CARROT CAKE

Cake:
1 cup raisins (optional)
4 cups shredded, peeled carrots **Note:** I use a two pound bag of baby carrots and place ¾ of the bag in the food processor. I measure this amount and then add more or take some out as necessary
2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa
4 large eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla
1 cup sugar
1 cup dark OR light brown sugar, firmly packed
1 1/4 cups corn OR canola oil
1 1/2 cups walnuts OR pecans, toasted and broken into medium pieces

1. Adjust racks to divide oven into thirds and preheat to 350.

2. Butter 3 round 9 inch baking pans, line with baking parchment, butter paper and dust all over with flour. Set aside.

3. Sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and cocoa, and set aside.

4. In the large bowl of an electric mixer beat the eggs to mix. Beat in the vanilla, both sugars and the oil.

5. On low speed, beat in the dry ingredients until just incorporated. Stir in the carrots, raisins, if you are using them, and nuts.

6. Divide batter among the pans. The solid ingredients tend to mound in the center of the pan. Use the bottom of a spoon to distribute them.

7. Place two pans on one rack, and one pan on the center of the other rack. Bake for 25-40 minutes until the cake tops just spring back when gently pressed, and the cake begins to pull away from sides of the pan.

8. Let the cake stand for 2-3 minutes, cover each pan with a rack, invert, remove pan, cover with another rack and invert. The cake will be right side up. Cool on racks. The cake can now be iced, or each layer wrapped and frozen.
for later use. If you wish to ice the cake, freeze the layers for 1-2 hours. They will be easier to handle. If you have frozen the cakes to store, frost them while still partially frozen. Remember to remove baking parchment!

**Cream Cheese Frosting**
1 1/2 lb cream cheese at room temperature
1 1/4 sticks (10 tablespoons) unsalted butter at room temperature
1 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
3 cup sifted or strained confectioner’s sugar

In the large bowl of an electric mixer, beat the cream cheese and butter until smooth. Beat in the vanilla and sugar and continue beating until smooth.

**NOTE:** For a richer, softer frosting, use only 1 lb of cream cheese and follow the recipe as above. Fold in by hand ½ lb **mascarpone cheese** after you beat in the confectioner’s sugar and vanilla.

To frost, place a layer of cake upside down on the serving platter. Spread a layer of frosting evenly over layer. Cover with second layer, also upside down. Frost this layer and cover with the third layer, upside down. Cover the side of the cake with a very thin layer of frosting to seal the crumbs. Frost the top. Using a long, thin metal spatula, smooth the icing on the top. Use a medium metal spatula to apply frosting decoratively to the side. A cake decorating turntable makes this easier to do. Remove paper strips. Decorate with marzipan carrots before frosting dries.

**Marzipan carrots:**

*Please make these carrots. People will think you are a cake decorating genius, and they are really very easy. If you ever made “snakes” out of clay in grade school, you have demonstrated the expertise necessary to make marzipan carrots. You will be embarrassed to receive so much praise for so little effort. Deal with it.*

3 1/2 oz marzipan  **Note:** Marzipan is sold in food specialty stores like Williams Sonoma and in the baking section of some supermarkets. Squeeze the package before buying. If it feels like a rock, it has dried out and you won’t be able to work with it. The package should have a modest amount of give.

Slivered almonds (these are julienne sliced)
Orange and green paste food coloring or liquid food coloring. If you use standard liquid coloring you will have to make orange from red and yellow.

1. Take a handful of slivered almonds and place them on a nonporous surface such as a glass plate. Place a dot of green paste food coloring on each one and roll the almonds around until colored. Thin the paste with a few drops of water, if necessary. Let the almonds dry.

2. Place the marzipan on a smooth nonporous surface. Flatten it with your hand. Put a minute amount of orange food coloring on the marzipan and knead it in. Add more as necessary to achieve a bright orange color.

3. If the marzipan is sticky, powder your hands lightly with confectioner’s sugar. Form the marzipan into a ball and then roll it with your hands into a 12 inch sausage shape. Cut into ½ inch lengths. Roll these lengths into carrot shapes, approx. 1 ¾ inch long, with your hands. Place each carrot on a flat surface. Use any knife to form lines around the carrot at irregular intervals. Look at a real carrot for inspiration.

3. When the almonds are dry, stick two into each “stem end “ of the carrots. Place carrots symmetrically around the cake.