

An Anarchist's Cookbook

a blog about food & lifestyles outside 'consumer society'

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Available free on-line at: <http://www.fraw.org.uk/aac/>

For the video accompanying this post, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ClyY1_errQs

This post started with a rant about vegan chocolate cake. Someone posted a photo of their wondrous new acquisition – a vegan cake in a box with a prominent “Reduced: Was £6.00; NOW £2.52” sticker on the front. I was not impressed. Vegan cake is SO easy to make. I am amazed that anyone would think any mass-market cake was a bargain at all.

I think Dylan Moran hit the nail on the head with his comment about the TV programme, 'Bake Off': "Cake is a beautiful thing, why fuck it up by talking about it".

Cake is a beautiful thing; and thus it pains me that something which can be so easily and inexpensively made is mangled through mass marketing, and cult celebrity TV machination, into something that detracts from its essential purpose – *as a simple gift to share*.

My response: Ignore the over-hyped celebration of affluent excess, and cut straight to the essential, simple, shared meal of brain altering ingredients – utilising some simple, punk, “Do It Yourself” practical action.

Look at the label!

As the table of ingredients on the next page shows, the most expensive part of a chocolate cake is the cocoa – especially if you pay a fair price for that globally-traded drug by using 'fair trade' produce.

Very simply, the more cocoa, the more intense the flavour hit – *and buying your drugs fair trade gives a better, less bitter buzz!*

Part 3: 'The Anti-Consumerist DIY (vegan) Chocolate Cake'

An imminent birthday means I need a cake for the obligatory celebration. Do I: (a) Buy; or, (b) Bake – a cake? *For me, though, there is no choice!* The systems of food marketing and manufacturing play upon these obligatory festivals in order to sell over-priced, over-engineered, sickly-sweet cakes that give you a sugar rush; while the psychoactive alkaloids of the cocoa – the caffeine and theobromine – mess with your brain chemistry and metabolism to give you a mildly blissed-out feeling. Any food that messes with brain chemistry always has an exploitative, value-added cost penalty – *which when it comes to cake I refuse to pay.*

The economics of mass-market cakes requires that they minimise the costs. To do this various additives are used – as well as a heap of sugar – that create the sticky, oily texture of mass-market cakes (see the box at the bottom of the next page). In part, that's why I hate commercial cakes. They have an overpowering flavour of cheap processed sugar rather than the main flavouring ingredient they are advertised as containing – be that cocoa, nuts, or fruit.

Most of these modern ingredients are not there to improve the cake, but to improve the shelf-life of the cake. For example, 'humectants' – that trap moisture to stop the cake drying out. Personally, I think if a cake lasts long enough to dry out before being eaten it wasn't tasty enough, or you need to be sharing it with more people!



*The simplest of ingredients:
Flour, cocoa, oil, sugar, molasses, and raising agents*



<u>Ingredient</u>	<u>Weight, g</u>	<u>Cost</u>
<i>Cake:</i>		
Self-Raising White Flour	350	£0.37
Fair Trade Organic Cocoa	50	£0.88
Molasses	90	£0.39
Veg. oil (sunflower, olive, etc.) – millilitres	120	£0.54
Light Brown Sugar	75	£0.17
Sodium Bicarbonate (E500) – 1 teaspoon	4.6	£0.03
Cream of Tartar (E336) – 2 teaspoons	9.2	£0.12
<i>Icing:</i>		
Fondant Icing Cane Sugar	120	£0.19
Fair Trade Organic Cocoa	30	£0.53
Total dry ingredients	849	£3.23
Final baked ‘wet weight’	925	

Any type of everyday cake can be easily and simply made without all those additional ingredients – and can be made for a fraction of the cost of the mass-market offerings.

Of course, the immediate conclusion might be that if your cake is cheaper, you can have more of it. Instead, I prefer to increase the quality of the ingredients to increase the taste experience – which in this case means adding lots of cocoa.

Begin with a cake tin

First issue – *how much cake mix to make?* Start with a cake tin.

The tin used here has a clip on the side, and pops open. Other tins have a solid side with a detachable bottom. The reason for using a cake tin is to remove the cake without damaging it – which is likely if you use a solid tin and the cake sticks inside.

I prefer not to use [chemical toxins](#) to cook with, so I use plain tin-coated steel instead of non-stick tins – which I just wipe over with a little vegetable oil to prevent the cake sticking.

