

STOVETOP CHOCOLATE CAKE

Steaming a standard chocolate cake batter produces a light, moist cake, and lets us avoid having to turn on the oven. To elevate the cake above the water that steams it, we fashion a ring from foil. Brown sugar and espresso powder give the cake complexity, while sour cream adds richness and a welcome tang. If your Dutch oven has a self-basting lid—bumps or spikes on the underside—lay a sheet of foil across the top of the pot before putting the lid in place to prevent water from dripping onto the surface. We like serving this cake dusted with powdered sugar or topped with whipped cream.

Start to finish: 35 minutes (10 minutes active), plus cooling

Servings: 8

130 grams (1 cup) all-purpose flour
28 grams (1/3 cup) cocoa powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon table salt
218 grams (1 cup) packed light brown sugar
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon instant espresso powder
120 grams (½ cup) sour cream
85 grams (6 tablespoons) salted butter, melted and cooled slightly
1½ teaspoons vanilla extract

Don't open the Dutch oven too often while steaming, but do ensure that the water is at a very gentle simmer. You should see steam emerging from the pot. If the heat is too high, the water will boil away before the cake is cooked.

Cut an 18-inch length of foil and gently scrunch together to form a snake about 1 inch thick. Shape into a ring and set it in a large Dutch oven. Add enough water to reach three-quarters up the coil. Mist the bottom and sides of a 9-inch round cake pan with cooking spray, line the bottom with a round of kitchen parchment and mist the parchment. Place the pan in the pot on top of the foil ring.

Sift the flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt into a medium bowl. In a large bowl, whisk the sugar and eggs until slightly lightened, about 30 seconds. Whisk in ½ cup water, the espresso powder, sour cream, butter and vanilla. Add the flour mixture and whisk gently until just combined.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Cover the pot and heat on high until the water boils. Reduce to low and steam, covered, until the center of the cake is just firm to the touch, about 23 minutes.

Turn off the heat and remove the lid. Let stand until the cake pan is cool enough to handle. Transfer the pan to a wire rack, then run a paring knife around the edge of the cake to loosen. Let cool completely.

Invert the cake directly onto the rack, lift off the pan and remove and peel off the parchment. Re-invert onto a platter.

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