



*AN EASY HOW-TO FOR THIS  
SWEET TREAT*

# CAKE POPS THREE WAYS



# INTRODUCTION



**L**ike the java chip Frappuccino, my first cake pop experience came courtesy of Starbucks. I bit into their salted caramel cake pop, and I was hooked. Moist, yummy cake mixed with frosting and coated in chocolate? What wasn't to love? A bona fide cake addict, I was enamored with its small portion size which left me a little more guilt-free when I ate one (okay, two), and I loved that it was served easy-to-eat and virtually mess-free on a stick.

Finally, a cake I could eat without being hampered by plates, forks, and napkins. A cake that, unlike a cupcake, left my fingers frosting free and my lap crumbless. A cake I could tear into while driving home, right after leaving the Starbucks' drive-through (hey, some days are just like that).

However, as with my caffeine fix, I had to find a more budget-friendly way to support my habit. To my delight, I found that cake pop recipes abound. As I researched the cake pop, I found that there are quite a few debates as to the best method of crafting one. Box cakes versus from cakes from scratch. Canned frosting versus homemade. Blending cake and frosting together by hand versus by mixer. And, there were numerous decorating discussions. Best ways to dip the cake pop. Best chocolates to dip the cake pop in. Best sprinkles to add to the chocolate coated cake pop.

In the spirit of cooking invention, I decided to experiment with three different cake pops. First, I would bake and decorate a traditional cake-and-frosting mixed cake pop. Then, I would try using a doughnut hole as the heart of my cake pop. Finally, though I was unable to find any record of its usage as a cake pop, I would use an ebelskiver as a cake pop center. I thought these little chocolate-filled

Danish pancakes would be a perfect cake pop candidate. At the end of my baking experiments, I would hold a taste test to find out which of these three contenders was the best. Of course, all three would be coated in chocolate, so really, how could there be any losers?

All contests need rules, so I decided that:

1. All recipes would be made from scratch, from frosting to doughnut holes, with no store-bought premade items. This way, the finished products would be completely the result of my baking skills, and Duncan Hines or Krispy Kreme couldn't be said to influence the outcome.
2. All good experimenters limit their variables,

so though I would decorate each cake pop a little differently, I would use the same chocolate coating on each. I didn't want different brands of chocolate affecting the final tasting, so I used only Baker's premium white and semi-sweet chocolates to dip the cake pops.

3. Not only would I taste the different cake pops, but, to ensure fairness, I would also employ the services of an unbiased cake pop taster. The taster would be compensated for their time and effort with homemade treats.

I decided I would start by making the traditional cake pop. So, without any further ado, let the games, and more importantly the tastings, begin!



# CONTENDER ONE:

## THE TRADITIONAL CAKE POP



**T**his is the recipe you'll follow if you want a cake pop consummate to what you'll find at Starbucks or in a bakery, the cake pop with the moist, rich cake-and-frosting filled center. The gist of the process is this: you bake a cake, crumb the cake, and mix the crumbed cake with frosting. Then, you form the mixture into cake pop-sized balls that are refrigerated until they're set. Once the balls are set up, they can be stuck on a stick, dipped in melted chocolate, and decorated. And, voila! You have cake pops.

### **BAKING THE CAKE**

To begin, I used one of my all-time favorite cake recipes from [The Barefoot Contessa](#): Beatty's Chocolate Cake. This cake is incredibly moist, perfect for a cake pop. And, the cup of coffee the recipe calls for gives the cake a really rich taste. The recipe is actually designed for two 8-inch round cakes, so I adjusted it slightly for a 13"x9" pan.

### **Ingredients**

- 1¾ cup flour
- 2 cups sugar

- ¾ cup cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup buttermilk
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup freshly brewed hot coffee (yum!)

### **Directions**

1. Preheat your oven to 350°. Then, grease and flour a 13"x9" baking pan. The cake will have to be removed from the baking dish to make the cake pops, and greasing and flouring the pan will help you get the cake out of the pan without leaving half of the cake behind.

I'm kind of an old school cake baker, so I just rub Crisco into the pan, and then sprinkle a spoonful of flour into the dish. To spread

the flour, I rotate the pan and gently tap the sides until the pan is evenly coated.



Some people prefer to use butter instead of shortening, or they just sidestep the whole flouring process by lining their pans with parchment paper. Use whatever method appeals to you. They all work equally well.

2. Sift your dry ingredients (the flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, and salt) into the bowl of an electric mixer. I'm all about saving time and have a good-sized sifter, so I sift all the dry ingredients together at once. Using the paddle attachment, mix the ingredients on low or



“stir” speed about 20-30 seconds.

3. Combine the buttermilk, oil, eggs, and vanilla in a separate bowl. Since I'll be pouring these ingredients into the dry mixture, I like to use a large liquid measuring cup as it makes for an easier transfer.

