

## Perfect Party Cake

<http://userealbutter.com/2008/03/30/perfect-party-cake-recipe/>  
*from Dorie Greenspan's Baking From My Home to Yours*

### cake

2 1/4 cups cake flour  
1 tbsp baking powder (3/4 tsp adjusted for altitude)  
1/2 tsp salt  
1 1/4 cups whole milk or buttermilk  
4 large egg whites  
1 1/2 cups sugar  
2 tsps grated lemon zest  
1 stick (8 tsps or 4 oz.) unsalted butter, at room temperature  
1/2 tsp pure lemon extract

### buttercream

1 cup sugar  
4 large egg whites  
3 sticks (12 oz.) unsalted butter, at room temperature  
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice (from 2 large lemons)  
1 tsp pure vanilla extract

### finishing

2/3 cup seedless raspberry preserves stirred vigorously or warmed gently until spreadable  
1 1/2 cups sweetened shredded coconut (omitted)

Center a rack in the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter two 9x2-inch round cake pans and line the bottom of each pan with a round of buttered parchment or wax paper. Put the pans on a baking sheet.

**Cake:** Sift together the flour, baking powder and salt. Whisk together the milk and egg whites in a medium bowl. Put the sugar and lemon zest in a mixer bowl or another large bowl and rub them together with your fingers until the sugar is moist and fragrant. Add the butter and working with the paddle or whisk attachment, or with a hand mixer, beat at medium speed for a full 3 minutes, until the butter and sugar are very light. Beat in the extract, then add one third of the flour mixture, still beating on medium speed. Beat in half of the milk-egg mixture, then beat in half of the remaining dry ingredients until incorporated. Add the rest of the milk and eggs beating until the batter is homogeneous, then add the last of the dry ingredients. Finally, give the batter a good 2-minute beating to ensure that it is thoroughly mixed and well aerated. Divide the batter between the two pans and smooth the tops with a rubber spatula. Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until the cakes are well risen and springy to the touch – a thin knife inserted into the centers should come out clean. Transfer the cakes to cooling racks and cool for about 5 minutes, then run a knife around the sides of the cakes, unfold them and peel off the

paper liners. Invert and cool to room temperature, right side up (the cooled cake layers can be wrapped airtight and stored at room temperature overnight or frozen for up to two months).

**Buttercream:** Put the sugar and egg whites in a mixer bowl or another large heatproof bowl, fit the bowl over a pan of simmering water and whisk constantly, keeping the mixture over the heat, until it feels hot to the touch, about 3 minutes. The sugar should be dissolved, and the mixture will look like shiny marshmallow cream. Remove the bowl from the heat. Working with the whisk attachment or with a hand mixer, beat the meringue on medium speed until it is cool, about 5 minutes. Switch to the paddle attachment if you have one, and add the butter a stick at a time, beating until smooth. Once all the butter is in, beat in the buttercream on medium-high speed until it is thick and very smooth, 6-10 minutes. During this time the buttercream may curdle or separate – just keep beating and it will come together again. On medium speed, gradually beat in the lemon juice, waiting until each addition is absorbed before adding more, and then the vanilla. You should have a shiny smooth, velvety, pristine white buttercream. Press a piece of plastic against the surface of the buttercream and set aside briefly.

**Assemble:** Using a sharp serrated knife and a gentle sawing motion, slice each layer horizontally in half. Put one layer cut side up on a cardboard cake round or a cake plate protected by strips of wax or parchment paper. Spread it with one third of the preserves. Cover the jam evenly with about one quarter of the buttercream. Top with another layer, spread with preserves and buttercream and then do the same with a third layer (you'll have used all the jam and have buttercream leftover). Place the last layer cut side down on top of the cake and use the remaining buttercream to frost the sides and top. Press the coconut into the frosting, patting it gently all over the sides and top.

**Storing:** The cake is best the day it is made, but you can refrigerate it, well covered, for up to two days. Bring it to room temperature before serving. If you want to freeze the cake, slide it into the freezer to set, then wrap it really well – it will keep for up to 2 months in the freezer; defrost it, still wrapped overnight in the refrigerator.