It's a simple ratio: Fill the cake tin half-full with flour; then use about one-third the volume of oil as the weight flour; and a quarter to a fifth the weight of sugar as the flour.

The baked cake will usually rise to twice the height of the raw cake mix. To estimate how much flour to use just half-fill the tin and then add the oil and sugar in the right proportions – unless you're using lots nuts or mixed fruit in the cake, in which case deduct a little.

The table above shows the list of ingredients in my cake, and their cost.

This is just a plain, extremely chocolaty cake. You could halve the amount of cocoa and it would still taste of chocolate, but not as intensely. Likewise you could double the amount of sugar if you wanted the standard, mass-market overpowering sweet flavour.

You can play with this list, adding ingredients as you like. E.g., without cocoa, and with a little nutmeg and mixed fruit instead, you'd have a fruit cake. This basic mix of flour, oil, sugar, and raising agents, is the basis of all cakes – everything else is just for flavour.

The typical contents of mass-market (vegan) cakes

In contrast to the list above, this list was created by merging the ingredients declared for a number of mass-market (vegan) cakes:

Acidity regulators (monopotassium phosphate, dipotassium phosphate, citric acid, dextrose); cocoa powder; cornflour; corn starch; emulsifier (methylcellulose, soya lecithin); glucose syrup; humectant (vegetable glycerine, soya protein isolate); invert sugar syrup; liquid chickpea extract; modified potato starch; preservative (potassium sorbate); raising agents (monocalcium phosphate, E450i, potassium bicarbonate, E500); salt; soya protein; stabilisers (gellan gum, xanthan gum); sugar; thickener (gellan gum); vegetable oil (rapeseed oil, sustainable palm oil); wheat flour; wheat gluten; wheat starch.



Comparison with mass-market (vegan) chocolate cakes

Nutrition, per 100g:

Source	Weight, g	Cake price	Price/ kilo	Calories	Protein	Saturated Fats	Carbohydrates	Sugars	
Waitrose – OGGs Chocolate Celebration Cake	602	£8.00	£13.29	448	5.5	26.1	7.6	45.9	32.5
Tesco – Just Love Food Vegan Chocolate Cake	485	£6.00	£12.37	409	3.4	22.0	5.4	48.4	33.0
Asda – Just Love Food Vegan Chocolate Cake	485	£6.50	£13.40	409	3.4	22.0	5.4	48.4	33.0
Anticonsumerist DIY Vegan Chocolate Cake	925	£3.23	£3.49	395	5.9	13.6	2.6	41.3	13.8

Mix everything together

Begin with the flour.

I use white self-raising flour for my more 'exotic' cakes because you get a more spongy result. Wholemeal works well, but it doesn't rise quite as much during baking.

I add extra raising agents to the flour – sodium bicarb. and *Cream of Tartar*.

The proteins inside the eggs usually used to make non-vegan cakes helps the cake rise. Adding extra raising agent makes up for that – and is essentially the difference between vegan and non-vegan cake.

Next I add the cocoa powder and mix everything really thoroughly – making sure there are no small lumps of dry ingredients.

Now I add the oil. If you wanted a more sticky, oily cake, use a little extra. First mix the oil into the flour with fingers, and when it has disappeared start to blend everything between your palms. This might take a while. What's required is an even, uniform crumb-like mass.

To add stickiness and a rich sweetness to the cake I add [molasses](#) – which is essentially the natural, more nutritious equivalent of the glucose syrups used in mass-market cakes. Dissolve three tablespoons/90 grams of molasses in about 150 millilitres of warm water.

Add the sugar to the mix, then pour over the molasses and water. Then with a spoon mix everything briskly until you get a smooth, but not too liquid goo.

The mix needs to be 'wet' enough to rise easily. The test is to mix thoroughly and then lift the spoon:

- ◆ If you lift the spoon and a sticky string falls off, and then another, it's just right;
- ◆ If you lift the spoon and mix runs off in a single string, it's too wet and you should add a little more flour;
- ◆ If you lift the spoon and it doesn't flow at all, add a little more water and mix thoroughly again.

At this stage if you wanted to drop in a chopped-up a bar of chocolate, or nuts, or mixed fruit, or other herbal flavourings, you should add them at this point – and then thoroughly stir them into the mix.

Most importantly: The moment you add water the raising agents are activated – mix the cake as quickly as possible, and then pour into the cake tin and get it in the oven!

