



Kitchen Cheat Sheet: Oatmeal Cake

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Tips and Time Savers

- Let the oats fully soak in the boiling water. That's what gives the cake its soft, tender crumb instead of a chewy, suspicious situation.
- Use real butter. This cake is old-fashioned and expects to be treated with respect.
- Spread the batter evenly in the pan so it bakes level and behaves itself when it's time to go under the broiler.
- Add the coconut topping while the cake is still hot so it melts in and sticks like it's supposed to.
- Stay glued to the oven during broiling. The topping goes from pale to perfect to "we have serious regrets" in about thirty seconds.
- Let the cake cool slightly before cutting unless you enjoy very warm, falling apart cake, and questionable self-control.

Storage

Room temperature

This oatmeal cake can be kept covered at room temperature for up to 24 hours, which makes it perfect for bake-ahead situations and surprise visitors.

Refrigerator

After that, move it to the refrigerator, tightly covered, where it will stay fresh for 3–4 days.

Freezer

For longer storage, oatmeal cake freezes beautifully. Cut it into individual squares, wrap each piece tightly in plastic wrap, then place in a freezer-safe container or bag. Freeze for up to 2 months. Thaw overnight in the fridge or at room temperature—no reheating required unless you want it slightly warm and extra comforting.

Variations

- No pecans version: Skip the pecans and lean fully into the coconut topping. Still rich, still broiled, still wildly snackable.
- Nut swap: Use chopped walnuts instead of pecans if that's what's hanging out in the freezer judging you.
- Extra cozy spice: Add a pinch of cinnamon or nutmeg to the cake batter for subtle, old-school warmth.
- Dairy tweak: You can use half-and-half in place of evaporated milk in the topping in a pinch, but evaporated milk gives the best old-fashioned richness.

FAQs

Can I make oatmeal cake ahead of time?

Yes, and it actually behaves better after a few hours. Bake it, broil the coconut topping, let it cool, then cover and keep it at room temperature for up to 24 hours or refrigerate for longer storage.

Does oatmeal cake need to be refrigerated?

Not right away. It's fine at room temperature for a day, loosely covered. After that, refrigerate to keep the coconut topping fresh and happy.

Can I use old-fashioned oats instead of quick oats?

You can, but the texture will be chewier and less tender. If you do swap, give the oats extra soaking time so they soften properly. Just do NOT use instant oatmeal!

What size pan should I use for oatmeal cake?

A standard 9×13 baking dish works best and keeps this firmly in sheet cake territory. Smaller pans will make it too thick and mess with the bake time. Saying that, my mom used to make it in a 9x9 inch pan.

Can I skip the coconut topping?

You can, but you'll be skipping the best part. The broiled coconut pecan topping is what turns this from "nice cake" into "why is there none left."

Nice to Have

As an Amazon Associate, I earn commission from qualifying purchases.

I use these Anchor Hocking glass baking dishes constantly, especially for dump cakes and casseroles that like to get a little wild in the oven. You get a 2-quart and 3-quart dish, they bake evenly, clean up without a fight, and the clear glass lets you see what's happening without opening the oven and messing with it. Not fancy, not precious — just solid, dependable, and exactly what you want when you're baking for real life. [get them here.](https://www.restlesschipotle.com/oatmeal-cake-recipe/)