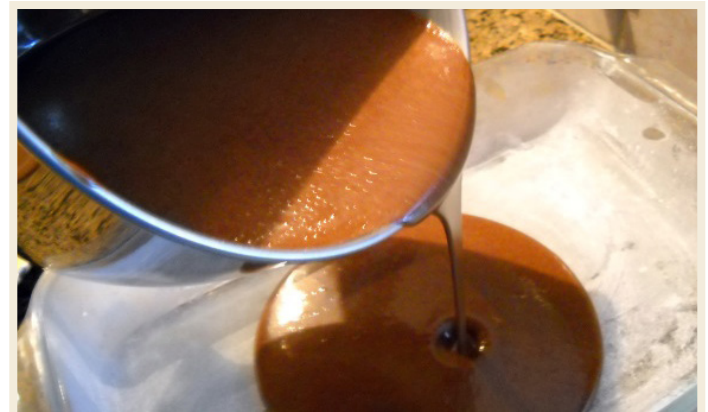


4. With the mixer on low or “stir” speed, slowly pour the wet ingredients into the dry. After 30 seconds, I stopped the mixer and scraped the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula. Then, I continued mixing the batter on medium speed for 2 minutes.



5. Turning the mixer back to low, add the coffee and stir just to combine. The batter will be very wet and runny...all the easier for pouring into the cake pan. Scrape the bottom of the mixer bowl with a rubber spatula to ensure the batter is well mixed.

6. Pour the batter into your floured or lined pans. Bake for 40-45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the middle of the cake comes out clean. This batter has a lot of liquid, so be prepared for the 9"x13" cake to dip a bit in the middle. Not really a big deal since it doesn't affect the cake's taste, and the cake will be deconstructed to make cake pops, so it's not an issue for frosting and decorating either.



The cake has to be cooled completely before it can be used to make cake pops. I set mine up on a wire rack to hasten the cooling process. After the cake cools, it will be crumbed and mixed with frosting to create the cake pop center. But, the cake won't crumb properly while it's still warm, so you'll have a little bit of time on your hands.



While you wait for your cake to cool, you can drink the leftover coffee, or you can make the frosting. Or, like me, you can do both.

### **MAKING THE FROSTING**

Of all the cake pop debates I read, the debate over frosting was probably the biggest. Many people advocated using premade canned frosting over homemade, saying that canned blended better with the crumbed cake. But, I had already promised to make my cake pops completely from scratch, so I decided to take my chances with homemade frosting. Plus, I was curious to see if it made that big of a difference (it didn't, as far as I could tell).

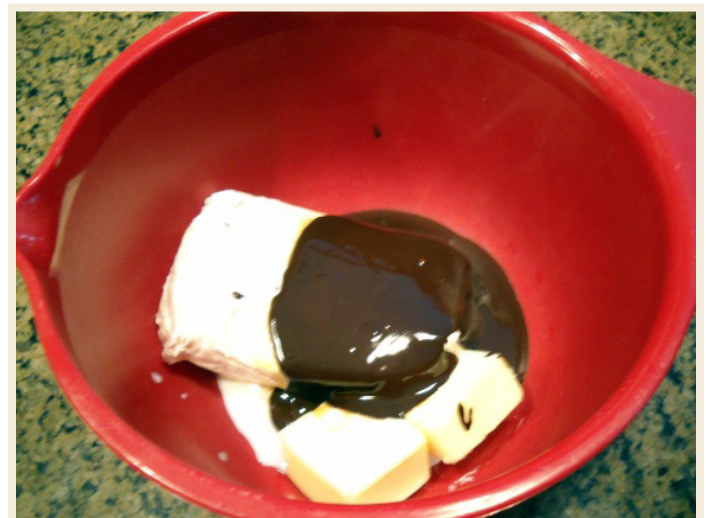
I just don't think a cake is truly a cake without cream cheese frosting, and I figured the same rule applies for cake pops. I used [Betty Crocker's](#) cream cheese frosting recipe. But, since I made a chocolate cake, and I wanted my cake pop to look uniform, I added 2 squares of melted chocolate to the cream cheese mixture to create a chocolate cream cheese frosting.

### **Ingredients**

- 1-8 oz package of cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup butter, softened
- 2 teaspoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 oz unsweetened baking chocolate, melted and cooled
- 4 cups powdered sugar

### **Directions**

1. Beat together the cream cheese, butter, milk, vanilla, and chocolate in a large bowl. The mixture will be thick!



2. Beat in the powdered sugar, one cup at a time. The frosting is very thick and can be a little tricky to beat. To avoid throwing powdered sugar everywhere, start the mixer on a very low speed, but increase the mixer speed as the sugar blends in to avoid overworking your mixer's motor.



