

# Alpine Angel Cake with 7- to 15-Minute Icing

**H**EAVENLY FOOD of the angels, this cake is divine: it rises like the Alps, has a slightly moist, tender crumb, and is not too sweet. I often serve it with a light sifting of confectioners' sugar on top ("snow on the Alps") and Blueberry-Honey Sauce (page 214), but for a party presentation you can frost it with the 7- to 15-Minute Icing. The basic recipe contains vanilla and (optional) almond extract, but you can substitute other flavors. To make Orange Angel Cake, replace the almond extract with orange extract plus 2 tablespoons grated orange zest, tossed with a little of the sugar-flour mixture in Step 3; add the zest when you fold in the whites. To make Coconut Angel Cake, use the vanilla and almond extract plus 1½ teaspoons coconut extract, and add ⅓ cup sweetened shredded coconut, tossed with a little of the sugar-flour mixture in Step 3; add the coconut when you fold in the whites.

To cool an angel cake, turn the pan upside down, either standing it on the little feet attached to the pan rim or hanging it over the neck of a bottle, so gravity can help stretch the fragile cell structure until it is cold and set; if you leave it right side up, the cake will collapse as it cools. (See "About Sponge Cakes and Egg Whites," page 110.)

**Note:** Superfine, or "bar," sugar is sold in the supermarket in 1-pound boxes (see page 38). This recipe calls for combination of confectioners' and superfine sugar because they will dissolve in the egg whites more quickly than regular granulated sugar (which also is heavier and will weigh down the batter). Instead of the combination, you can use all superfine sugar (1¼ cups). To prepare your own superfine sugar, whirl granulated sugar in the food processor until fine.

**General High Altitude Notes:** At altitudes above 2,500 feet, the trick with this cake is to under-

beat the whites, just until they form soft, slightly droopy peaks; at this stage there is still room in them to expand when baked. If over-beaten to stiff peaks, the air cells, and the cake, will collapse when the cake cools. As the elevation increases, add flour to strengthen the cake's cellular structure and cream of tartar for acidity and to stabilize the whipped whites. To compensate for evaporation and a drier atmosphere, add a little water at 5,000 feet and above. The oven temperature must be carefully monitored because you need just enough heat to enable the whites to expand sufficiently and the starch to set the cell structure before the cake top over-

browns. If the oven is too hot, the top will glaze over before the interior batter rises and sets.

If your cake sinks, you can blame it on over-whipped whites and/or weak structure (not enough flour)—or the fact that you forgot to invert it while cooling.

**Special Equipment:** A 10 × 4-inch (16-cup) angel tube pan with a removable bottom; sifter; wax paper; flexible spatula or flat whisk; narrow-necked bottle (like a wine bottle) tall enough to

hang the tube pan upside down on its neck (optional); foil-covered 10-inch cardboard cake disk or flat plate; serrated knife

**Pan Preparation:** None; do not grease the pan.

**Makes** one 10-inch tube cake; serves 10 to 12

## High Notes

**At 3,000 feet and above,** add extra flour and cream of tartar. Raise the oven temperature and add flavor by increasing the extracts.

Ingredients	Sea Level	3,000 feet	5,000 feet	7,000 feet	10,000 feet
<b>Oven rack position, temperature, and baking time</b>	Rack in center; bake at 325°F for 45 to 50 minutes	Rack in lower third of oven; bake at 375°F for 25 to 32 minutes	Rack in lower third of oven; bake at 375°F for 25 to 30 minutes	Rack in lower third of oven; bake at 375°F for 30 to 35 minutes	Rack in lower third of oven; bake at 350°F for 30 to 35 minutes
<b>Sifted cake flour</b>	1 cup	1 cup plus 1 tablespoon	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons	1 cup plus 2 tablespoons	1¼ cups
<b>Sifted confectioners' sugar</b>	½ cup	½ cup	½ cup	½ cup	½ cup
<b>Salt</b>	½ teaspoon	½ teaspoon	½ teaspoon	½ teaspoon	½ teaspoon
<b>Large egg whites, at room temperature</b>	1½ cups (10 to 13)	1½ cups (10 to 13)	1½ cups (10 to 13)	1½ cups (10 to 13)	1½ cups (10 to 13)
<b>Cream of tartar</b>	1 teaspoon	1½ teaspoons	1½ teaspoons	1½ teaspoons	2 teaspoons
<b>Superfine sugar</b>	¾ cup	¾ cup	¾ cup	¾ cup	¾ cup
<b>Vanilla extract</b>	1 teaspoon	1 teaspoon	2 teaspoons	2 teaspoons	2 teaspoons
<b>Almond extract, optional</b>	¾ teaspoon	1 teaspoon	1 teaspoon	1 teaspoon	2 teaspoons
<b>Water</b>	None	None	2 tablespoons	2 tablespoons	2 tablespoons

CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR OR 7- TO 15-MINUTE ICING (RECIPE FOLLOWS)





droopy peaks

*Whipped Egg Whites*



stiff peaks

1. Position the rack and preheat the oven as indicated for your altitude in the chart above. Prepare the pan as directed.

