

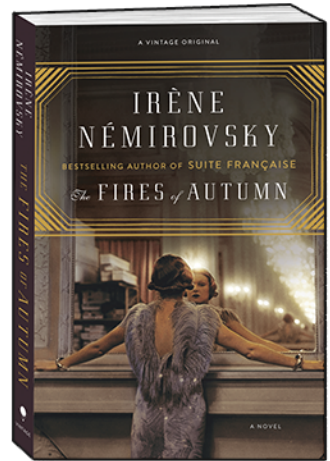


# COFFEE CREAM CAKE

Irène Némirovsky's *The Fires of Autumn* opens with a scene of cozy domesticity in Paris, 1912. The First World War is just months away, but for now, Némirovsky's characters can still revel in life's simple pleasures:

It was a beautiful Sunday. Martial Brun had brought in the dessert, a coffee cake with cream that made Bernard Jacquelain's eyes light up with joy. They ate it in silence; nothing was heard but the clinking of teaspoons against the plates and the crunching of the little coffee beans hidden in the cream, full of heady liqueur. After this brief moment of silence, the conversation started up again, just as peaceful and devoid of passion as a kettle simmering gently on a stove.

Re-create the opening pages' idyll for your book club with a slice of this delicious coffee cream cake.



## INGREDIENTS:

### For the cake batter:

2 cups all-purpose flour  
2 cups sugar  
¼ teaspoon salt  
2 sticks butter  
3 Tablespoons instant coffee crystals

½ cup buttermilk  
2 whole eggs  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

### For the icing:

1½ sticks butter  
1 pound powdered sugar  
1–2 Tablespoons instant coffee crystals  
4 Tablespoons heavy cream

## METHOD:

### For the cake batter:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease and flour two round 9-inch baking pans (8-inch pans will also work).

In a large bowl, mix flour, sugar, and ¼ teaspoon salt. Set aside.

Melt the butter in a pot over medium-low heat until melted. Meanwhile, in a separate bowl, add the instant coffee to 1 cup boiling water and let it dissolve. Set aside.

Once butter has melted, add coffee liquid. Let the contents come to a boil for about 10 seconds, then turn off the heat. Set aside for just a minute.

In a separate bowl, add buttermilk, eggs, baking soda, and vanilla extract. Mix until well combined.

Pour the liquid into the dry ingredients, stirring gently to cool down the mixture before adding the remaining ingredients.

Add in the egg mixture and stir gently until well combined. Pour into pans. Bake for 20–22 minutes or until set. Allow to cool completely.

### For the icing:

Mix butter, powdered sugar, and instant coffee to your liking. Add 2 tablespoons heavy cream and whip on high until mixture is light and fluffy. Add remaining heavy cream, 1 tablespoon at a time, until the desired consistency is reached. Icing should be thick but spreadable. Ice the cake and chill for an hour before serving.