

A SUGAR SHAKE Recipe

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Chocolate Bourbon Smoked-Tea Layer Cake

Adapted from [Jane Kirby, Real Simple March 2003](#)

You can use any bourbon you like. I usually bake with Maker's Mark because it's good quality (like wine, use something that you enjoy so your dessert doesn't taste crappy, but not so good that its nuances are covered up and wasted), but not terribly expensive. Use something with a nice flavor and not too much of a burn because the alcohol in the ganache and poured on the cake layers does not bake off.

- 2 tablespoons loose Lapsang Souchong tea
- ½ cup hot water
- ½ cup bourbon
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter
- 3 eggs
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 5 ounces unsweetened (baker's) chocolate, melted and cooled
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon [Maui Preserved Vanilla Powder](#) (or seeds from ½ vanilla bean)
- ¼ teaspoon kiawe-smoked salt (I used [Hawaiian Volcano Sea Salt](#); you can use any smoked-salt, too)
- ½ cup plain yogurt (if you can't find regular, Greek-style is perfectly fine)
- 2 ounces bourbon (for soaking cake layers)
- confectioner's (powdered) sugar (for decorating)

Special equipment: quarter-sheet pan; 6" round cake pan; acetate strip (see my [Momofuku Layer Cake](#) post for more details on these items)

Pre-heat oven to 350°. Spray sheet pan with cooking spray and line with parchment. Be sure to get the sides thoroughly coated with spray. (Please ignore the fact that in the photo the parchment extends up the sides—I was lazy and didn't trim it, and this did not do my cake any favors.)

Brew tea in water and bourbon for about 5 minutes. Strain out the tea leaves and set aside to cool.

In a stand mixer, beat butter, eggs and sugar thoroughly. While the mixer is running, combine dry ingredients (flour, baking soda, baking powder, vanilla powder, salt—if you are using vanilla seeds from a bean, add them to the batter in the next step) in a separate bowl and stir with a whisk to combine.

Add melted chocolate to the mixer and beat in. (Add vanilla seeds if using instead of vanilla powder.) Add dry ingredients in two batches, mixing in between additions. Add yogurt, and when mixed in, stream tea in slowly to avoid splashing. The batter will be very runny and loose.

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Pour into prepared quarter-sheet pan. Tap pan against counter to even out and remove air bubbles. Bake for 30 – 40 minutes at 350°. After 30 minutes, check doneness with a toothpick. (You should also be able to tell by eye whether the cake is still wet in the center.) Try to remove the cake from the oven before the top dries out too much and develops too many cracks; just be sure it's baked all the way through. The top of the cake will be puffed up slightly and will appear a lighter brown than the inside. Cool on a wire rack.

[For the Chocolate Bourbon Ganache](#)

- 5 ounces unsweetened (baker's) chocolate
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons bourbon

Combine chocolate and cream in a small saucepan. Heat on low until chocolate begins to melt. Remove from heat and continue stirring until chocolate and cream are blended together and smooth and satiny in consistency. Add bourbon and stir again. Set aside to cool and thicken. This may take a while. (I have been known to transfer the mix to a glass bowl, cover with plastic wrap and stash in the freezer for 15 minutes to hurry the process along. You'll need to stir thoroughly again after removing from the chill, if you do this.) The mixture should be peanut butter-like in consistency; spreadable, but not runny. If it refuses to thicken, try the freezer. If it is too thick (and you haven't chilled it), add a tiny bit of hot cream and stir.

[To Assemble the Cake](#)

Carefully turn the cake out of the sheet pan onto a cutting board and peel off the parchment paper. The “bottom” of the cake is now the top (which only matters for the very top layer)—it's a nice, dark brown color as opposed to the drier, possibly cracked, paler brown “top” side of the cake. Using the bottom of your cake pan as a guide (or if you have a pan with sharp edges, you can use it like a cookie cutter), cut out two 6” rounds, and two approximate halves to make a third layer (this will be the bottom layer; you'll probably end up with a gap in the center of the layer, which should then be stuffed with cake trimmings to make a solid layer. Avoid the crunchy hard edges. Set aside the nice circles and pack the partial circles and trimmings into the bottom of the cake pan for the first layer.

Pour one ounce of bourbon over the layer. Allow to soak in (it shouldn't take very long). Spread half the ganache evenly over the layer, edge to edge. Top with the less-nice of your two remaining layers. Use a “collar” of acetate to create a taller cake ring, tucking it along the inside of the cake pan at this point.

Repeat the one-ounce bourbon dousing and ganache layer process. Top with the final (nicest) cake layer. This layer does not get a dousing of bourbon. Don't forget to arrange this layer so the flat, darker brown side faces up.

Wrap cake (including the cake pan) in plastic wrap and foil and freeze overnight to set the layers. Defrost in the refrigerator before serving. Decorate the top of your cake with a dusting of powdered sugar immediately before serving.