

taste of tradition pound cakes

Get out your grocery list! North Carolina's favorite daughter of comedy shares her recipe for pound cake—and *laughter*.

BY JEANNE ROBERTSON / FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARCY BLACK SIMPSON
FOOD STYLING BY REBECCA TOULIATOS



IT'S TRADITION IN THE SOUTH AND, I SUSPECT, IN MOST other areas of the country to take food to a friend who is sick or has an emergency. You get credit if you take over anything, more credit if you make it yourself.

For years in these situations, I took over a big bowl of my “special” potato salad. Then the place that made it for me burned down. Now little 7-Up pound cakes are my specialty. I make them by the dozen and freeze them. If someone gets sick and I'm out of town, my husband, Jerry, (a.k.a. “Left Brain”) takes one over.

I was getting ready to leave on a speaking trip when I heard that a friend was sick. I headed straight to my freezer, but there wasn't a pound cake in it. Left Brain announced, “A lot of people have been sick. I've been running cakes all over the county.” Then he mumbled, “I might have eaten a couple of 'em myself.”

Now, once you establish a tradition (taking pound cakes, for example) and then miss a few times, another woman will jump in ahead of you, start showing up with pound cakes, and declare herself the pound-cake queen. We've all seen it happen. It's not pretty. I had to get a pound cake made before I headed to the airport.

I was really in a hurry, and making a pound cake wasn't in my time plan. And to add to my dilemma, I didn't have the ingredients. I needed Left Brain to make a quick trip to the grocery store while I packed.



“I just need a few ingredients.”

He looked at his watch. “I can't go, honey. I'm trying to get to badminton.”

“I just need a few ingredients,” I coaxed. “That badminton birdie is not flying away. And as you just admitted, you ate two of the cakes.”

He finally agreed—on one condition. “Just make sure I can get through the express lane,” he said. I nodded.

He took the short list and left. I waited and waited. He didn't come back. And he didn't come back. I figured he had gone to badminton and forgotten me and the cake. I was about to call the grocery store to have him paged (again), when I heard the car pull in. Left Brain came hurrying through the door, grocery bags in hand.

It is important that you know I'm married to a nice guy. Left brained? Absolutely. Still, a nice guy. That noted, when he came through the door, he glared at me as he put down the sacks. “Gotta get the rest out of the car,” he muttered.

I looked in the first sack. There was a pound of butter and two gigantic bottles of vanilla flavoring. Doling out a teaspoon and a half per cake, it would take years to use that much vanilla flavoring.

In the next sack were three dozen eggs. I only needed five eggs and had clearly written on the list to get a “dozen eggs.” Must have been a “special” on the eggs, I thought.

In the next sack was a 3-pound tub of shortening. No, two tubs. In the next sack, two more. Twelve pounds of

lard—enough to fry fish for a civic-club fund-raiser! But in that fourth sack, I found my list.

You also need to know that Left Brain is a smart man. He went to Duke University on a basketball scholarship, played basketball for four years, and graduated in the same four years. Then he got a master's degree and a doctorate at The University of North Carolina. But I don't care how many diplomas you have, if you have a left brain, it is going to kick in on you. His kicked in on him in that grocery store.

To make sure Left Brain could get through the express lane, I had, for probably the first time in my life, numbered my items:

- 1— pound of butter (No problem.)
- 2— large bottle of vanilla flavoring (Why did he get two?)
- 3— dozen eggs (One, two, three dozen—this man has a doctorate degree!)
- 4— can of shortening (One, two, three, four. Unbelievable!)

I could hear him coming back and quickly looked down at item No. 5. It was a 5-pound bag of sugar. I knew he was coming in the kitchen with 25 pounds of sugar. Item No. 6 was a 5-pound bag of all-purpose flour. Thirty pounds of flour!

He came stumbling in with bags in each hand, on both arms, and between his teeth and started plopping sugar and

“Is there an epidemic?”

flour in 5-pound thuds on the kitchen floor. “One more trip ought to do it,” he glared.

I sneaked a look at my list. Item No. 7 was a bottle of 7-Up. I didn’t want that big 2-liter bottle because I was only going to make one cake. I wanted a six-pack of medium-size bottles that hang down from plastic. I started clearing a space on the kitchen floor.

In a few minutes, he was putting the 42 bottles among the other sacks. “Well, obviously, they wouldn’t let me through the express lane,” he said. “Now, if you don’t mind, I have got to get to badminton.”

