

# Nan's Chocolate Cake with Richmond Frosting

Serves 8-12 | 20 minutes prep + 40 minutes cook time

My mother Nan made this chocolate sheet cake for every birthday over a couple of generations in our family. Her old handwritten recipe calls it sour cream chocolate cake, but it's basically a version of Texas sheet cake, a fluffy, moist cake that's made using the classic boiling water technique. Cocoa powder blooms in the heat, and the leavening power of the baking powder gets a boost. Boiling water chocolate cakes stay moist longer, and any leftovers are good for days.

The frosting is a mystery. While you can find lots of recipes for Richmond frosting, none offer any explanation for the name. I've seen it in Amish cookbooks and some speculate that it may be a relic from wartime when sugar, especially the powdered sugar typically used for cake frosting, was in short supply. Maybe a cook in Virginia popularized the shiny dark frosting that also uses a boiling water technique. It doesn't really matter; what does is that it's delicious and, since it's pourable while warm, the frosting self-levels after it's scraped out of the saucepan onto the sheet cake.

We always leave the cake in the pan, typically Nan's well-used, slightly dented aluminum 9 by 13 inch cake pan. The fluffy cake with the soft, dense frosting is intensely rich, so at our house we won't eat it without a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

## For the Cake:

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups AP flour
- ½ teaspoon kosher sea salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup butter
- 3 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1 cup water
- ½ cup plain, full-fat Greek-style yogurt or sour cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 eggs

## For Richmond Frost:

- 1½ cups sugar
- 4½ tablespoons cornstarch
- ⅛ teaspoon (a pinch) salt
- 1½ cups water
- 3 oz unsweetened chocolate
- 4½ tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

**The Cake Step 1** Heat your oven to 350F. Mix the sugar, flour, salt, and baking soda in a large bowl.

**Step 2** In a small saucepan, bring the butter, water, and cocoa powder to a boil. Stir well, remove from the heat and let cool. Combine with the flour mixture.

**Step 3** In a separate bowl, combine the sour cream, vanilla, and eggs. Stir into flour mixture.

**Step 4** Pour the batter into a buttered & floured 9 inch by 13 inch cake pan. Bake at 350F for 20-30 min or until a toothpick inserted into the cake comes out clean. Let the cake cool in the pan for 15-20 minutes.

**Richmond Frosting Step 1** Mix together the sugar, cornstarch, and salt in a small bowl.

**Step 2** In a small saucepan, heat the water and chocolate, stirring constantly until the chocolate is melted.

**Step 3** Add the sugar and cornstarch mix and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and stir in the butter and vanilla. Let cool for 10 minutes, then gently pour over the cake. Cool for at least an hour before serving.