3. Refrigerate the frosting until it's ready to be used.



This recipe does make a large batch of frosting. I did have some leftover after I made the cake pops, but just know, cream cheese frosting is delicious as a filling for homemade sandwich cookies.

### ***MIXING THE CAKE AND FROSTING***

Just like the debate over frosting, when it comes to cake pops, there's a lot of discussion over the best way to mix the cake and frosting together. Some people crumb their cake by hand; others use a blender or a food processor. Some bakers mix the cake and frosting with a mixer. Others say you have to mix the cake and frosting with your hands to get a good feel for the right texture. Still other bakers claim they have success just mixing the cake and frosting together in a bowl with a wooden spoon; I was not one of them.



I divided my cake into four sections. I wanted to try a few different mixing methods. Plus, it was easier to work with smaller sections of the cake rather than trying to crumb the entire cake at once.



I tried mixing the cake and frosting three different ways to find out which method worked best. The fourth section, I frosted and served as that night's dessert. My husband was sniffing around for treats having smelled the cake baking, and I had to distract him lest he eat the M&M's and other candies I'd stockpiled for decorating my cake pops the next day.

### **METHOD ONE: CRUMBING CAKE BY HAND AND MIXING WITH A WOODEN SPOON.**

I don't recommend this method. While I was able to crumble the cake into fine crumbs by hand, spoon mixing it with the frosting didn't work well. It took a long time to get the mixture to combine, and even then, I felt like I had cake laced with frosting rather than a consistent mix. I used a mashing-and-stirring motion, pressing the cake and frosting against the sides and bottom of the bowl with the spoon. Eventually, I was able to get a mix I thought would work, but I was concerned that I could still see specks of cake in the mixture. I ultimately abandoned this cake pop batch in favor of the other two.

### **METHOD TWO: CRUMBING CAKE BY HAND AND MIXING WITH HANDS.**

This method worked better, but it was messy. The cake and frosting mixed together quickly to form a thick cookie-batter consistency. And, I agree with the hand-mixing proponents that this method gives you the best feel for the right cake pop texture. This mix was a little sticky, so I

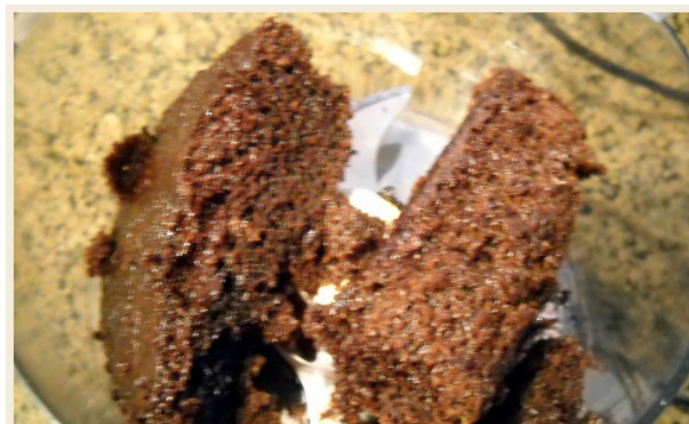
refrigerated it for 15 minutes before forming the cake balls. Once the dough had set a little, it was much easier to work with. The cake balls I made from the hand-mixture didn't hold their shape as well as Method Three's. They sagged a bit during the refrigeration process, but before I dipped them in chocolate the next day, I reformed them into perfect circles, and they stayed that way. They just needed a little extra refrigerator time.

### **METHOD THREE: CRUMBING AND MIXING IN A FOOD PROCESSOR.**

This is the method I will always use when I make cake pops. The cake crumbed perfectly, and the frosting mixed right in. I could work with the dough right away, and it kept a perfect cake ball shape during its overnight refrigeration. I suspect using a hand mixer or blender would give you the same good result.

#### **Directions**

1. Place one quarter of your cake in the food processor. I broke the cake quarter in half, so it would easily fit into the bowl. Pulse the food processor 10-15 times until the cake is chopped into fine crumbs.





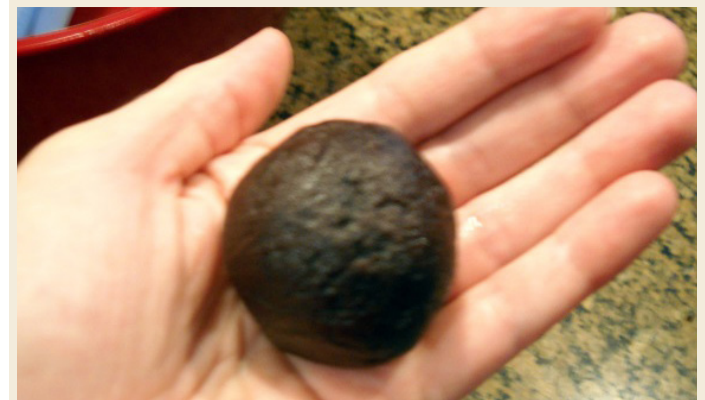
2. Add the frosting to the crumbs and process until the cake and frosting are well blended. I used about a third of a cup of frosting. The amount of frosting you use is going to vary based on the moisture content of your cake and the amount of cake you've crumbed.

