



Magic Chocolate Flan Cake

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WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

This hybrid dessert has a layer of chocolate cake and a layer of caramel-coated flan that “magically” switch places as they bake. For ease, we started with a simple dump-and-stir chocolate cake recipe. At first, the flan added too much moisture to the cake, making it soggy. A drier cake was key, and removing some of the buttermilk and sugar did the trick. To help our flan stand tall rather than slump when sliced, we use whole eggs (instead of just yolks) and add cream cheese as a stabilizer. We opted for store-bought caramel sauce to top it all off—much easier than homemade

SERVES 16

It's worth using good-quality caramel sauce, such as Fat Toad Farm Goat's Milk Caramel. If your blender doesn't hold 2 quarts, process the flan in two batches. The cake needs to chill for at least 8 hours before you can unmold it.

INGREDIENTS

CAKE

- 1/2** cup caramel sauce or topping
- 1/2** cup plus 2 tablespoons (3 1/8 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1/3** cup (1 ounce) cocoa
- 1/2** teaspoon baking soda
- 1/8** teaspoon salt
- 4** ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 6** tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/2** cup buttermilk
- 1/2** cup (3 1/2 ounces) sugar
- 2** large eggs
- 1** teaspoon vanilla extract

FLAN

- 2** (14-ounce) cans sweetened condensed milk
- 2 1/2** cups whole milk
- 6** ounces cream cheese
- 6** large eggs plus 4 large yolks
- 1** teaspoon vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

1. FOR THE CAKE: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease 12-cup nonstick Bundt pan. Microwave caramel until easily pourable, about 30 seconds. Pour into pan to coat bottom. Combine flour, cocoa, baking soda, and salt in bowl; set aside. Combine chocolate and butter in large bowl and microwave at 50 percent power, stirring occasionally, until melted, 2 to 4 minutes. Whisk buttermilk, sugar, eggs, and vanilla into chocolate mixture until incorporated. Stir in flour mixture until just combined. Pour batter over caramel in prepared pan.

2. FOR THE FLAN: Process all ingredients in blender until smooth, about 1 minute. Gently pour flan over cake batter in Bundt pan and place pan in large roasting pan. Place roasting pan on oven rack and pour warm water into roasting pan until it reaches halfway up side of Bundt pan. Bake until toothpick inserted in cake comes out clean and flan registers 180 degrees, 75 to 90 minutes. Transfer Bundt pan to wire rack. Let cool to room temperature, about 2 hours, then refrigerate until set, at least 8 hours. (Remove roasting pan from oven once water has cooled.)

3. Place bottom third of Bundt pan in bowl of hot tap water for 1 minute. Invert completely flat cake platter, place platter over top of Bundt pan, and gently turn platter and pan upside down. Slowly remove pan, allowing caramel to drizzle over top of cake. Serve.

IS IT MAGIC OR IS IT SCIENCE?

While our Magic Chocolate Flan Cake is baking, the cake layer and flan layer switch places in the oven. Amazingly, they don't mix together; they just reverse positions. How is that even possible? Our science editor explained that the combined baking soda and acidic buttermilk in the cake layer produce gas, making the cake less dense than the flan. The (lighter) cake layer rises and the (denser) flan layer sinks. The water bath is critical, too. Since the water comes only halfway up the Bundt pan, only the top half of the pan gets hotter than the boiling point of water. As the cake batter slowly heats up from the surrounding hot water, it expands (from the gas), pushing the flan layer higher. The eggs in the flan are thus exposed to more heat at the top of the Bundt pan, so they cook and start to solidify. The solidifying flan can't fuse with the (still fluid) cake batter, and since it is denser, the flan sinks and the batter seeps up at the edges of the pan. Once the lighter cake batter rises to the top, it is exposed to the higher temperature at the top of the Bundt pan and it finally sets.

INTO THE OVEN



OUT OF THE OVEN



ONTO THE TABLE



MODULATE THE HEAT

A water bath, or bain-marie, can be created by simply placing your baking vessel in a larger vessel (we use a roasting pan) and filling the latter with water. The water makes for a more even, temperate baking environment.