2. Sift the cake flour onto a piece of wax paper, then sift the confectioners' sugar and salt over it. Place the empty sifter over a bowl, gather up the edges of the wax paper, and tip the dry ingredients into the sifter, without shaking the sifter; let it sit over the bowl until needed.

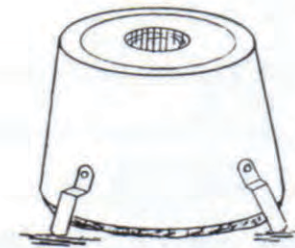
3. Place the egg whites in the large bowl of the electric mixer and check the whites to make sure they no longer feel cold. Add the cream of tartar and whip on medium-high speed just until foamy. Gradually whip in the superfine sugar, increasing the mixer speed to high, but watch closely. As soon as you see beater tracks on top of the whites, stop the machine, lift the beater, and check the stiffness of the foam. At sea level, you want whites that will stand up in stiff peaks, but at 2,500 feet and above, you only want soft, droopy peaks (see sketch). If the whites look too soft, continue beating for just a few more seconds and check again; do not overbeat. The whites should be glossy and smooth.

4. With a flexible spatula, fold in the extract(s). Sift about one-third of the flour-sugar mixture onto the whites and fold it in,

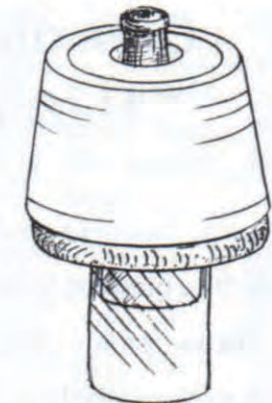
then slowly sift and fold in the rest (including any that fell into the other bowl) a little at a time. Fold with a very light touch, cutting through the center of the whites and down to the bowl bottom, then bringing the spatula up again toward you while giving the bowl a quarter turn, until all the dry ingredients are incorporated.

5. Scoop the batter gently into the pan and smooth the top. Cut through the batter once with the spatula to be sure there are no large air pockets. Bake for the time indicated for your altitude in the chart above, or until the cake is well risen and golden on top and a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. As soon as it is baked, invert the cake pan onto its feet or hang it upside down over the neck of a bottle, as shown on the following page, and let cool completely, several hours (or overnight).

6. To remove the cake from the pan, slide the blade of a long, thin knife between the cake and the pan sides, and then the central tube, to loosen it. Top the cake with a foil-covered cardboard disk or plate, invert, and lift off the pan. If your cake is stuck to the pan bottom, slide the knife between the pan and the bottom of the cake to release it. Top the cake with sifted confectioners' sugar or the icing, and cut with a serrated knife.



Cooling cake on pan feet



Cooling cake over a bottle

### 7- to 15-Minute Icing

You may remember this as 7-Minute Icing, which it is from sea level to about 5,000 feet. At higher elevations, the lower boiling point of the water means that it takes longer to heat the whites into a stiff, stable foam. Don't give up—keep whipping, and eventually it will work. You can vary the flavor by changing the extract.

**Special Equipment:** Double boiler; hand-held electric mixer

**Makes** 2½ cups, enough to frost a 10-inch tube cake

- 2 large egg whites, at room temperature
- 1½ cups superfine or granulated sugar
- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon lukewarm water
- 2 teaspoons light corn syrup
- ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Add water to the bottom of a double boiler one quarter to one third its depth and set over high heat until it comes to a rolling boil (this

will take longer at high altitudes than at sea level). Meanwhile, stir together all the ingredients except the vanilla in the top of the double boiler, off the heat. Set a hand-held electric mixer next to the stove. At 7,000 feet and above, have a kettle of water boiling on the stove to replenish the water in the bottom pan if it evaporates. Peek into the bottom pan occasionally as you whip to see if there is enough water.

When the water boils, put the top pan in place and begin whipping the whites. Use medium-high speed for the first 5 minutes, then increase the speed to high and beat until the whites form a satiny foam that holds soft peaks and mounds on the beater, 2 to 7 minutes, depending on your altitude (the whites will be whipped again in the next step).

When the whites are ready, turn off the heat and set the top pan on a pot holder on the counter. Fold in the vanilla, then whip hard for an additional 1 to 3 minutes, until the whites form very stiff peaks on the beater tip. The icing will air-dry to a stiff outer surface, so use it as soon as it is made.