



I've been meaning to post these pictures all week but somehow couldn't come up with any good words to go with them. Does anyone have some useful suggestions for dealing with writer's block? My current method of "wait until you find good words" works but is very slow. Anyway, onwards about cake.

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My family has a very good pound cake recipe generally used for birthday cakes. It's actually called Birthday Cake no matter when you make it and I posted the recipe [last year](#). For my birthday tea this year, however, I really wanted to make a layer cake and Birthday Cake is just too heavy so I spent some time searching around for a new cake recipe. I found what I was looking for in a cupcake book.



Maybe I should start over and say that originally I was thinking of doing cupcakes for my birthday because I'd been giving this [awesome book](#) for Christmas (thanks Joyce) and everything in it is so cute and yummy looking. I particularly liked some cupcakes that were decorated with grass and marzipan ladybugs. Second runner up had strawberries baked in. When I remembered I'd made cupcakes last year I decided to go for the layer cake instead but kept the grass and ladybugs idea because it was so cute.

I searched for a tasty cake recipe but in the end decided to take a chance and use the [strawberry cupcake recipe](#)

and cook it as cake. This might not seem like "taking a chance" but I had no idea how the cake would turn out on a bigger scale or how much of it there would be. It turned out perfectly, smelt like pancakes while it was cooking and tastes so good you hardly need icing to dress things up.



That turned out to be a very good thing because the icing I made was not very good at all. I made the [Swiss Meringue Buttercream](#) suggested in the book for its piping qualities and buttery flavour. At first it seemed okay; it's not a very sweet icing and I thought that would be nice since the cake was quite sweet, and it certainly has a buttery flavour - there is an entire pound of butter in the five cups of icing the recipe made - but after a few bites it just tastes like butter and not much else. It did alright as a filling when mixed with chopped strawberries but I found I didn't even eat the icing from my second piece of cake. In the future I'll make the ordinary butter/shortneing mix buttercream that I've done before; it doesn't pipe quite as beautifully but it tastes much better. Piping was important for the grass though so I'll forgive the poor flavour for the cuteness of my cake.



Oh, and I made the marzipan ladybugs. I can't forget those. They were a little time consuming but fun to make and so cute and, of course, so yummy. I had lots left over and took them into work for sharing.

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I've had a few people say they thought it was a bit sad that I was making my own cake but really it's something I look forward to every year and I was completely spoiled by my friends and family anyway: my grandmother came up for a surprise visit; my sister hosted a big family dinner for me on Sunday night (and made the traditional Birthday Cake - decorated to look like a ladybug); Rob and I had a feast of sushi for my birthday dinner on Friday; and my friends gave me all sorts of wonderful goodies and lots of hugs. It was a fantastic birthday.