

FROM EPISODE 209: NEW MEXICO, OLD MEXICO



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Steaming a traditional chocolate cake batter produced a light, moist cake, and let us avoid using the oven. We used a foil coil set in a Dutch oven to elevate the cake above the water that steams it. Brown sugar and espresso powder gave the cake complexity, while sour cream added richness and a welcome tang. We liked the cake dusted with powdered sugar or topped with whipped cream. If your Dutch oven has a self-basting lid—dimples or spikes on the underside—lay a sheet of parchment or foil over the top of the pot before putting the lid in place to prevent water from dripping onto the surface.

Don't open the Dutch oven too often while steaming, but do ensure that the water is at a very gentle simmer. You should see steam emerging from the pot. If the heat is too high, the water will boil away before the cake is cooked.

Stovetop Chocolate Cake

Start to finish: 35 minutes (10 minutes active), plus cooling | Servings: 8

INGREDIENTS

142 grams (1 cup) all-purpose flour
 29 grams (⅓ cup) cocoa powder
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 ½ teaspoon kosher salt
 198 grams (1 cup packed) light brown sugar
 2 large eggs
 ½ cup water
 1 teaspoon instant espresso powder
 ½ cup sour cream
 6 tablespoons (¾ stick) salted butter, melted
 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

Cut an 18-inch length of foil and gently scrunch together to form a snake about 1 inch thick. Shape into a circle and set on the bottom of a large Dutch oven. Add enough water to reach three-quarters up the coil. Coat the bottom and sides of a 9-inch round cake pan with cooking spray, line the bottom with kitchen parchment, then coat the parchment. Place the prepared pan on top of the coil.

Sift the flour, cocoa powder and baking soda into a medium bowl, then whisk in the salt. In a large bowl, whisk the sugar and eggs until slightly lightened, about 30 seconds. Whisk in the water, espresso powder, sour cream, butter and vanilla. Add the flour mixture and whisk gently until just combined.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Cover and heat on high until the water boils. Reduce heat to low and steam, covered, until the cake is just firm to the touch at the center, about 23 minutes.

Turn off the heat and remove the lid. Let the cake sit in the Dutch oven until the pan is cool enough to handle. Transfer the pan to a wire rack, then run a paring knife around the edges. Let the cake cool completely, then invert onto a plate and remove the parchment. Invert again onto another plate.