



Strawberry Shortcake

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

For the cake:

- 225g unsalted butter, softened and at room temperature
- 1½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups cake flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- ½ tsp fine sea salt
- 1¾ cups caster sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1¼ cups full fat milk
- butter and flour for greasing

For the filling:

- 400g whipping cream
- 3 tbsp icing sugar
- 1 tbsp vanilla extract
- 500g strawberries
- 50ml cointreau
- 50g light brown sugar (or to taste)
- mint leaves and icing sugar to garnish (optional)

Instructions

A close friend of mine had a birthday pot-luck do, and since it sounded like everyone had the "proper" food covered, I offered to make the birthday cake. She jumped at the offer and begged me to make

strawberry shortcake, which is her favourite, so how could I say no, right? Strawberry shortcake is usually done with scone-like biscuits, cream and fresh strawberries, but since it was going to be a birthday cake, I wanted to jazz it up a little. I decided to go with a fairly simple, but light and fluffy butter cake, which I would layer with vanilla crème chantilly and strawberries macerated in some sort of liquor (I picked an orangey one). Anyway it turned out well, so I decided to put it up here. :)

1. Divide the strawberries into 2 bowls - reserving the prettier ones in one bowl in the fridge. For the less-pretty bowl, halve the smaller ones and quarter the bigger ones, then mix them gently in a non-reactive bowl with the brown sugar and the cointreau. (You'll probably want to taste the mixture to adjust the sweetness and alcohol content.) Set aside for at least 2 hours, or overnight.
2. Preheat the oven to 175°C. Butter two 9x2 inch round cake pans, line the base of each pan with greaseproof paper, then butter the paper. Dust with flour, tapping out excess, and set aside.
3. Sift the flours, baking powder and salt into a medium bowl, whisk lightly to mix evenly, then set aside.
4. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy (3 minutes). Scrape down the sides of the bowl, then beat for 1 more minute. Add the eggs, one at a time, ensuring that each egg is fully incorporated before adding the next one. Add the vanilla extract. With the mixer on low speed, add one quarter of the flour mixture, alternating with one third of the milk, until both are fully incorporated.
5. Divide the batter between the two prepared pans, and smooth down. Bake for 30 minutes, or until the cakes are golden brown and pass the toothpick test. (You will probably need to rotate the cakes halfway through for even browning.) Transfer the pans to a wire rack and let them cool for 20 minutes, then invert the cakes out, peel off the parchment, and let them cool right-side-up until completely cool.
6. Combine the whipping cream, icing sugar, and vanilla extract in a cooled bowl. (To whip cream, it's best to ensure that everything - including the metal implements - are cold. I place my mixing bowl and whisk/whisk-attachment in the freezer for 10-15 minutes before using them.) Whisk to stiff peaks, then store in the fridge, covered, until ready to use (or for up to 1 hour). Drain the macerated strawberries, reserving the soaking liquid in a squeeze bottle.
7. Using a serrated knife, trim the tops off the cakes to level them. Place one layer on your serving plate, and squirt some of the strawberry-cointreau mix over the cake (I used about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the liquid as I wanted the cake to remain fluffy), then spread $\frac{1}{3}$ of the cream over it, leaving a 1-inch border from the edges of the cake. Evenly distribute the drained strawberries over the cream. Place the other cake on top, then squirt with a little more of the strawberry liquid, top with the rest of the whipped cream, creating a slight dent in the centre of the cream, and top with the reserved whole strawberries and garnish with mint and a dusting of icing sugar if using. Serve immediately.