds. Set the flour aside.

3. Put the sugar into a large mixing bowl. Heat 6 oz. of water (3/4 cup) to a simmer. Add the hot water to the sugar and mix to dissolve the sugar. Beat in the butter, vanilla, and salt at medium speed.

4. Add a third of the flour mixture to the sugar mixture. Mix at low speed just until incorporated and then add in remaining flour a third at a time. Total mixing time for this step should be approximately 5 minutes.

5. Add the last 4.5 oz of water, the egg yolks to the batter and mix until just combined.

6. Pour the batter into one 9" x 13" cake pan or two 9" cake pans. Be sure to grease and flour the pans first; or grease the pans and then line the bottoms of the pans with parchment paper. Drop the pan onto the counter from a height of 4" to remove any large air bubbles.

7. Place the cake in the oven on the stone and bake until the cake reaches an internal temperature of 209 degrees Fahrenheit. If you do not have a digital baking thermometer, the cake should spring back when touched and a toothpick inserted into the middle should come out clean, but moist. The cake should not pull away from the sides until after it is out of the oven.

Cake with Butter – Creaming Method

1. Place an oven rack in the lower third of the oven. Place a baking stone on it and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

2. Start by mixing the flour, xanthan gum, salt and baking powder in a large mixing bowl. Whisk by hand with a fork for 1 minute or at medium speed on a hand mixer for 30 seconds. Set the flour aside.

3. Place the butter into the mixing bowl and cream at medium speed until lightened in color (3 minutes). Add the sugar and continue to beat the mixture until the total elapsed mixing time is 6 – 10 minutes. (Stand mixers take less time than hand mixers). Feel the bowl while you are mixing. If it's not cool to the touch, then chill it in the freezer for 5 minutes before continuing creaming.

4. Beat in the oil and vanilla at medium speed.

5. Beat in the eggs one at a time at the lowest speed, or by hand. Mix as little as possible at this step – just get the eggs blended in.

6. Add half of the flour to the butter/sugar mixture and blend it in at low speed. Add half of the water, followed by the remaining flour, and then the remaining water, blending each in before adding the next.

7. Pour the batter into one 9" x 13" cake pan or two 9" cake pans. Be sure to grease and flour the pans first; or grease the pans and then line the bottoms of the pans with parchment paper. Drop the pan onto the counter from a height of 4" to remove any large air bubbles.
8. Place the cake in the oven on the stone and bake until the cake reaches an internal temperature of 209 degrees Fahrenheit. If you do not have a digital baking thermometer, the cake should spring back when touched and a toothpick inserted into the middle should come out clean, but moist. The cake should not pull away from the sides until after it is out of the oven.

Mary's Black Chocolate Layer Cake



This is a chocolate version of my Yellow Gold Layer Cake. The cocoa powder counts as a flour, so you'll see that the amounts of each of the other flours is reduced. A chocolate cake also needs extra sugar. Since sugar makes a cake less structured, I've used whole eggs instead of egg yolks. The egg whites in the whole eggs increase the structure of the cake.

This cake is delicious without icing. The pictures show the cake with a packaged German chocolate icing. Since we make several cakes for this class, I froze this Black Chocolate Layer Cake and then thawed it the next Saturday when we had company. It was even more delicious then!

Black Chocolate Layer Cake

3.6 oz.(2/3 c + 2 Tbsp.) brown rice flour
2.7 oz. (1/2 c. + 2 Tbsp) tapioca starch
2.7 oz. (1/2 c.) sorghum flour
2.5 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. xanthan gum

3.0 oz. (1 c.) cocoa powder (not Dutch process)
12.0 oz. (1 2/3 c.) granulated sugar
4.0 oz. (2/3 c.) brown sugar
6 oz. (3/4 c.) water
9.0 oz. (1 1/8 c.) oil
1 tsp. vanilla

6.0 oz eggs (3 large)
1/4 tsp. salt
4.0 oz (1/2 c.) water

1. Place an oven rack in the lower third of the oven. Place a baking stone on it and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Start by mixing the flour, xanthan gum and baking powder in a large mixing bowl. Whisk by hand with a fork for 1 minute or at medium speed on a hand mixer for 30 seconds. Set the flour aside.
3. Put the sugar and cocoa powder into a large mixing bowl. Heat 6 oz. of water (3/4 cup) to a simmer. Add the hot water to the sugar/cocoa mixture and mix to dissolve the sugar. Beat in the oil, vanilla, and salt at medium speed.

4. Add a third of the flour mixture to the sugar mixture. Mix at low speed just until incorporated and then add in remaining flour a third at a time. Total mixing time for this step should be approximately 5 minutes.
5. Add the last 4.0 oz of water and the eggs to the batter and mix until just combined.
6. Pour the batter into one 9" x 13" cake pan or two 9" cake pans. Be sure to grease and flour the pans first; or grease the pans and then line the bottoms of the pans with parchment paper. Drop the pan onto the counter from a height of 4" to remove any large air bubbles.
7. Place the cake in the oven on the stone and bake until the cake reaches an internal temperature of 209 degrees Fahrenheit (approximately 30 minutes). If you do not have a digital baking thermometer, the cake should spring back when touched and a toothpick inserted into the middle should come out clean, but moist. The cake should not pull away from the sides until after it is out of the oven.

