

“They Say It's Your Birthday”

Written by Debbi Covington

Tuesday, 06 May 2014 13:03 - Last Updated Wednesday, 21 May 2014 06:07



One of the advantages of having a lot of friends is celebrating a lot of birthdays! The past couple of months have been a whirlwind of birthday soirees – many of them commemorated at one of our favorite local hot spots, The Old Bull Tavern on West Street. As is custom with the best of friendships, someone unfailingly volunteers to bring a home-baked birthday cake.

The sweet confections are not always beautiful, but they're always delicious. That's one of the serendipities of desserts baked with love. So far this season, we've been fortunate to sample assorted chocolate cakes and several strawberry cakes made with fresh berries from Dempsey's Farm. I've even baked a couple of cakes for the festivities. This week's recipes are some of my offerings. I'm giving away my secret; they all use boxed cake mixes. What makes them extra-special is the yummy frostings and fillings that are actually a cinch to prepare. Try one of these show-stoppers at your next birthday party – and you can just keep that boxed cake mix thing under your hat....

Chocolate Ganache Birthday Cake (Above: with Dusty Conner, Mary Ellen Thompson and Brad Ballington)

Absolutely the best chocolate cake I've ever eaten! Don't let the whipped ganache intimidate you. It's actually very easy to make.

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For the frosting:

2 cups heavy whipping cream

1 (12-ounce) package semi-sweet chocolate chips

For the cake:

1 (15.25-ounce) chocolate cake mix

Eggs, water and vegetable oil, according to package directions

Heat whipping cream in a microwave-safe bowl until cream begins to steam but not boil. Stir in chocolate chips until chips are melted and mixture is well combined. Place bowl in refrigerator for 2 hours. In the meantime, prepare cake mix according to package directions, making two 8-inch layers. Cool cakes on a wire racks. When completely cool, split both layers making 4 cake rounds. Remove ganache from the refrigerator and beat with an electric mixer until frosting is light and fluffy. Spread on cooled cake. Refrigerate cake until ready to serve. Serves 12.

Chocolate Tunnel Cake with Raspberries

This cake is filled with a tunnel of sweetened cream cheese. What a fun idea for a birthday cake! Simple to prepare, too!



For the cake:

1 (15.25-ounce) package dark chocolate cake mix

Eggs, water and vegetable oil, according to package directions

For the filling:

2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, at room temperature

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½ cup sugar

2 eggs

For the chocolate glaze:

1 cup heavy whipping cream

1 cup semi-sweet chocolate morsels

Garnish:

12 ounces fresh raspberries

(David Anderson, left, on his birthday.)

Grease and flour a Bundt cake pan. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a mixing bowl, prepare cake mix according to package directions. In a separate mixing bowl, combine cream cheese, sugar, jam and eggs; mix until smooth. Pour cake batter evenly into prepared pan, reserving 1½ cups of the batter. Spoon cream cheese mixture over center of cake batter. Spoon reserved batter over cream cheese mixture; covering completely. Bake cake in preheated oven for 50 to 60 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in center of cake comes out clean. Cool cake in pan on a wire rack for 30 minutes; then remove from pan and place on a wire rack until completely cooled. Heat whipping cream in a small saucepan over medium-low heat just until cream begins to steam. Remove from heat and whisk in chocolate, stirring until chocolate is completely melted and mixture is dark. Refrigerate for 15 minutes. Place cake on a cake stand or platter and drizzle with chocolate mixture. Chill in refrigerator until ready to serve. Fill the center of the cake with fresh raspberries and garnish with fresh raspberries just before serving. Serves 12.

Devil's Food Cake with Seven Minute Frosting

My husband, Vince, asks for this cake every year for his birthday. The trick is to make the icing on a clear day. If it's raining or there's too much moisture in the air, the icing will weep.



For the cake:

1 (15.25-ounce) package devil's food cake mix

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Eggs, water and vegetable oil, according to package directions

For the frosting:

1½ cups sugar

½ cup cold water

2 egg whites

2 teaspoons light corn syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla

(Debbi and Vince, on his birthday)

Prepare cake mix according to package directions, making two 8-inch layers. Cool cakes completely on a wire racks. In the top of a double boiler, combine sugar, water, egg whites and light corn syrup. Beat with an electric mixer on low speed for 20 seconds. Place over boiling water (upper pan should not touch water). Cook, beating constantly with the electric mixer on high speed, about 7 minutes or until the frosting forms stiff peaks. Remove from the heat; add vanilla. Beat 2 minutes more. Frost tops and sides of two cake layers. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Serves 12.

The writer owns Catering by Debbi Covington and is the author of two cookbooks, Gold Medal



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