

Serves 16-24

- 1 pound fresh celery stalks, leaves and hard stubs removed
- 5 ounces fresh ginger root, unpeeled
- 2 cups brown sugar, preferably dark
- ¾ cup vegetable oil
- 4 eggs
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1.5 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons powdered dried ginger (optional)

Rinse and dry the celery stalks and ginger. Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease a 9 x 13" cake pan and line the inner bottom with parchment; set aside. Using a food processor fitted with a grater attachment, grate the celery lengthwise (against the grain of the strands) in batches. It's easiest to place as many stalks as you can fit vertically in the feed tube, then push firmly down with the pusher. Repeat with any stalks that have turned sideways or otherwise not grated well; use kitchen shears to mince any lingering large tangles or long strands of celery fiber. Place all grated celery and its water in a glass bowl or measuring cup; you should have a little over two cups. Set aside.

Grate the fresh ginger in the food processor or by hand, re-grating or mincing any very large pieces, and retrieving any stubborn ginger fibers from the back of the grater disc. Set aside. In separate, large bowl, beat the brown sugar and oil. Add the eggs, beating in one at a time, followed by the vanilla. Sift the remaining dry ingredients over the oil mixture. Stir into a thick, smooth, caramel colored batter.

Quickly assess the amount of water in your grated celery. If the container is filled much more than halfway with water, strain a bit of the water out. You do want a good amount of liquid -- water about halfway up the bowl is about perfect -- whereas, if celery is completely submerged in water, the cake can come out soggy unless you drain some.

Transfer all grated celery with remaining water into batter, followed by the grated ginger. Fold celery and ginger into the batter until evenly dispersed, using a rubber spatula and scraping bottom of bowl. Pour batter into prepared baking pan. Place in preheated oven on center rack. Bake 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in center comes out batter-free.

Let cake cool completely in pan, covering snugly with foil once cool. Store at room temperature until ready to serve. When ready to serve, loosen sides with a butter knife and invert pan onto platter or cutting board. Remove pan and parchment. Dust with powdered sugar or frost as follows.

Frosting:

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 4 ounces butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 pinch salt (omit if using salted butter)

Beat cream cheese, butter, and vanilla until well-blended. Sift the powdered sugar and salt over the mixture. Stir gently to begin to incorporate dry ingredients, then beat well until smooth and fluffy, preferably with a whisk attachment. Slather evenly over room temperature cake. Cover and refrigerate any leftover frosted cake.

Notes: Ginger is the leading flavor in this cake; feel free to reduce the amount if you prefer less or want to taste the celery more. You can also substitute half or all the salt with celery salt to bump up the celery factor. Feel no obligation to use oil labeled as "vegetable oil;" canola oil or sunflower oil are fine and offer a neutral taste; olive oil works if you don't mind its added flavor; melted coconut oil is delicious though it changes the cake's texture slightly. If you're up for a workout, feel free to use a handheld grater for the celery and ginger, pressing very firmly and working quickly. If you want to serve this cake straight from the pan, use a safe-to-cut 9x13" cake pan such as glass, and grease & flour the pan instead of using parchment.