You want enough frosting that the cake holds together, so you can form the cake pops, but you don't want too much frosting, as the mix will be too sticky and hard to work with. If in doubt, start with a small dollop of frosting and gradually add more until your cake mixture reaches the right consistency. Remember that old adage: it's far easier to add an ingredient to the pot than it is to take it out after it's been blended in.



3. Form the mix into cake pop-sized balls. I used a small ice cream scoop, so all my cake balls would be roughly the same size.

Place the cake balls on a parchment-lined baking sheet, cover with plastic, and refrigerate until firm. The cake balls should be ready within 2-3 hours. For faster set up, place the cake balls in the freezer for 30 minutes. I refrigerated mine overnight for decorating the next day.



Whichever cake-and-frosting mixing method you decide to your use, remember:

- Make sure the cake is completely and finely crumbed. You don't want any large pieces of cake floating around in your cake pops, or your pops will be lumpy and unpalatable.
- Less is more when it comes to adding the frosting. You want just enough that your cake pop will hold together and not crumble. Too much frosting and the cake pop will be sticky and hard to work with.
- Fully mix your cake and frosting. You don't want to be able to see dry crumbs of cake.
- If you're using the freezer to set your cake balls, don't let them freeze completely. You want them firm but not frozen. Don't leave them in the freezer for longer than an hour (30 minutes would be even better).
- If you accidentally went a little heavy on the frosting, you can refrigerate the mix for 15-30 minutes before you form your cake pops to make it easier to work with. Or, keep a clean bowl of water nearby and keep your hands moistened as you form the cake pops.

### **DECORATING THE CAKE POP**

I'll be honest: I'm not the most proficient of cake decorators. Fondant drives me crazy, and I'm one of those stick-figure Pictionary players, so intricately frosting-piped cartoon characters are beyond me. But, chocolate dipping and sprinkles I can handle. Another reason to love cake pops? Even the most basic of decorating techniques

leaves cake pops looking pretty and professional, a sure way to wow your officemates or the other baby shower invitees.

### **Directions**

1. Melt your dipping chocolate in a double boiler, if you're wise, or in the microwave, if you're brave. I'm brave, so I used the microwave. Just be sure to set your microwave to half power and melt the chocolate in 30 second bursts, stirring after each 30 second increment.

You don't want to overheat your chocolate. Too much heat makes the chocolate thick and difficult to use for dipping. Your chocolate squares may still look like they're holding



their shape even though they've been melted enough. After the chocolate has been microwaved for a minute, give it a really good stir to see if there's enough heat in the bowl to fully melt the chocolate.

After the chocolate is melted, consider stirring in a little shortening to thin the chocolate a bit more. It will give the chocolate a better consistency for dipping. Never use water to thin chocolate! Like water and oil, water and chocolate don't mix.

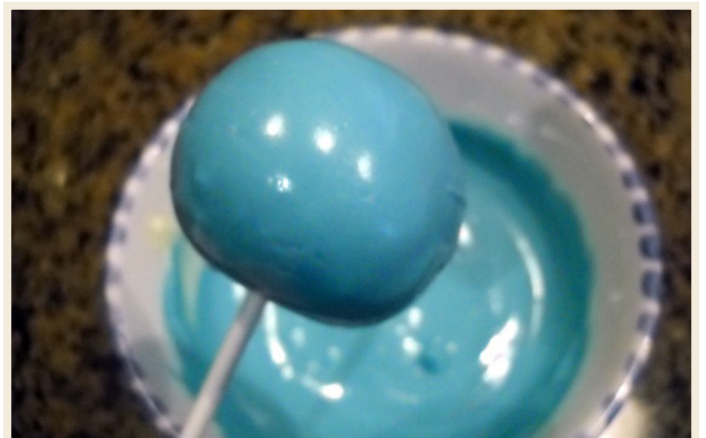
If you're going to add color to your chocolate, do it now. But, don't use the regular food coloring you use to color frosting. You'll need to use candy coloring. Regular water-based food coloring won't mix with chocolate. You know why.

