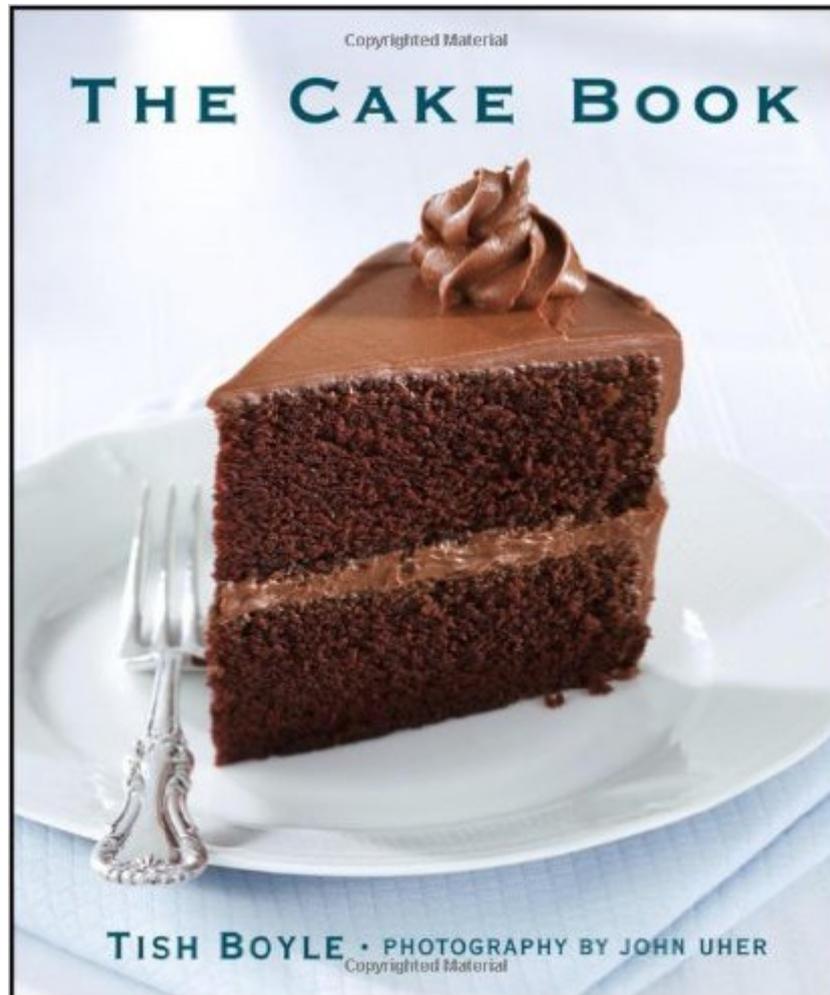


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The Cake Book



Synopsis

"There's something magical about the process of making a cake from scratch, a process that transforms a few simple ingredients--butter, sugar, flour, and eggs--into culinary artistry."--Tish Boyle

Book Information

Hardcover: 384 pages

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; 1 edition (April 14, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0471469335

ISBN-13: 978-0471469339

Product Dimensions: 7.7 x 1.2 x 9.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (68 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #120,357 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #86 in [Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Baking > Cakes](#) #326 in [Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Desserts](#)

Customer Reviews

I have bookshelves in my kitchen, overflowing with baking books that still have pristine pages, doomed to live their lives as mere gastroporn. Amongst the hundreds (yes, hundreds!) of cook books, only a couple of dozen make their way to the "active" shelf. In the three weeks since I purchased Tish Boyles' latest offering, it has worked its way to finger-smudged, frosting-smearing glory. There's a lot to like about this book; the clear explanations of ingredients, equipment and techniques in the introductory chapters, a clean easy to read typeset and layout, and attractive, though limited in number, photos. Also appreciated by an antipodean like myself, measurements are given in both imperial and metric. This includes dry ingredients such as flour and sugar, which are often only listed by cup measurements in other baking books. If you've ever checked the discrepancies between one scooped cup of flour and the next, by weight, you'll appreciate the reason a careful baker chooses weighing. But the real pleasure in this book are the recipes; there are real originals, such as the Jasmin Ginger and Plum upside down cake, and Goat Cheese Cheesecake with Fig Topping. There are also great versions of classics. The Deeply Dark Devil's Food cake is the most tender version I have ever made, with a truly luscious flavour (just don't try to reel the name off your tongue too quickly!). The Banana cake with Caramel Espresso Frosting defied the usual dense and gummy banana cake stereotype. Although time-consuming, and a need for careful attention to the

details with the frosting, it is definitely worth the effort. The difficulty of each recipe is indicated by a cake slice symbol at the start of each cake's description.

'The Cake Book' by chocolate guru Tish Boyle evokes in me the exclamation ... 'Holy butter crÄ"me, Batman, yet another book on cakes! What with several recent and classic big books on cakes, including those from great teachers such as 'Perfect Cakes' by Nick Malgieri, those from dessert icons such as 'Cakes' by Maida Heatter and those from baking expert explainers such as 'The Cake Bible' from Rose Levy Beranbaum, one wonders, does the world really need another book on cakes? Well, I bought it, and I'm glad I did. Beranbaum does a somewhat better job of explaining the reasons why cakes work or don't work, and Heatter covers more of the classic European types of cakes, and Malgieri covers some pedagogical matters a bit better, but if you like baking cakes, then this book will not be intimidated by sitting alongside these other volumes on your shelf. One thing which did surprise me (and which actually increases the value of the book) is that Ms. Boyle actually covers a lot more than cakes understood in a narrow sense as those confections generally done in layers, with icing in the middle and leavened primarily with eggs. The first and most interesting 'out of spec' chapter covers cheesecakes, and I believe she has done us a major service by pointing out that cheesecakes, and the cream cheese from which they are made, are one of our great American originals. Her second great service is to give us a recipe for the classic New York cheesecake. I was quite surprised to find that these are not baked in water baths and a little crack or two is considered quite acceptable. This is totally understandable, as I'm sure Juniors in Brooklyn doesn't roll out their thousands of cakes a day by baking in water baths.

As author Tish Boyle put it, "Cakes are the edible symbol of life's celebrations." Cakes are - or should be - celebrations on their own, however, and this volume gives many reasons to rejoice. Boyle is a professional. She serves as editor-in-chief for both "Chocolatier" and "Pastry & Art Design" magazines and is a graduate of LaVarenne Ecole de Cuisine (founded by the extraordinary Anne Willan). She has worked extensively as a pastry chef, food stylist, caterer, and has authored several other dessert books. Cakewise, Boyle is in the same category as Carole Walter, Susan Purdy, Rose Levy Beranbaum, Maida Heatter, Carole Bloom, Nick Malgieri, and Lisa Yockelson - all of whose books I own, along with another dozen devoted to cakes alone. Did I need this volume? Absolutely. Did I glean things from this book that I had not found in others? Without question. Is the book overpriced at \$40? Yes, it is - about \$10 more than it should be - but it can be had for less at and other sites. What makes this book valuable? For me, cookbooks and baking books should be as

much about technique, equipment, and ingredients as a compilation of recipes. The first 57 pages of "The Cake Book" is just that. The first chapter, "Ingredients for Cakes" boasts a simple guide for "Boiled Sugar Syrup Stages". In the third chapter "Cake-Baking Equipment", there is a handy "Guide to Cake Pan Sizes" giving not only surface area, but volume in cups for 24 different pans! A guide to blanching and toasting nuts in Chapter 4: "Cake-Making Techniques, Tips and Troubleshooting" provides oven temperatures specific to five different varieties of nuts.

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