He started to leave, then walked back into the kitchen. “For the record,” he began, “I figured out what I had done wrong, but by then she was ringing up the 7-Up.”

I was standing there among the sacks, when Left Brain stuck his head in the room one more time. “Don’t tell anybody,” he said.

Three days later, the cashier ringing up my items in the grocery store commented, “I think I checked out your husband a few days ago. That was an interesting order.”

“Well, yes, let me explain,” I said. “Anytime a friend of ours gets sick, I take over a pound cake.”

She thought a few seconds, then asked, “Is there an epidemic?”

An acclaimed professional speaker and humorist, Jeanne Robertson was born and raised in Graham, North Carolina. She and her husband make their home in Burlington, North Carolina. Jeanne’s hilarious real-life experiences are the basis for the numerous recordings to her credit as well as the three books she has authored. She can be heard on XM Radio. To learn more about Jeanne, go to www.jeannerobertson.com.



7-up® pound cake



jeanne robertson's
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Recipe courtesy of Jeanne Robertson

Yield: 12 to 16 servings

Bake: 1 hour

Cool: 30 minutes

- 1 cup butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 3 cups sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons lemon extract
(give or take a little)
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
(sometimes more)
- 5 eggs
- 3 cups all-purpose flour (measure
before sifting)
- 7 fluid ounces Diet 7-Up® (to cut
calories)

PREHEAT oven to 300°.

PUT butter or margarine under a kitchen light until it's soft. Beat it with the shortening and sugar with a mixer.

ADD lemon and vanilla extracts. Add *now* so you won't forget. Cake tastes funny without 'em. Beat some more.

DON'T BOTHER adding eggs one at a time. I throw all of them in at the same time. First, take off shells.

DON'T WORRY about adding flour alternately with the 7-Up. I don't alternate. Dump it all in. Go for it! Turn mixer to highest level. Stand back. Add more 7-Up if it looks dry. Sprinkle in more flour if it looks too moist. (This is not rocket science.)

SPRAY a 10-inch tube pan with Baker's Joy nonstick baking spray with flour. (No need to flour.) (**Important:** Be generous! Trust me.) Or split the batter and use 2 (8-inch) tube pans. (This will give you two cakes—math.)

BAKE for 1 hour, or until cake tests done. (Remember: It takes longer to cook one big cake than 2 smaller ones. Higher math. Think about it. Adapt.)

TO TEST FOR DONENESS, poke a knife or a broom straw in and out of cake until nothing sticks.

TAKE whatever you cook out of the oven. Let it sit for 30 minutes before flipping over on a plate. Flip the cake. Not you. Waiting a lot longer will require a chiseling step—it gets ugly.

7-up® pound cake

Recipe courtesy of Jeanne Robertson

Yield: 12 to 16 servings

Bake: 1 hour

Cool: 30 minutes

- 1 cup butter or margarine,
softened
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 3 cups sugar
- 5 eggs
- 1 1/2 teaspoons lemon extract
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 3 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
- 7 fluid ounces lemon-lime soda,
such as 7-Up®

PREHEAT oven to 300°. Spray 1 (10-inch) tube pan or 2 (8-inch) tube pans with nonstick baking spray with flour; set aside.

IN A LARGE BOWL, beat butter or margarine, shortening, and sugar at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add lemon and vanilla extracts, beating to combine.

GRADUALLY ADD flour and 7-Up to butter mixture in three batches, beating well after each addition and ending with 7-Up. Spoon batter into prepared pan.

BAKE for 1 hour, or until a tester inserted in cake tests done.

LET COOL for 30 minutes. Invert onto a cake plate and let cool completely.

Recipe courtesy of Jeanne's husband, Jerry, a.k.a. "Left Brain," or L.B.

- 1 pound butter
- 2 gigantic bottles vanilla
flavoring
- 3 dozen eggs
- 12 pounds shortening
- 25 pounds sugar
- 30 pounds all-purpose flour
- 42 bottles 7-Up®
- 1 teaspoon lemon flavoring
(Or just throw in a whole
lemon. What difference will
it make?)

JUST DO THE BEST YOU CAN, but do not try this alone. People have disappeared into the batter. **ALTERNATE USE FOR BATTER:** pound cake wrestling! Tastes better than mud. Send photos.

L.B.'S 7-UP POUND CAKE