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What is German Chocolate Cake?

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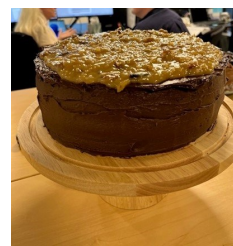
What is German Chocolate Cake?

For the TJCAA holiday gathering, we were treated to a bake off between two staff members. The contestants chose a German Chocolate Cake, and it was difficult to choose a winner. Alec MacLean, our featured employee, was one of the bakers and provided us with background information on the origin of the cake. Here is a summary of his findings.

The name "German chocolate cake" is a bit misleading, as it is not actually a German dessert. The cake's name stems from American baker Samuel German, who created a sweet baking chocolate for the Baker's Chocolate Company in 1852. In 1957, The Dallas Morning News published a recipe for "German's Chocolate Cake," credited to Dallas resident Mrs. George Clay. She named the cake after Samuel German because she used his sweet baking chocolate, and the recipe quickly gained popularity. As other publications shared it, the apostrophe 's' was dropped, leading to confusion about its country of origin. The misconception that the cake is German became so widespread that, in 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson served it to German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard at a luncheon, as reported by The Dallas Morning News. While most modern recipes no longer use sweet

baking chocolate, like Mrs. Clay's original, this version still incorporates buttermilk to create a more tender crumb. Traditionally, the cake is light in color with a mild chocolate flavor, and it is typically topped with coconut-pecan frosting. In this version, coconut frosting is used only on top and in the center, but if you're not a fan of coconut, you can easily skip it and still enjoy a delicious chocolate cake.

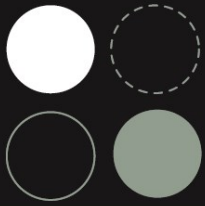
Alec was inspired by a recipe from [Homemade German Chocolate Cake - Tastes Better From Scratch](#) and his version, captured in pictures and his own descriptive instructions can be found below.



It took Alec approximately 30 minutes to prep and an additional 45 minutes to bake.

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Ingredients:

For the Chocolate Cake:

2 cups granulated sugar
1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
2 large eggs
1 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup oil (vegetable or canola oil)
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup boiling water

For the Coconut Frosting:

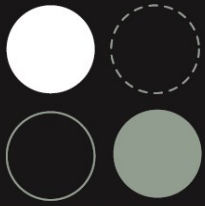
1/2 cup light brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup butter
3 large egg yolks
3/4 cup evaporated milk
1 Tablespoon vanilla extract
1 cup chopped pecans
1 cup shredded sweetened coconut

For the Chocolate Frosting:

1/2 cup butter
2/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
3 cups powdered sugar
1/3 cup evaporated milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

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Instructions:

Preheat your oven to 375°F and grease two 8 or 9-inch round baking pans. To make things easier, cut out a round piece of wax or parchment paper to line the bottom of each pan, ensuring the cake comes out smoothly.

For the Cake:

In a large bowl, combine sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. In another bowl, whisk together the eggs, buttermilk, oil, and vanilla until well mixed. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry mixture and stir until combined. Carefully add boiling water (batter will be thin consistency) and pour the mixture into the pans.

Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, depending on your pan size (the 9-inch pan will bake faster). The cake is done when a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean or with a few crumbs. Let it cool in the pans for 5 minutes before transferring onto wire racks to cool completely.

For the German Chocolate Coconut Frosting:

In a medium saucepan, combine brown sugar, granulated sugar, butter, egg yolks, and evaporated milk. Stir well and heat over medium heat until it reaches a low boil. Keep stirring for

several minutes until the mixture thickens.

Remove from heat and mix in vanilla, nuts, and coconut. Allow the frosting to cool completely before layering it on the cake.

For the Chocolate Buttercream Frosting:

Melt the butter and stir in cocoa powder. Gradually add powdered sugar and milk, beating until you see a spreading consistency. If needed, add a little more milk to thin the frosting or extra powdered sugar to thicken it, until you reach your preferred texture. Stir in vanilla.

Cake Assembly:

Position one cake layer on your serving plate. Spread a thin layer of chocolate frosting over the top, then spoon half of the coconut frosting on top, smoothing it out while leaving about 1/2 inch from the edge.

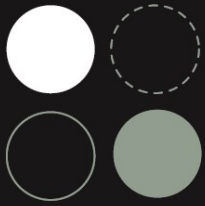
Place the second cake layer on top and frost the entire cake with chocolate frosting. Add the remaining coconut frosting on top.

Notes:

For high-altitude baking, add an extra 3 tablespoons of flour.

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Make Ahead Instructions:

Both frostings can be prepared in advance and stored in a covered container in the refrigerator. The coconut frosting will last for about 1-2 weeks, while the chocolate frosting will keep for 2-3 weeks. Be sure to take them out of the fridge an hour before frosting the cake to allow them to reach room temperature.

Freezing Instructions:

After baking, let the cake layers cool completely, then wrap each layer tightly in plastic wrap and place them in Ziplock freezer bags. You can freeze the layers for up to three months. Frost the cakes while they are still frozen for easier handling! The fully assembled German Chocolate Cake can also be frozen for 2-3 months (for best results, slice the cake and wrap each piece in plastic wrap before placing it in a freezer-safe container). Allow the cake to come to room temperature before serving.

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