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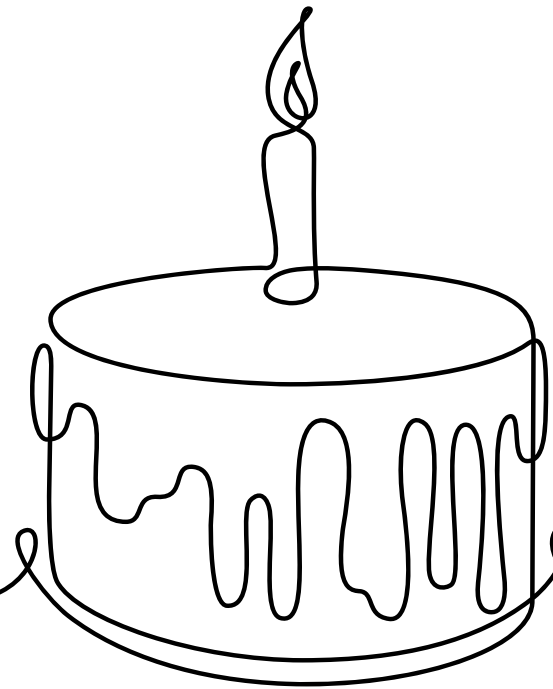
Pumpkins

Winter Hard Squash

Winter Greens

Root Vegetables

HOW TO  
PRESENTED BY THE JOHN C. CAMPBELL FOLK SCHOOL



The Best  
Chocolate Cake Ever

A baking instructor at the John C. Campbell Folk School shares her secrets for the best chocolate cake she's ever created ... and no one will know it's vegan.

**R**uth Drennan is a North Carolina luxury cake designer and a baking instructor at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown. So when she said she had a recipe for the “best chocolate cake ever,” we were inclined to believe her. And when she said it was a vegan recipe to boot, we knew we had to share the recipe.

Drennan developed the dairy-free cake recipe after being contacted by a vegan bride-to-be who needed a wedding cake that would wow her guests—but she steered clear of eggs, butter, milk and all other animal products.

“My husband and I are the guinea pigs for my recipes and I’m really critical of things,” Drennan says. “After small modifications, I thought this was a really great recipe.”

Since then, Drennan has made the cake for several more weddings, replacing the standard American buttercream frosting with a frosting that uses vegan butter and oat milk. For more casual events, she’ll bake it as a Bundt cake and sprinkle it with powdered sugar.

“It’s super moist and flavorful—and you don’t need a mixer or any esoteric ingredients,” she says. “Seriously, no one will know it’s vegan unless you tell them.”



## The Best Chocolate Cake Ever

Prep time: 15 minutes  
 Baking time: 35–45 minutes  
 Servings: 12

*I like to serve this as a Bundt cake, but you can also use two 8- or 9-inch round pans (bake 30 minutes), a 9- by 13-inch pan (bake 35–40 minutes), or two 12-cavity cupcake pans (bake 20–25 minutes) and decorate as desired.*

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder\*
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon instant espresso powder\*\*
- 1 cup dairy-free buttermilk (1 tablespoon vinegar or lemon juice plus oat milk\*\*\*)
- 2 flax eggs (2 tablespoons ground flaxseed meal\*\*\*\* plus 6 tablespoons hot water)
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup boiling hot water

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Prepare large Bundt pan or other fluted pan by spraying with nonstick spray or thoroughly brushing pans with vegetable

oil. “Flour” the pan with cocoa—not with flour—and shake out excess. Make sure that all surfaces are greased!

Sift flour and cocoa powder into a large mixing bowl; add sugar, baking soda, baking powder, salt and espresso powder. Whisk together.

Prepare your dairy-free buttermilk by adding 1 tablespoon vinegar, apple cider vinegar or lemon juice to your liquid measuring cup and then adding oat milk to bring the amount to 1 cup total. Set aside for 5–10 minutes to curdle.

Prepare the flax eggs by adding 2 tablespoons of ground flaxseed to a bowl and adding 6 tablespoons hot water. Stir it together and let sit for 5 minutes to thicken and become a bit gloopy.

Add the buttermilk, flax eggs, oil and vanilla extract to the bowl with the dry ingredients and stir into a thick batter. Add boiling water to the bowl and whisk it into the batter with a hand whisk. Batter will be thin and a bit runny.

Add batter to the prepared pan and bake for about 35–40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the cake comes out clean.

Let the cake cool in the pan for about 10–15 minutes before removing to a wire cooling rack to cool completely.

Transfer to a plate. Sprinkle cake with powdered sugar and serve.

Cake can be stored covered at room temperature for 3–4 days, in the fridge up to a week, or in the freezer up to 3 months.

### NOTES

\*If you want to make a darker chocolate cake, use ½ cup cocoa plus ¼ cup black cocoa, available from kingarthurbaking.com or on Amazon.

\*\*I use King Arthur brand instant espresso powder purchased from my local supermarket. If it’s not available at your market, you can get it from the King Arthur website

or substitute any instant espresso coffee like Ferrara Instant Espresso Coffee.

\*\*\*I like to use Califia Extra Creamy Oat Milk, which is found with the other plant-based milks in the refrigerated milk section of the supermarket. If you can’t find it, or if you would prefer another kind of nondairy milk, you can use coconut, almond or soy milk—just make sure to get the unsweetened variety from the refrigerated section and not the boxes from the regular shelves.

To make buttermilk, add 1 tablespoon of vinegar, apple cider vinegar or lemon juice to a liquid measuring cup and then add nondairy milk to the cup to measure 1 cup total. Set aside for 5 minutes to curdle (though it may not look very chunky).

\*\*\*\* I use Bob’s Red Mill Ground Flaxseed. You can find this in almost any supermarket or on Amazon.

To make 2 flax eggs, combine 2 tablespoons ground flax with 6 tablespoons hot water in a bowl. Stir and set aside for 5 minutes to thicken.

### John C. Campbell Folk School

Located on a beautiful 270-acre mountain campus in Brasstown, NC, about two hours west of Asheville, the John C. Campbell Folk School offers weeklong and weekend-long courses on hundreds of subjects—from cooking and pottery to printmaking and jewelry design—encouraging students in a relaxed environment to continue learning new skills and hobbies that make life rewarding. Meals and lodging are included, and students can enjoy tours, concerts and performances in their down time.

Cake designer Ruth Drennan will be teaching two courses at the John C. Campbell Folk School in coming months: “Cake Like a Boss” in February and “Fabulous Fruit Desserts” in May.

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