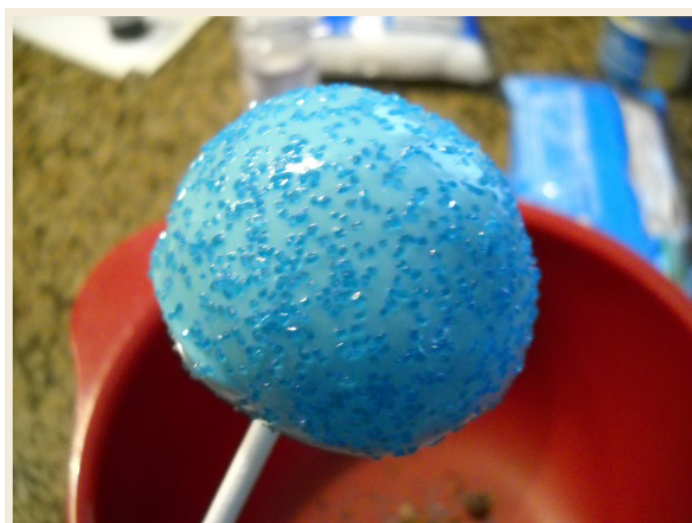
2. Dip the end of the cake pop stick in chocolate. This will help the stick stay firmly stuck in your cake pop. Twirl the stick to remove any excess chocolate. Then, push the stick into



the center of your cake pop. I dipped one cake pop at a time and left the other cake balls in the refrigerator until I was ready to work with them.

3. And, now, the moment we've all been waiting for....dip your cake ball into the chocolate! Like mixing the cake and frosting, every baker seems to have their own method for coating their cake pop in chocolate. Some dip and twirl the cake pop in the bowl. Some use a bowl deep enough that they can completely submerge the cake pop in the chocolate. Others spoon chocolate over the cake pop.





I tried all of these methods at some point during my decorating process. They all worked fine. But, be sure to twirl the cake pop after it's been dipped until all the excess chocolate is removed.

After the excess chocolate has dripped off, add your sprinkles. You want to get your sprinkles in place while the chocolate is still wet, so they'll adhere. But, if you're adding a second layer of chocolate or a chocolate drizzle, wait until the first layer of chocolate has set. I added my sprinkles while holding the cake pop over a bowl to catch any that didn't quite stick lest I have little nonpareils inadvertently decorating my kitchen counter and floor.

4. Set your dipped and decorated cake pop on a parchment-lined baking sheet to dry. If you



don't want your cake pop to have a flat back, you can use a Styrofoam block punched with cake pop stick-sized holes. Then, you can dry your cake pops as they sit upright, leaving them nice and round. I lined my Styrofoam block with aluminum foil to catch any excess chocolate drips. That way, I could keep my block clean and use it for my next batch of pops.



## **CONTENDER TWO:** **THE DOUGHNUT HOLE CAKE POP**

**W**hen I first heard about cake pops, I assumed the inside would be more cake-like, more like a cupcake on a stick than a brownie. This recipe provided a cake pop more like my original assumption. If you're not a huge fan of frosting and want a cake pop with a true cakey center, this is the recipe for you.

### **MAKING THE DOUGHNUT HOLES**

If you've never made homemade doughnut holes before, beware! They're incredibly addicting. I was only able to save four for my cake pop experiment. The rest mysteriously disappeared. And, if you have a fear of using yeast, cake-style doughnut holes don't require it. The only trick is keeping the oil at a consistent temperature, so your doughnut holes cook evenly rather than burning on the outside while remaining raw in the middle. Use a thermometer and adjust your heat source accordingly.

I used a doughnut hole recipe from [Pillsbury](#) that promised to be quick and easy, and it was. Since I was using the doughnut holes for cake pops, I didn't roll them in cinnamon sugar after

they were fried, and I made them a bit bigger than the recipe called for since I wanted a meatier cake pop.

### **Ingredients**

- 1½ cups flour
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ cup milk
- 2 tablespoons oil
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 1 egg

### **Directions**

1. In a large bowl, stir the dry ingredients together (flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg).



2. Lightly beat your egg and add it to the dry ingredients along with the milk, oil, and vanilla. Stir together until the dry ingredients are just moistened. Don't overmix!



3. Heat 2-3 inches of oil in a large saucepan. You want the oil temperature to be 375°. Oil heats quickly and keeps getting hotter, so keep a close eye on your thermometer and keep lowering the heat source to keep the oil temperature constant.

If you don't have a thermometer, watch your doughnut holes. If they're browning too quickly, turn the heat down and wait a minute or two before you start the next batch.



4. Though you can drop rounded spoonfuls of dough into the hot oil to cook, I formed mine into a ball shape that would work best for a



cake pop. Shaping the dough also made the doughnut a little denser, so it stayed on the stick better for chocolate dipping later. The dough is sticky, but if you keep your hands moistened, you can work with it (kind of like a matzo ball, though I didn't refrigerate the batter before frying). The dough will expand while cooking, so plan accordingly.

5. Fry the doughnut holes in small batches; I did three at a time. Cook the doughnut holes until golden, about 1 – 1½ minutes on each side. Place the doughnuts on a paper towel-lined plate to cool.



