

german chocolate cake

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German Chocolate Cake

Not German. Named for Samuel German, an English-American chocolate maker who in 1852 developed a sweet dark baking bar for the Baker's company; a Texas newspaper printed a reader's recipe for "German's chocolate cake" in 1957 and the possessive fell off. The identity is not the cake but the filling: coconut and pecan cooked into an egg custard.

What makes it work

- **Sweet baking chocolate, melted, not cocoa powder.** The original bar is about 45% sugar, so the cake batter carries less sugar than it looks like it should. Substituting cocoa changes the cake into something else.
- **Whipped egg whites folded in.** This is an old-fashioned cake with a foam component; it is lighter than [devils food cake](#) and deliberately so.
- **The filling is a stirred custard and it will curdle if rushed.** Egg yolks, evaporated milk, sugar and butter cooked over medium heat, stirring constantly, for about 12 minutes until it coats a spoon.
- **Toast the pecans and the coconut.** Both go into the custard at the end, off the heat.
- **Filling between layers and on top, never the sides.** That is the traditional presentation, and it exists because the custard is too loose to hold a vertical face.

Ingredients

Three 20 cm layers. Serves 14.

Cake:

- 115 g sweet dark baking chocolate — see [Chocolates](#)
- 120 ml boiling water
- 225 g unsalted butter, softened
- 400 g granulated sugar
- 4 [eggs](#), separated
- 280 g cake flour
- 5 g baking soda
- 4 g fine salt
- 240 ml buttermilk — see [buttermilk recipes](#)
- 1 tsp vanilla — see [Pure vanilla extract](#)

Coconut-pecan filling:

- 4 egg yolks
- 360 ml evaporated [milk](#)
- 300 g granulated sugar
- 170 g unsalted butter
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 200 g desiccated [coconut](#), toasted
- 200 g pecans, toasted and chopped

Method

Melt the chocolate in the boiling water and cool.

Heat the oven to **175 °C / 350 °F**. Butter and line three tins.

Cream the butter and sugar four minutes, beat in the yolks one at a time, then the melted chocolate and vanilla.

Alternate the flour, soda and salt with the buttermilk in three additions.

Whip the whites to soft peaks and fold them in in two additions.

Divide and bake **24–28 minutes**. Cool completely.

For the filling, whisk the yolks and evaporated milk, add the sugar and butter, and cook over medium heat, stirring without stopping, until thickened — about 12 minutes. Off the heat, stir in the vanilla, coconut and pecans. Cool to spreadable, about an hour.

Stack with filling between the layers and on top. Leave the sides bare.

Notes

- **The custard will not thicken past a point** if the heat is too low, and will scramble if it is too high. Medium, moving, and take it to 80 °C if you have a thermometer.
- Chocolate frosting on the sides is a common modern addition and is not traditional.
- **Keeps three days** covered at room temperature; the filling contains egg and should be refrigerated past that.

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