# South Carolina Living

## Sweet stuff

**Celebrate the holidays with Chef Belinda's new cookbook**

NOV/DEC 2021

# A TASTE OF *Southern* SUGAR

BY BELINDA SMITH-SULLIVAN
RECIPE PHOTOS BY KATE BLOHM

**N**ever one to sit still, *South Carolina Living* recipe columnist Chef Belinda Smith-Sullivan has completed her third cookbook in as many years—*Southern Sugar*, a celebration of just desserts.

Enjoy the following recipes and photos from the book, provided courtesy of Chef Belinda and her publisher, Gibbs Smith. For more details, visit gibbs-smith.com. And turn to Page 16 for a sweet chance to win an autographed copy.

ALEXANDER FOX

## TEXAS SHEET CAKE

MAKES 16 TO 20 SERVINGS

*This cake is like Texas—BIG! A perfect dessert for a church function, picnic, family reunion, child's birthday party or office party, this easy-to-prepare cake is a "must-have" in your recipe box. It's almost like a brownie, but less dense and extremely moist, and the addition of espresso powder enhances the flavor of the chocolate. Pecans or not—your choice. Serve by itself or topped with ice cream, whipped cream, fruit or a combination of the three. This is just plain down-home goodness!*

**CAKE**
- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup water
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon instant espresso powder (optional)
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- ½ cup sour cream, room temperature
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

**FROSTING**
- ½ cup unsalted butter
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 6 tablespoons sour cream or whole milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3½ cups confectioners' sugar, sifted to remove lumps
- 1 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray a half-sheet pan (12 x 18 inches) with nonstick spray. In a medium saucepan, combine butter, water and cocoa over medium-high heat and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, salt, baking soda and espresso powder. In a medium bowl, combine eggs, sour cream and vanilla, and stir into dry ingredients. Stir in chocolate mixture and completely combine. Spread into prepared pan and bake 18–20 minutes until a cake tester comes out clean. Remove from oven and set aside.

For the frosting, in a medium saucepan, add butter and cocoa and cook over medium heat, stirring, until it comes to a boil. Remove from heat and add sour cream and vanilla. Whisk in confectioners' sugar until smooth. Pour and spread hot mixture over warm cake. Sprinkle chopped nuts over hot frosting.

## MISSISSIPPI MUD CAKE

MAKES 12 SERVINGS

*This dense chocolate cake, smothered in marshmallows, chocolate ganache and nuts, is said to resemble the thick mud found along the banks of the Mississippi River.*

### CAKE

- 1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- ⅓ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 cup hot water
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon espresso powder
- ½ cup sour cream, room temperature
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 10-ounce bag miniature marshmallows

### GANACHE

- 1 cup bittersweet or semisweet chocolate chips
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 cup coarsely chopped pecans or walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray a 13 x 9 x 2 cake pan with nonstick spray.

In a medium bowl, melt butter in the microwave. Stir in cocoa and hot water. In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine flour, sugar, baking soda, salt and espresso powder. Lower mixer speed and gradually add cocoa mixture. Add sour cream, eggs and vanilla. Increase mixer speed and beat until nearly smooth. Pour batter into the prepared pan. Bake for 35–45 minutes or until a cake tester comes out clean. Remove from oven and sprinkle all over with marshmallows, completely covering it. Return to oven for 2–3 minutes longer until puffy and soft. Let cool completely before drizzling ganache.

For the ganache, place the chocolate chips in a medium bowl. Set aside. Heat the cream in a small saucepan over medium heat. Bring to just before a boil. Immediately pour the hot cream over the chocolate and allow to stand for 5 minutes. Stir with a whisk until smooth. Drizzle over cake and top with nuts.

## ULTIMATE CHOCOLATE CAKE

SERVES 16

*This cake is the epitome of Southern hospitality. Can't you just see yourself sitting on your grandma's front porch enjoying a slice?*

### CAKE

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa
- 1 teaspoon espresso
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¾ cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1½ cups sugar
- 4 large eggs, room temperature
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup buttermilk, room temperature

### CHOCOLATE BUTTERCREAM FROSTING

- 5 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa
- 1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- ½ cup milk, room temperature
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
  Pinch kosher salt

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line two 9-inch cake pans with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, whisk flour, cocoa, espresso, baking soda and salt. In the bowl of a stand mixer, cream butter. Add sugar and continue to cream until pale yellow. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla and combine thoroughly. Reduce speed on mixer and gradually add flour mixture and buttermilk alternately until just combined. Divide batter evenly between cake pans. Bake 25–30 minutes until cake tester comes out clean. Remove from oven and cool on a rack for 10 minutes. Transfer to cooling rack to cool completely.

For the frosting, in a large bowl, sift confectioners' sugar and cocoa together. Cream butter until smooth in the bowl of a stand mixer or in a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer. Reduce mixer speed and gradually add in sugar/cocoa mixture until well incorporated. Add milk, vanilla and salt and continue beating on low for 1 minute. Increase to medium-high speed and beat 3–4 minutes until frosting is smooth and fluffy. If mixture is too thick for spreading, add additional milk 1 tablespoon at a time; if too thin, add additional confectioners' sugar 2 tablespoons at a time.

If cake layers have domed on top, use a serrated knife to cut off the dome (optional). Using the same knife, cut each layer in half horizontally to create four thin layers. Put 1 layer on a foil-covered cake round or cake serving plate. Top with a dollop of icing and gently spread. Repeat with remaining 3 layers. Frost side using the remaining frosting. Cover cake with a cake dome until ready to serve.

