

- Prep Time: 25 minutes
- Cook Time: 35-40 minutes
- Total Time: 1 hour 5 minutes (plus cooling time)
- Difficulty: Medium
- Servings: 12 slices
- Course: Dessert
- Cuisine: American Classic

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Recipe Intensities & Profile

To help you plan your baking session, here is a detailed breakdown of the recipe's technical intensity, labor investment, and flavor profile:

- Labor Intensity: Moderate (Requires shredding fresh carrots and toasting/chopping nuts)
- Skill Level: Intermediate (Focuses on gentle folding techniques and proper temperature management for the frosting)
- Flavor Profile: Warmly spiced (cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger), nutty, rich, with a pleasant natural sweetness
- Texture Profile: Super dense, tender, moist crumb paired with crunchy toasted walnuts and silky, smooth frosting
- Equipment Needed: Two 9-inch round cake pans, box grater or food processor, hand or stand mixer, wire cooling rack

The Secret to the Best Carrot Cake

Before diving into the ingredients, keep these three crucial golden rules in mind:

1. **Grate Your Own Carrots:** Pre-shredded bagged carrots from the grocery store are far too dry, thick, and tough. Grating whole carrots fresh on the fine-to-medium side of a box grater releases natural juices that guarantee a moist cake.
2. **Toast the Walnuts:** Raw walnuts are fine, but toasted walnuts elevate the flavor profile exponentially by adding a deep, buttery, roasted crunch.
3. **Use Neutral Oil:** Butter adds great flavor, but neutral oil (like vegetable or canola oil) retains moisture at room temperature and in the fridge, keeping the cake soft for days.

Ingredients

For the Carrot Walnut Cake:

- Dry Ingredients:
 - 2 cups (250g) all-purpose flour
 - 2 teaspoons baking powder
 - 1 teaspoon baking soda

- 1 ½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Wet Ingredients:
 - 1 cup (200g) granulated white sugar
 - 1 cup (200g) packed light brown sugar
 - 1 cup (240ml) vegetable oil (or canola oil)
 - 4 large eggs, room temperature
 - 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Mix-Ins:
 - 3 cups (approx. 300g) freshly grated carrots (loosely packed)
 - 1 cup (115g) raw walnuts, toasted and coarsely chopped

For the Classic Cream Cheese Frosting:

- 8 oz (225g) full-fat block cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- ½ cup (115g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 3 ½ cups (420g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- A pinch of salt
- ½ cup extra chopped walnuts for garnish (optional)

Step-by-Step Baking Instructions

Step 1: Prep and Toast Nut Intensity

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. Grease two 9-inch round cake pans with butter or cooking spray, line the bottoms with parchment paper rounds, and dust lightly with flour.
3. Spread the walnuts across a small baking sheet and toast in the preheated oven for 6 to 8 minutes until fragrant. Remove, cool completely, and chop coarsely.

Step 2: Combine the Dry Ingredients

1. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and salt until evenly combined. Set aside.

Step 3: Whisk the Wet Ingredients

1. In a large mixing bowl (or stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment), combine the granulated sugar, brown sugar, and vegetable oil. Beat on medium speed for 1 to 2 minutes.
2. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition until the mixture turns pale and smooth.
3. Stir in the vanilla extract.

Step 4: Combine and Fold

1. Turn the mixer speed to low and slowly add the dry ingredient mixture in two batches, mixing just until combined. Do not overmix.
2. Using a rubber spatula, gently fold in the freshly grated carrots and toasted walnuts until evenly distributed throughout the batter.

Step 5: Bake

1. Divide the batter evenly between your two prepared cake pans.
2. Bake at 350°F (175°C) for 35 to 40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cakes comes out clean or with just a few moist crumbs attached.
3. Remove from the oven and allow the cakes to cool in their pans for 15 minutes. Then, turn them out onto a wire cooling rack to cool completely before frosting.

Step 6: Make the Cream Cheese Frosting

1. In a large bowl, beat the softened cream cheese and butter together on medium-high speed for 2 to 3 minutes until smooth and fluffy with no lumps.
2. Add the vanilla extract and a pinch of salt.
3. Gradually add the sifted powdered sugar, one cup at a time, beating on low speed until fully incorporated.
4. Increase the speed to high and beat for 1 minute until the frosting is light, creamy, and holds its shape.

Step 7: Assemble and Decorate

1. Place the first cooled cake layer on a cake stand or serving plate.
2. Spread a generous layer of cream cheese frosting over the top.
3. Carefully place the second cake layer on top.
4. Use the remaining frosting to cover the top and sides of the cake smoothly using an offset spatula.
5. Decorate the outer edges or top with extra toasted chopped walnuts.

Baker's Storage & Preservation Notes

- Refrigeration: Because of the cream cheese frosting, this cake should be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator. It will stay fresh for up to 5 days.
- Serving Tip: For the best flavor and texture, let slices sit at room temperature for 15 to 20 minutes before serving so the frosting softens and the cake warms slightly.
- Freezing: You can freeze the unfrosted cake layers wrapped tightly in plastic wrap and aluminum foil for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the fridge before frosting.

Complete Nutritional Breakdown

The following values are estimated per slice based on a 12-slice yield:

Nutrient	Amount Per Serving
Calories	585 kcal
Total Fat	35g
<i>Saturated Fat</i>	10g
<i>Trans Fat</i>	0.2g
Cholesterol	85mg
Sodium	310mg
Total Carbohydrates	64g
<i>Dietary Fiber</i>	3g
<i>Total Sugars</i>	46g
Protein	7g
Vitamin A	3200 IU
Calcium	75mg
Iron	2.1mg
Potassium	220mg