

Let's Eat

Food, family, friends & kitchen comforts!

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Blogger, baker and cookbook author Jocelyn Delk Adams and her family share their legendary recipes—plus the sweet memories that go with every one.

CHUCK OLU-ALABI

[THE GATHERING PLACE]

Love & Cake

Big Mama teaches her grandbaby lessons in life, baking and family history. **BY JOCELYN DELK ADAMS**

When I was young, my family routinely embarked on a 10-hour journey from our hometown of Chicago to Winona, Mississippi, to visit my maternal grandparents, Sid and Maggie Small. Now, at the age of 35, I can say that this tradition continues. My grandmother, whom we

into the steaming temptation before me. Finally, Big Mama would take pity on her impatient grandbaby and hand me a fork.

Big Mama's cakes are the best I ever tasted. They are rich in flavor, and the crumb is so moist that it literally melts in my mouth. From tree-picked fruit to farm-raised chicken eggs and fresh-churned butter (thanks to Big Mama's cow, Betsy), Big

working in the fields all day are etched in my memory.

These desserts are the love notes of my family, the fabric of our heritage. They were called upon for every history-making event, from a church picnic and minister dinner to a wedding or holiday. Family memories like these inspired my website, **grandbaby-cakes.com**, where I follow in Big Mama's footsteps and put my own twists on classic flavors while telling tales of my heritage. I hope to honor her and all the men and women in my family who unknowingly shaped me, through decades of lessons learned in the kitchen, into the fearless, confident, loving woman I am. ■

Jocelyn Delk Adams is the author of the cookbook Grandbaby Cakes, available online and at bookstores nationwide.

“The life lessons I learned in Big Mama's kitchen forever shaped my character.”

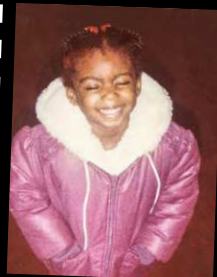
—JOCELYN DELK ADAMS

affectionately call Big Mama, always created a gorgeous centerpiece cake. Sometimes she would wait until we arrived, and the women would roll up their sleeves and head into the kitchen to bake and catch up. I treasured these moments when Big Mama, Mom and Auntie would let me dabble in the process as a rite of passage. They were never fazed by my ceaseless curiosity and countless questions in the midst of their magic-making.

Big Mama never required a timer; just a whiff of a baked good's fragrance in the air was enough for her to know it was ready. While the pan was piping hot, she would slide it out of the oven and onto the grates of the stove. The anticipation was brutal—I could not wait to tear

Mama used these gifts to build dessert monuments topped with billowing buttercream.

Watching my family make her recipes—and learning to make them myself—taught me patience (anything worth having should never be rushed), forgiveness (sometimes things don't turn out perfectly, but that's OK), selflessness (giving of yourself is the best gift you can give) and love (the most important ingredient you can add to your cakes). The life lessons I learned in Big Mama's kitchen forever shaped me. Stories about how her mother died when she was a young girl, how she invented the recipes that were passed down to me, and the fun she had ringing the supper bell to assemble her daddy and 13 siblings from



As a girl, Jocelyn loved being with Big Mama, especially in the kitchen, where flour and sugar became cakes.





Extra yum! Drizzle frosted cupcakes with your favorite homemade or prepared buttery toffee sauce.

Coffee-Toffee Pumpkin Cupcakes

My Southern family is devoted to the sweet potato, so I followed suit and steered clear of pumpkin until a friend convinced me to try pumpkin ice cream about 10 years ago. Now I can't imagine an autumn without both flavors. Perfectly spiced and topped with a cream cheese buttercream spiked with coffee and infused with cinnamon, this cupcake is a superb cheat for those married to the sweet potato.

—**JOCELYN DELK ADAMS** CHICAGO, IL

BAKE: 20 MIN. + COOLING
MAKES: 18-20 CUPCAKES

- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- ¼ cup hot water
- 1 tsp. instant coffee powder
- 1 cup sifted all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp. ground cloves

SPICED BUTTERCREAM

- 1½ cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 6 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
- 2 Tbsp. heavy cream, cold
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. instant coffee powder
- ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
- Pinch salt

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Line two 12-well muffin pans with 18 to 20 cupcake liners.
2. In the bowl of your stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat the eggs, granulated sugar and brown sugar for 3 minutes on high speed. Add the pumpkin, oil, hot water and instant coffee and mix until incorporated. Scrape the side and bottom of the bowl as needed.
3. Turn your mixer down to its lowest speed and carefully add the flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, baking soda, nutmeg and cloves. Mix the batter until just combined. Do not overmix.
4. Using an ice cream scooper with a trigger release, scoop the batter into the cupcake liners until each is ⅔ full. Be careful not to overfill. Bake for 16 to 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of a cupcake comes out clean.
5. Let the cupcakes cool in the pans for 10 minutes, then transfer to wire racks. Let cool to room temperature. Lightly cover the cupcakes with foil or plastic wrap so they do not dry out.
6. For the spiced buttercream, clean your stand mixer bowl and whisk attachment. Combine the confectioners' sugar, butter and cream cheese on low speed. When the mixture has just come together, increase your mixer speed to high and mix for another 2 minutes. Add the heavy cream, vanilla extract, cinnamon, instant coffee, nutmeg and salt and continue to mix until the buttercream is fluffy. Refrigerate for 20 to 30 minutes.
7. When the buttercream is firm and the cupcakes are room temperature, frost the cupcakes.