

Carrot Snack Cake

YIELD Serves 12 to 16

TIME 1½ hours, plus 3 hours cooling

Why This Recipe Works

We wanted an incredibly tasty carrot cake that was easier, faster, and more moist than ever. To that end, we skipped the stacking of layers and fiddling with piping bags and opted to make an easy-to-prepare sheet cake in a 13 by 9-inch baking pan. Shredding the carrots and making the cream cheese frosting in a food processor made quick work of these otherwise tedious steps. A couple of easy but uncommon techniques ensured an ultramoist and superflavorful cake. First, we plumped and softened golden raisins in fragrant orange juice before stirring them into the batter. Then, we soaked the still-hot, just-baked cake in a stir-together buttermilk syrup, both moistening the cake and layering in brightness that balanced the sweetness of the cake while enhancing the tanginess of the cream cheese frosting.



Gather Your Ingredients

Cake

- 1 cup golden raisins
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 2 ½ cups (12½ ounces/354 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¾ teaspoon table salt
- 1 ½ cups packed (10½ ounces/298 grams) light brown sugar
- 1 ¼ cups vegetable oil
- 4 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 pound (454 grams) carrots, peeled and shredded (3 cups)
- 1 cup (4 ounces/113 grams) confectioners' sugar

Before You Begin

- * Shred the carrots in a food processor fitted with the shredding disk or on the large holes of a box grater. One pound of carrots is about six medium carrots and will yield about 12 ounces of shredded carrots after peeling and trimming.

Instructions

⅔ cup buttermilk

Frosting

12 ounces (340 grams) cream cheese, softened

2 cups (8 ounces/227 grams) confectioners' sugar

8 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

⅛ teaspoon table salt

1 cup pecans, toasted and chopped

- 1. FOR THE CAKE:** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Spray 13 by 9-inch baking pan with vegetable oil spray. Combine raisins and orange juice in small bowl. Microwave, covered, until hot, about 1 minute. Let stand, covered, until raisins are soft, about 5 minutes.
2. Whisk flour, pumpkin pie spice, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in medium bowl; set aside. Whisk brown sugar, oil, eggs, and vanilla in large bowl until smooth; stir in carrots and raisin mixture. Stir in flour mixture with rubber spatula until just combined.
3. Transfer batter to prepared pan and smooth top with rubber spatula. Bake until toothpick inserted in center of cake comes out clean, 33 to 38 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking. Transfer pan to wire rack.
4. Immediately whisk confectioners' sugar and buttermilk together until smooth. Brush buttermilk syrup evenly over entire surface of hot cake (use all of syrup). Let cake cool completely in pan on wire rack, about 3 hours.
5. For the frosting: Process cream cheese, sugar, butter, vanilla, and salt in food processor until smooth, about 30 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl with rubber spatula as needed.
6. Spread frosting evenly over surface of cake, leaving ½-inch border. Sprinkle frosting evenly with pecans. Serve.

TO MAKE AHEAD: Frosted cake can be covered with plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 2 days.