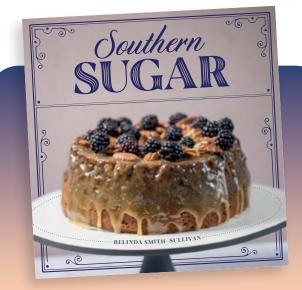## SOUTHERN PECAN LOG

MAKES 8 (4-INCH) LOGS

*This sweet and chewy nougat, covered in chopped pecans, is pure sweets heaven! When thoughtfully presented in a clear cellophane wrapper with a bow, it makes a beautiful gift for a hostess, neighbor or employee. At the very least, it is the perfect sweet ending to a heavy meal!*

3½ cups confectioners' sugar
 ½ cup nonfat dry milk powder
 ½ cup unsalted butter, room temperature
 ½ cup light corn syrup
 1 cup sugar
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 1 14-ounce package caramels
 3 tablespoons heavy cream
 3 cups chopped pecans

Line an 8- or 9-inch square baking dish with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, combine the confectioners' sugar and milk powder and set aside. In a medium saucepan, combine butter, syrup and sugar over medium heat. Cook, stirring, until sugar dissolves and mixture starts to boil. Stir in confectioners' sugar and milk powder a little at a time until blended. Remove from heat and add vanilla. Continue to stir until it starts to clump. Spread in prepared dish and let stand until cool enough to handle (about 15 minutes). Cut into four equal strips and then cut each strip crosswise, creating eight strips. Shape each piece into a log 4–4½ inches long. Wrap each log in parchment or wax paper and freeze until firm (about 1 hour).

In a double boiler or melting pot, combine caramel and cream over medium heat. Keep caramel warm. Spread pecans on a rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Using a dipping tool or flat spatula with holes, carefully dip each log into warm caramel, letting excess drip off. Roll log in chopped pecans until evenly coated. Wrap in parchment or wax paper and store in airtight container at room temperature. To serve, cut each log into 4 pieces.

## SWEET 16

### Satisfy your sweet tooth with a *Southern Sugar* sweepstakes

Register to win an autographed copy of *Southern Sugar*, courtesy of Chef Belinda Smith-Sullivan and Gibbs Smith. We'll draw the names of 16 lucky readers from all eligible entries received by Nov. 30. Please note that by entering the sweepstakes, you agree to opt-in to the *South Carolina Living* email newsletter list and may also receive commercial messages from the magazine's sponsors. For more on the book or to order copies, visit gibbs-smith.com.

**Register using the mail-in form below, or online at SCLiving.coop/southern-sugar.**

### GIMME SOME *SOUTHERN SUGAR*

Yes! Enter me in the drawing for an autographed copy of *Southern Sugar* by Belinda Smith-Sullivan, published by Gibbs Smith.

Name

Address

City

State/ZIP

Email*

Phone*

My electric cooperative is:

**\*Winners will be contacted to verify correct mailing address.**

**SEND COUPON TO:** Southern Sugar, c/o *South Carolina Living*, **808 Knox Abbott Drive, Cayce, SC 29033.**
**Entries must be received by Nov. 30, 2021, to be eligible.**



## JAPANESE FRUIT CAKE

MAKES 8 TO 10 SERVINGS

*The details are vague on where this cake originated and, more specifically, how it got its name. It is traditionally a four-layer cake in which two layers are plain and the other two are laced with warming spices, raisins and nuts. But what makes it even more unique is the citrusy coconut icing distributed between the layers. The icing stops short of covering the sides, revealing the true beauty of this mysterious cake.*

### CAKE

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup chopped currants or raisins
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1½ teaspoons cardamom
- 1½ teaspoons ground cloves
- 1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 eggs, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup milk

### CITRUS COCONUT ICING

- 2 cups sugar
- ¼ cup fresh squeezed lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest
- 3½ cups grated coconut
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 lemon, thinly sliced (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray four 8-inch round cake pans with nonstick spray and line with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt. In another bowl, combine raisins, pecans, cardamom and cloves. Cream butter in the bowl of a stand mixer and then add sugar and mix well. Add eggs one at a time and beat well after each. Stir vanilla into the milk. Lower mixer speed and alternately add flour and milk, beating until just combined.

Divide half of the batter between two pans. Stir the raisins, pecans and spice mixture into the remaining batter, then divide this mixture between the remaining two pans. Bake for 20–25 minutes until the cake is golden brown and a cake tester comes out smooth. Cool in pans on wire racks for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, remove parchment paper and cool completely on racks, top side up.

For the icing, in a medium saucepan, bring 1 cup water to boil over medium heat. Stir in sugar, lemon juice, zest and coconut. Bring to a boil and lower heat slightly to maintain a gentle boil for 7 minutes, stirring occasionally. Mix cornstarch with ½ cup of water and stir into the pan. Let simmer for an additional 3 minutes, stirring until thickened. Remove from heat and place into a larger saucepan filled with water and ice to cool. Stir occasionally.

Place a plain layer, top side down, onto a cake plate and, using a skewer, poke holes into the cake to allow some of the icing to penetrate. Apply approximately one-fourth of the icing and spread just to the edge of the layer. Repeat the process with a spiced layer, then another plain layer, and finally the remaining spiced layer on top, top side up. If any icing remains, pour it over the top and let cascade down the sides.

Let cake stand for several hours; cover and refrigerate. Remove from refrigerator for an hour before serving. Garnish with lemon slices, if desired.