

How to Make Cream Cheese Frosting

Smooth, tangy frosting for carrot cake, cupcakes, or cinnamon rolls. Full-fat block cream cheese gives a more dependable texture than the spreadable kind in a tub. Makes approximately 2 1/2 cups, enough for about 12 generously frosted cupcakes or the top of a 9-by-13-inch cake.

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN • OPTIONAL CHILLING: 20-30 MIN • ALLOW ADDITIONAL TIME TO SOFTEN INGREDIENTS

Ingredients

- 8 ounces full-fat block cream cheese, softened but still slightly cool
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 US stick), softened but not melted
- 3 cups powdered sugar (about 360 grams), sifted if lumpy
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Small pinch of fine salt

Tools: Mixing bowl, hand or stand mixer, spatula, measuring cups or scale.

How to Make It

1. Beat the softened butter on medium speed for about 1 minute, until smooth. Scrape down the bowl.
2. Add cream cheese and beat just until smooth and combined, about 30-60 seconds. Both ingredients should give slightly when pressed; neither should be warm or melted.
3. Add powdered sugar in three additions on low speed, mixing each addition in before adding the next. Scrape the bowl as needed.
4. Add vanilla and salt. Mix briefly on medium-low until creamy. Stop once the mixture is smooth; extended beating can loosen cream cheese frosting.
5. If too soft to spread, refrigerate 20-30 minutes and stir gently. Spread onto completely cooled cake or cupcakes. This is a soft spreading frosting, rather than a firm decoration frosting.

It should spread smoothly and hold soft ridges from the spatula, without butter or cream cheese lumps.

Troubleshooting

Do not use whipped or spreadable tub cream cheese. Avoid melting the butter, adding milk unnecessarily, or frosting a warm cake.

Jane’s Note

Let the cake cool completely before you start frosting. A warm cake can undo all your work in a minute.

Storage

Refrigerate frosting and frosted desserts promptly at 40 F or colder. Use within 3-4 days for this guide. Keep total room-temperature time under 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90 F, including preparation and serving. Bring out only what you need for serving.

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