

sour cream coffee cake

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Sour Cream Coffee Cake

A cake to eat with coffee, not a cake made of it. The American coffee cake is a sour-cream butter cake with a cinnamon-nut streusel swirled through the middle and scattered on top, usually baked in a tube or square tin, and it descends directly from the German *Kaffeeuchen* that arrived in the Midwest and Pennsylvania in the nineteenth century.

The rye version already in the vault, [rye chocolate coffee cake](#), is the same idea run through a different flour.

What makes it work

- **Sour cream is acid and fat at once.** The acid tenderises and reacts with the soda; the fat keeps the crumb moist for days. Full-fat only — low-fat sour cream is mostly water and thickener.
- **Two-thirds of the streusel goes inside.** A middle ribbon is what makes it a coffee cake rather than a crumb-topped one, and the internal layer must be dry enough not to make a wet seam — that is why there is flour and butter in it, not just sugar and cinnamon.
- **Do not swirl.** Layer the batter, streusel, batter. A swirled knife drags the ribbon into streaks and it disappears.
- **A stiff batter holds the ribbon up.** This batter should mound on the spoon; a loose one lets the streusel sink to the bottom.

Ingredients

One 25 cm tube pan or 23 cm square. Serves 12.

Streusel:

- 150 g light brown sugar
- 100 g all-purpose flour
- 12 g ground [cinnamon](#)
- 85 g unsalted butter, cold and cubed
- 150 g pecans or [walnuts](#), chopped
- 2 g fine salt

Cake:

- 225 g unsalted butter, softened
- 300 g granulated sugar
- 3 [eggs](#)
- 350 g all-purpose flour
- 5 g baking powder
- 5 g baking soda
- 4 g fine salt
- 350 g full-fat sour cream
- 2 tsp vanilla — see [Pure vanilla extract](#)

Method

Heat the oven to **175 °C / 350 °F**. Butter and flour the tin thoroughly.

Rub the streusel ingredients together to coarse clumps and stir in the nuts.

Cream the butter and sugar four minutes, beat in the eggs one at a time, then the vanilla. Alternate the flour, powder, soda and salt with the sour cream in three additions. The batter is thick.

Spread half the batter in the tin. Scatter two-thirds of the streusel evenly. Spoon the rest of the batter over in dollops and spread carefully. Top with the remaining streusel.

Bake **50–60 minutes**, until a skewer comes out clean. Cool 20 minutes in the tin before turning out, or serve straight from a square tin.

Notes

- **Blueberries, sliced apple or rhubarb** can go into the middle layer with the streusel; add 20 g of flour to the fruit so it does not wet the seam. See [apple](#) and [Rhubarb](#).
- A powdered sugar glaze over the top is standard in American bakeries and optional everywhere else.
- **Keeps four days** covered, and the sour cream means day three is still good.

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