

Cleo Coyle's Chocolate Peanut Butter Cup Cake

Text and photos (c) by Alice Alfonsi who writes [The Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) and [Haunted Bookshop Mysteries](#) as [Cleo Coyle](#) with her husband, Marc Cerasini.



With the Reese's Peanut Butter Cup ranked as one of the most popular candies in the country, it's no wonder the chocolate peanut butter cake is a crowd-pleaser. Here's my take on this classic: While the Devil's Food may appear sinful, the peanut butter brings protein and nutrition to the dessert. And, sure, the candy scattered on top looks decadent, but in truth it's no more than 4 snack size peanut butter cups chopped finely (after freezing, which is one of my tips for keeping the candy intact). For those of you who don't bake much, the cake mix starter in my recipe will yield an easy yet impressive cake, one that won't fall or come out uneven, and my added ingredients will do wonders for the flavor. In fact, one of the reasons this cake is impressive to serve is because it's layered with many flavors and (despite the candy on top) not overly sweet. Even the vanilla in the peanut butter icing brings another dimension while evoking that delicious Reese's peanut butter filling. Now let's start baking... ~Cleo

Makes one 9 x 13-inch sheet cake

Cake Ingredients:

- 1 standard box of Devil's Food cake mix (check freshness date, expired cake mixes will not rise properly)
- 2 Tablespoons natural, unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 cup milk (whole milk, 1% or 2% - not skim)
- 1/3 cup brewed and cooled coffee (**see my coffee note, page 2)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1/4 cup canola or vegetable oil
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten with fork



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Finishing Ingredients:

- * Peanut butter Icing (recipe included)
- * Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, chopped into small pieces (*I use 4 "snack size" peanut butter cups; not regular size and not minis or miniatures*)

****Coffee note:** *You will not taste the coffee in your cake. Coffee is a way to boost the chocolate flavor in any recipe. If you'd rather not use coffee, no worries; simply increase the milk to 1-1/3 cups.*

Directions: (1) First preheat your oven to 350° F. and put your peanut butter cups in the freezer (this will allow you to slice them without smashing them).

(2) Lightly coat the bottom and sides of a 9 x 13-inch baking pan with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside.

(3) Place the "Cake Ingredients" into a large mixing bowl. Using an electric mixer blend on low until ingredients are combined and then beat on medium for 2 minutes.

(4) Pour the batter into your prepared pan. Bake for about 25 to 30 minutes in an oven well-preheated to 350° F. Do not over-bake. Cake is done when a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean (with no batter clinging to it). Allow to cool, and then frost with my Peanut Butter Icing (recipe included). Garnish with chopped Reese's Peanut Butter Cups (see my tips below).

Cleo's garnishing tips: *Be sure to freeze the peanut butter cups before chopping them. Slice carefully, making sure to keep the pieces small but intact (do not crush them). Finally, when you place them on the cake, do it one piece at a time, turning the peanut butter side up and putting the ridge side down into the icing (as you see in my finished photos). This will give your cake a more pleasing appearance.*



Cleo Coyle's Peanut Butter Icing

*Frosts the top of one 9 x 13-inch sheet cake – Thinly
Double this recipe for a thicker topping!*

Ingredients:

1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
4 Tablespoons butter (1/2 stick), softened
4-1/2 teaspoons milk
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 cup powdered sugar

Directions: Using an electric mixer, cream the peanut butter and softened butter until fluffy. Add the milk and vanilla. Blend on low speed until smooth. Finally, add the powdered sugar and beat on high until you have a light and fluffy frosting. (If frosting is still too stiff, add 1 to 2 more teaspoons of milk and beat again.)

Culinary note: Did you know the Reese's Peanut Butter Cup was invented by a former dairy farmer named H.P. Reese who worked for Milton Hershey as a shipping foreman? Inspired by Mr. Hershey, Reese started his own candy company in the basement of his home, using Hershey's chocolate to make the peanut butter cup. After the death of Mr. Reese, his six sons merged their company with Hershey's—not unlike their culinary product. And speaking of culinary products: I hope this cake is one you will...



Eat with joy! ~ Cleo

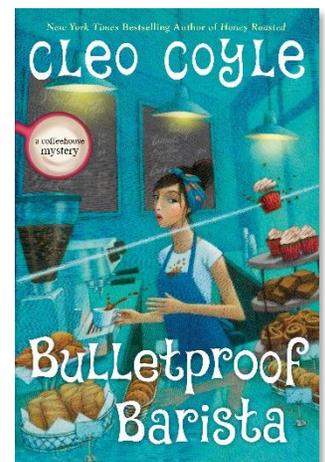
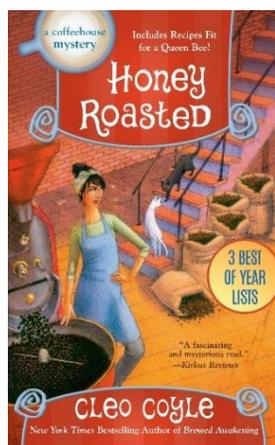
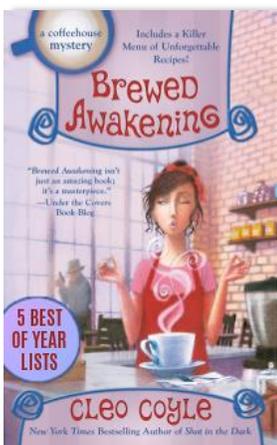
The [Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) are bestselling culinary mysteries, set in a landmark Greenwich Village coffeehouse. Each includes the added bonus of recipes.

To learn more and see more recipes, visit Cleo Coyle's online coffeehouse at

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