

## Vertamae's Poundcake

*This is the simplest recipe in the world, and at the same time, it's complicated. A pound cake works because you beat enough air into the butter and sugar and then add eggs one at a time, also to aerate the batter. There is no baking powder to fall back on. This is a dense cake. Which is why I preferred the King Arthur all-purpose flour to the White Lily in baking it. I felt the KA flour gave it more structure and better flavor. And I know there are thousands of ways to bake a pound cake, and you probably have a favorite method in your family recipe box. Some use sour cream and others cream cheese or even heavy cream. A few call for 7Up. But this is pound cake the way it started. And I can empathize with Vertamae as she was baking this cake, making apologies that she wasn't experienced. But at the same time, you have to sometime just dive in and try a recipe and not be a spectator anymore! And so here's a chance to celebrate pound cake—and celebrate the ladies who baked it—as something that helps us step back into another decade into someone else's shoes and share some love.*

Makes 16 servings

Bake: 1 hour, 20 to 25 minutes

1 pound (4 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature but not too soft

2 cups granulated sugar

6 large eggs, at room temperature

1/2 teaspoon salt (3/4 teaspoon if using kosher salt)

1 tablespoon vanilla

Optional flavorings of your choice: 1/2 teaspoon almond extract, 1/2 teaspoon lemon extract, 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest, 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg or mace

3 cups unbleached flour (measured by spooning flour into the cup measure and sweeping a knife across the top to level it)

1. Place a rack in the center of the oven, and preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Lightly grease and flour a 10-inch tube pan.
2. Place the butter in the mixing bowl of a KitchenAid or other stand mixer. Beat on low speed until creamy, about 30 seconds. With the mixer running, gradually add the sugar, beating until creamy and lighter in color, about 2 minutes. Turn off the mixer, and scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula.
3. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the salt, vanilla, and any flavoring you choose, or none at all. Scrape down the sides of the bowl again and beat on low to combine. Add the flour in three increments, mixing on low just to incorporate. Or, fold in the flour by hand using the rubber spatula to combine.

(Vertamae says you can make a pound cake with an electric mixer or with 900 strokes by hand.)

4. Turn the batter into the prepared pan, smooth the top, and place the pan in the oven. Bake until the top of the cake is golden brown, and it is firm to the touch, about 1 hour, 20 to 25 minutes.
5. Remove the pan from the oven, and place it on a wire rack to cool 20 minutes. Run a knife around the sides of the pan, and invert the cake once and then again so that it rests right side up. Let cool 1 hour before slicing.