Just like your cake, the doughnut holes need to cool completely before you can proceed with making your cake pops. Lest your doughnut holes disappear like mine, I recommend you hide them well while they cool.

Unlike the traditional cake pop, you can skip the refrigeration step. Your cake ball is already fully formed and set! So, if you're in a bit of a rush to get your cake pops ready, the doughnut hole cake pop is a quicker option. Once the doughnut holes cool, they can be immediately decorated.

### ***DECORATING THE DOUGHNUT HOLE CAKE POPS***

I used the same method to decorate the doughnut holes as I did the traditional cake pop: dipped in chocolate with a few decorative touches. Since the doughnut holes were a little less dense than the traditional cake pops, they could be a little unstable on the cake pop stick. For those doughnut holes that had an air pocket in their center (due to the frying and puffing of the dough), I dipped them in chocolate first, allowed the chocolate to set, and then, inserted the cake pop stick. That gave me a more stable cake pop.

#### **Directions**

1. I decided to decorate these cake pops with chocolate shavings. To create my shavings, I grated a Hershey chocolate bar with a cheese shredder. I refrigerated the shavings for fifteen minutes before decorating the cake pop to keep the chocolate sprinkles from



melting together in my hot kitchen before I could use them.



2. Melt your dipping chocolate in a double boiler or microwave just as you would for a traditional cake pop. Remember not to overheat your chocolate. Thin the chocolate with a little shortening for smoother chocolate and easier dipping.

3. Dip the end of the cake pop stick in the dipping chocolate and insert the stick into the doughnut hole. Like before, the chocolate will help keep the doughnut hole on the stick.

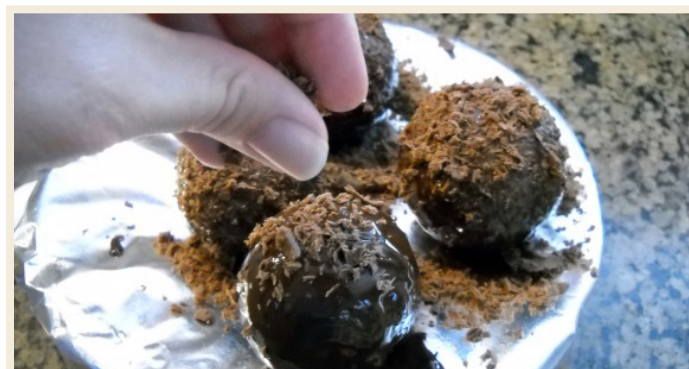
If the doughnut hole is a bit too light in the middle and loose on the cake pop stick, consider dipping the doughnut hole first, allowing the chocolate to set, and then inserting the stick later. For easy dipping and excess chocolate removal, use a slotted spoon



to submerge the doughnut hole in the chocolate. Or, you can spoon your dipping chocolate onto the doughnut hole cake pop rather than dipping it.

4. Dip the doughnut hole in chocolate and swirl the cake pop to remove the excess chocolate. Sprinkle the chocolate shavings onto the cake pop.

Lay the cake pops on a parchment-lined baking sheet or set them upright in a Styrofoam block until the chocolate is hardened. To hasten this process, you can put your cake pops in the freezer or refrigerator. Just don't let them freeze completely!



Once your chocolate sets, you have doughnut hole-style cake pops! The doughnut holes were even more popular in my house after they had been dipped in chocolate and cake popped. These four survivors from the initial doughnut hole assault didn't last long. Luckily, I kept one hidden for the final taste test. Speaking of which, we have one more contender to go...

# CONTENDER THREE:

## THE EBELSKIVER CAKE POP



**A**t this point, you may be wondering what in the world an ebelskiver is. I only heard about them a year or so ago. They're a small, round Danish pancake. They're cooked in a special pan with a half dozen circular wells. Depending on the recipe used, ebelskivers can either be made sweet, and served as a dessert, or savory, and served as an appetizer or entrée.



### MAKING THE EBELSKIVERS

Though a little more flat and football-like than circular, I thought the ebelskiver size and shape would work well as a cake pop center. I used a

dessert recipe from [Williams-Sonoma](#) and added a chocolate filling. The resultant cake pop tasted like an éclair on a stick, so much so that the next time I make them, I'll use a vanilla custard filling. If you like decadent French treats individually sized, this is the cake pop for you.

### Ingredients

- 1 cup flour
- 1½ teaspoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 large eggs, separated
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- ½ teaspoon vanilla

### Directions

1. In a large bowl, stir together the dry ingredients (flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt).



2. In a separate bowl, lightly beat the egg yolks. Then, whisk in the milk, butter, and vanilla. Again, for easy pouring into the dry ingredients, I used a large liquid measuring cup.



3. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ones and mix together with a wooden spoon. The batter will be a little lumpy.



4. In a clean bowl (sorry, this recipe creates a lot





of dishes!), beat the egg whites until stiff (not dry) peaks form. This won't work if you've gotten any egg yolk into your egg whites. For better results, use a glass bowl and make sure your egg whites are room temperature. I know many recipes call for eggs to be room temp, and like many cooks, I totally ignore it and pull my eggs straight out of the fridge. But, this is an instance where setting your eggs out thirty minutes before using them actually makes a difference.

Use an electric mixer and start beating the egg whites on low speed until they're foamy.



Then, increase the mixer speed. Egg whites are sufficiently beaten when you remove the beaters and the egg whites form a peak. The tip of the peak will droop slightly at the top. You can also test your egg whites by tilting your bowl. The egg whites shouldn't slide around

5. Using a rubber spatula, in a slicing motion, fold one-third of the egg whites into the batter until combined.



6. Fold the remaining egg whites into the mix until no white streaks remain. Don't stir the egg whites, or they'll lose their volume.





7. Preheat your ebelskiver pan over medium-low heat. Don't pour the batter into a cold pan! Brush the wells with melted butter. Think "cooking a pancake," which is exactly what you're doing.
8. Fill the heated wells about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full of batter. If you're going to add chocolate or any other filling, do it now before you turn the ebelskivers.



9. Once the batter starts to bubble in the center (after 2-3 minutes), flip the ebelskiver over, so it can cook on the other side. Using a wooden skewer or chopstick, slide the skewer around the edges of the ebelskiver, gently lift, and flip.
10. Cook on the opposite side for another 2-3 minutes until the pancakes are a nice golden brown and remove them from pan.



Congratulations! You have now made ebelskivers. I'm sure you know the drill by now, but the ebelskivers have to cool completely before they can be decorated as cake pops. Luckily, the ebelskivers are small, and they cool quickly, so you'll soon be indulging in chocolate-filled cake pops.

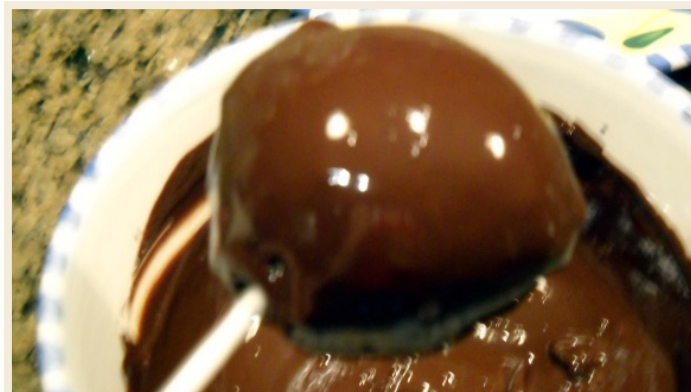
### ***DECORATING THE EBELSKIVERS***

Though I normally frown on double dipping, I did want to get two different colors of chocolate on a cake pop. To keep it simple, I used dark chocolate and white chocolate to create a black-and-white cookie-style cake pop.

Melt your dipping chocolates as you use them to avoid having one clump on you. Remember, before you can dip your cake pop in the second chocolate, the first chocolate has to harden. Wait until this occurs before melting your second dipping chocolate.

## Directions

1. Just like before, melt your first dipping chocolate. Then, dip the cake pop stick in the chocolate and insert it into the ebelskiver. Dip the ebelskiver in chocolate, twirling it to remove any excess chocolate drips.



2. Place the dipped ebelskivers on a parchment lined baking sheet or upright in your Styrofoam block to dry. I did use my Styrofoam block, but the ebelskivers are bit more flat and football shaped than doughnut holes or traditional cake pops, so having a flat back on these pops really won't be that noticeable.



3. Once the first chocolate layer hardens, melt your second dipping chocolate. Dip half of your cake pop in the melted chocolate and allow the second layer of the chocolate to set.



Now you have a striped, albeit double-dipped, cake pop! Of course, this is a time when double dipping is encouraged rather than frowned upon. Though I enjoyed all aspects of the cake pop making process, I had the most fun decorating them. Before I announce the winner the Cake Pop Challenge (I know, the suspense is killing you, right?), here are a few more decorating tips and ideas.