Mary's Gluten Free Red Velvet Cake



1 c. (4.5 oz) brown rice flour
3/4 c. (3.5 oz) sorghum flour
3/4 c. (3.5 oz) tapioca starch
1/2 + 1/8 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. xanthan gum
1 1/2 c. (10.5 oz) sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
1 3/4 c. canola oil
2 eggs, large (4.0 oz)
1 c. buttermilk (or 1 Tbsp cider vinegar and 1 c. milk substitute)
1 tsp. vanilla
1 oz. red food coloring (*this is one of the McCormick's bottles*)
1 Tbsp. cocoa

Frosting Ingredients:

1 lb. confectioner's sugar
8 oz. cream cheese (can sub vegan cream cheese)
1 stick butter (*room temp*)
1 c. chopped nuts (*optional*)
1 tsp vanilla

Cake Instructions:

1. Place an oven rack in the lower third of the oven. Place a baking stone on it and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Start by mixing the flour, xanthan gum and baking powder in a large mixing bowl. Whisk by hand

with a fork for 1 minute or at medium speed on a hand mixer for 30 seconds. Set the flour aside.

3. Use a mixer to beat the oil and sugar. With the mixer still going, add one egg at a time and beat until the eggs are incorporated.

4. Add the flour to the oil and sugar mixture in four parts. Alternate the flour with the buttermilk. You should begin and end with dry ingredients and each part should be mixed in completely before you add the next. Total mixing time for this step should be approximately 5 minutes.

5. Make a paste of the cocoa, red food coloring, and vanilla and gently stir it into the batter.

6. Pour the batter into one 9" x 13" cake pan or two 9" cake pans. Be sure to grease and flour the pans first; or grease the pans and then line the bottoms of the pans with parchment paper. Drop the pan onto the counter from a height of 4" to remove any large air bubbles.

7. Place the cake in the oven on the stone and bake until the cake reaches an internal temperature of 209 degrees Fahrenheit (approximately 25 minutes). If you do not have a digital baking thermometer, the cake should spring back when touched and a toothpick inserted into the middle should come out clean, but moist. The cake should not pull away from the sides until after it is out of the oven.

8. Removed the cake from the pan(s) and let them completely cool on a cooling rack before icing.

Frosting Instructions:

1. Cream the confectioner's sugar, cream cheese, and butter.

2. Mix in the vanilla and chopped nuts.

3. Spread over cooled cake.

Troubleshooting: 10 Cake Baking Tips

I didn't realize how much of a science cake-baking is until I read the cake section of [BakeWise: The Hows and Whys of Successful Baking with Over 200 Magnificent Recipes](#) by Shirley Corriher. Here are a few tips that I picked up from that book that I've found particularly helpful or interesting. If you're interested in really delving into the hows and whys of baking, then I highly recommend her books. It's written assuming that you use wheat flours, but much of the content is still applicable.

1. Most cake recipes have you add flavorings, such as vanilla extract, at the very end of the mixing process. A better technique is to add the flavoring to the fat component of the recipes. Fat carries flavors easily, so if the flavoring is in the fat it will be better distributed through the batter.
2. When you're baking it's important to get the leavening agents, e.g. baking soda and baking powder, mixed evenly throughout the batter. One technique that is often used to do that is sifting. Corriher found that sifting actually did a rather bad job of evenly mixing the dry ingredients. Instead, mix the flour and leavening ingredients with a fork or hand mixer for 1 minute.
3. Cakes can be made with butter, shortening, or oil. Each of the fats has its pros and cons. Oil does a better job than the other fats of coating each grain of flour. Corriher states that this characteristic produces a moister cake because it greases the flour proteins, preventing gluten from forming and tying up water.

We don't really care about that, but I've found that using oil gets rid of the graininess that is sometimes a problem with gluten free flours. When I made the yellow cake with butter it had a grainy texture. When I replaced the butter with oil, the graininess completely disappeared.

4. A cake is done when it reaches an internal temperature of 209 degrees F. I tested a new cake recipes this weekend and wasn't sure how long it needed to bake. Knowing that the cake was done when it reached a certain temperature took all of the guesswork out of the process.
5. To keep a cake from sticking to the pan, line the bottom of the pan with parchment paper. For years I dismissed parchment paper as needlessly frou-frou. Now that I've used it, I'm in love. Parchment paper always be in your kitchen, just like plastic wrap and aluminum foil.

To line a cake pan, lay the parchment paper on the counter and place the cake pan on top. Trace the outline of the cake pan and then cut it out, cutting to the inside of the drawn line. Place the cut-out parchment paper in your cake pan and pour the batter on top.

6. Did you know there was a general rule for how much baking powder and baking soda to include in a cake? If you include too much of either then the cake may rise too quickly and fall, creating a dense heavy mess. Or you may have a soapy aftertaste from too much baking soda.

For cake recipes, 1 tsp. of baking powder leavens 1 c. of flour. Baking soda is 4 times as strong as baking powder, so 1/4 tsp. of baking soda will leaven 1 c. of flour. Corriher mentions that you can look through "good" cookbooks and find plenty of cake recipes that are overleavened. I flipped through a few this weekend and she was right!

7. Egg whites help create the structure of the cake, but they are also very drying. If your cake recipe is too dry, you can replace some of the whole eggs with an equal weight of egg yolks. Increasing the sugar also makes for a moister cake. The amount of sugar by weight should equal or exceed the weight of the flour.

8. If you are making a chocolate cake then you can increase the chocolateness by pouring a small amount of hot water over the cocoa. For a fudgy flavor, replace part of the granulated sugar in the recipe with brown sugar.

9. The size and type of the baking pan is important. A cake that falls badly in a loaf pan may do just fine in a Bundt pan which allows more heat to reach the center of a cake. Dark metal pans retain more heat than glass pans or light colored metal pans. Different sizes of pans require different cooking times and different amounts of leavening in the cake. Be sure to use the same size and type of pan as specified in the recipe.

10. Cakes should generally be baked at 350 degrees. This temperature keeps the sides of the pan from setting too soon, which would result in an uneven layer, but lets the top set before all of the leavening escapes.