Bake, cool, and decorate

You should put the oven on to pre-heat before you start mixing the cake – gas mark 2½, 155°C, 310°F.

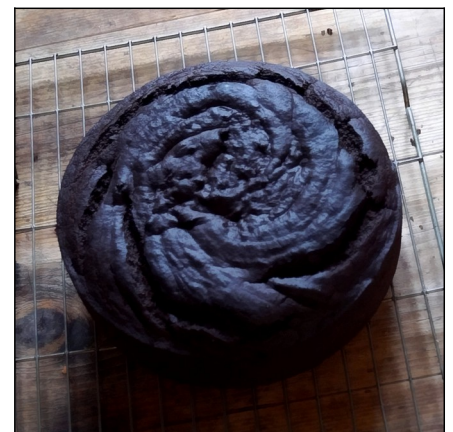
When the mix is the right thickness pour into a well-greased/oiled cake tin – and gently stir until it's well mixed (*see picture at the bottom of the previous page*). This seems to make the cake rise better than just pouring the mix into the tin, and it helps to reduce the cake splitting in the middle as it rises.

Put the cake in the middle of the oven for at least an hour to an hour-and-a-half, depending how deep your cake tin is – a deeper cake requires a longer baking time.

If you had a muffin tin, and the expensive paper muffin papers to fit into it, you could make individual chocolate muffins instead. Simply half fill the paper containers with mix and bake for about half-an-hour.

When it's ready you should be able to press a thin knife into the centre, leave for five seconds, and then remove without seeing any wet streaks on the blade.

Turn it out onto a cooling tray. It needs to stand for a few hours to allow it to cool fully – before eating or decorating.



You could eat as-it-is.

You could melt a bar of chocolate – by putting the chocolate on a thin plate placed over of a bowl of boiled water, until it warms and melts – and spread that over the cake.

For this event I'm mixing four parts [fondant icing](#) (that's icing sugar mixed with corn starch or gelatine to prevent it crystallising) to one part cocoa power – to give the cake a really chocolaty-sweet glaze.

Dribble very small amounts of water into the fondant icing-cocoa mix and blend it really well with the back of a spoon. It requires very little water to make a smooth paste – but use just a little too much and it will become too runny to spread on the cake. If you put in too much water, add more icing sugar.

Put the cake on a plate. When the icing mix is a stiff liquid goo, dump a little on the top and spread over. I use the straight back-edge of an ordinary table knife for this. To do the side of the cake I dump a dollop on top, then push it over the edge and swirl it around the side. When finished let it stand for a few hours until it is set.

If you want to glue-on sweets, or chocolates, or fancy icing-sugar shapes, gently press them down on top of the icing layer before it is set, and they should stick into place.

When the icing layer has set it is possible write on the cake in a different coloured icing. Or use a stencil, and dust icing sugar over the top with a sieve to highlight just the shape of the stencil.

I'm dusting the whole top of the cake with icing sugar. Then I'll scratch through with the point of a knife to write the message.

How you decorate – or not – is completely up to you. It's part of the creative process, and can improve to the flavour of your cake by adding, quite literally, a little “eye candy”.



Repeat, with free improvisation!

Why was I annoyed by that social media post about the 'bargain' chocolate cake? A 454 gram cake costing £2.52 works out at £5.50 per kilo – though normally they're around £13 per kilo. I made this chocolate cake for £3.50 per kilo (*see comparison table on previous page*) – and it's nutritionally superior!

Making cake isn't very hard. It was one of the first things that I was taught to make as a child!

Once you have the 'feel' for how much flour and oil to use, how to blend them, and add just the right amount of water to make it rise, everything after that becomes 'free improvisation' – adding whatever ingredients you wish to get the result you desire, or just making a simple cake with whatever ingredients you happen to have available.

Cake is a gift to share. It's something to stimulate the taste senses, put a little sugar rush in your blood, and cheer the spirit.

Too much cake ceases to be a treat, and so it should be made in moderation; but learning to make a good tasty spongy cake can make an event of any occasion – without the need to participate in the exploitative mass market for sweet goods, that are thrust upon society through the media and retail systems today.

An Anarchist's Cookbook, Part 3: 'Anti-Consumerist Chocky Cake'

Note: The experiences described in this paper are to be performed at your own risk! No liability is accepted for any loss or damage to your illusory affluent consumer lifestyle.

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