## **DECORATING IDEAS: A FEW EXTRA TRICKS & TIPS**

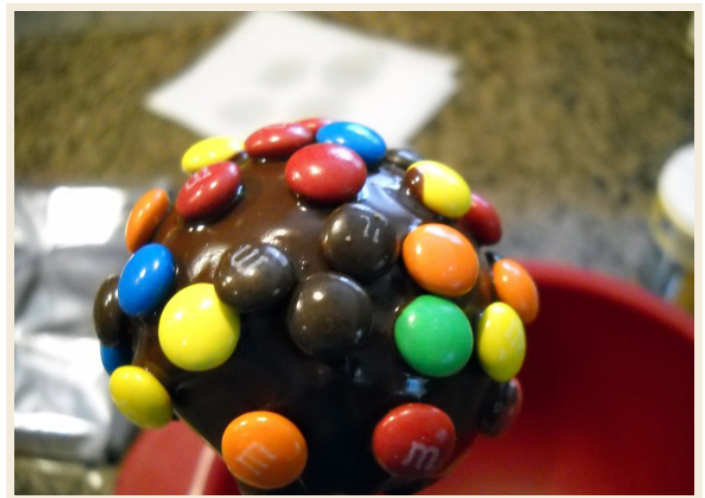
**L**ike I mentioned before, I'm no steady hand at cake decorating, but cake pops are incredibly forgiving. With just a few simple decorating tricks, you can create expert looking cake pops. Here are a few of my favorites:

- Use a fork to drizzle a second layer of chocolate swirls or patterns on the cake pop. But, remember to let your first layer of chocolate harden before adding the second. I just twirled my cake pop and let the white chocolate drip naturally from the fork tines



onto the dark chocolate layer. I liked the effect so much, I tried dark chocolate drizzles on my blue-tinted white chocolate.

- Color white chocolate to give the cake pop a



little extra panache. Just remember to use candy coloring not food coloring. You can also use candy melts which come in a variety of colors and allow you to skip the chocolate-tinting process. Try pairing your colored chocolate with similarly colored sugar crystals or complimenting nonpareils.

- Experiment with a lot of different candy coatings. I tried mini M&M's, nuts, coconut, chocolate shavings, and multiple chocolate layers in addition to traditional baking sprinkles. I even made a little cake pop man with candy eyes, a swipe of chocolate



from the end of a chop stick smiley face, and coconut hair. Don't be afraid to try something new. If it doesn't work out, you can easily eat the cake pop, destroy the evidence, and no one will be the wiser.



## **CONCLUSION:** **AND, THE WINNER IS....**



**N**ot to be all anticlimactic, but it was kind of a tie. I preferred the traditional cake pops as they were the most like what I'd get at a bakery or Starbucks. Plus, brownie fan than I am, I like a rich, chocolate cake center. My taster, not a heavy sweets fan, preferred the ebelskiver pops with a more constructed center and just a hint of chocolate filling. If it were a popularity contest, the doughnut hole cake pops disappeared first, indicating the family's preference for which cake pop was the winner.



The rules of the contest were all strictly adhered to. I used the same brand of chocolate for dipping all cake pops, and I secured the services of a disinterested taster. I also made all of the cake pops completely from scratch. However, while baking treats from scratch can be more fun and give you more control over a recipe (or, at least more opportunities to experiment), there are times when...well, you just don't have the time to make a home baked good entirely from scratch.

### **CAKE POP TIME SAVERS**

Cake pops, especially, can be time consuming, and you may find yourself needing to save a few min-

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utes when, say, your first grader tells you at eight o'clock at night that she promised her class she'd bring cake pops to the school bake sale at nine the next morning. Rather than pull an all-nighter, you may want to:

- **Use a Cake Mix or a Premade Can of Frosting.**

Many cake pop recipes actually call for pre-made frosting and cake mixes rather than items made from scratch. Some bakers claim these pre-prepared items actually work better for cake pops. At any rate, I doubt the first grade teacher or bake sale patrons would be able to tell the difference.

- **Buy Doughnut Holes from Your Local Bakery or Grocery Store**

Even from scratch, doughnut hole cake pops came together quickly. If you use premade doughnut holes, you can probably have your cake pops put together in under an hour. On that note...

- **Make Doughnut Hole or Ebelskiver Cake Pops Rather Than Traditional**

Even if you're using a cake mix, you still have to bake a cake, let it cool, mix it with frosting,

shape your cake pops, and refrigerate them for a few hours before you can even dip them. Using either doughnut holes or ebelskivers allows you to skip several of those steps and save hours of time. Making ebelskiver cake pops is much quicker than making traditional cake pops, and making doughnut hole cake pops is quicker than both.

- **Keep the Cake Pop Decorating Simple**

If you're dipping or drizzling your cake pops with multiple layers of chocolate, you're going to have to allow time for each layer to set. If time is a factor, dip the cake pop in just a single layer of chocolate and decorate with a quick sprinkle of colored sugar crystals or nonpareils. Save the intricate decorating for when your first grader gives you more advance notice.

Regardless of how you decide to make your cake pops, either from scratch or from a mix, with canned frosting or homemade, or with doughnut holes, ebelskivers, or a center of your own creation, I hope this tutorial has sparked several creative ideas you can use in crafting your own cake pops.