

VICTORIA SPONGE

The next cake in my 'Around the World' series is that British classic - a Victoria Sponge. I know how much people love this cake – and whilst nothing tastes better than nostalgia and familiarity, this cake in comparison to all the others I have made so far, sits a little underwhelming. I have always enjoyed the ones you get in the shop. You know the small ones which says feeds 6 but in reality feeds just 1. Rubes. The caster sugar topping, the cream and jam middle and that soft, moist, almost maderia like sponge, washed down by a cup of coffee or tea? Bingo. And whilst this isn't that, this is a tweaked version of the recipe I tried online.

Recipe Makes: 2 x 20 cm / 8 inch Sponges

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SPONGE

200 g Unsalted Butter*
200 g Golden Caster Sugar
1 tsp Vanilla Bean Paste
25 ml Vegetable Oil
4 Medium Eggs*
150 g '00' Flour, sifted
50 g Potato Starch, sifted
2 tsp Baking Powder, sifted
50 ml Buttermilk*

* room temp

FILLING

140 g Raspberry Jam
250 ml Double Cream
½ tsp Vanilla Bean Paste
5 g Icing Sugar, sifted

TO FINISH

Icing Sugar, to dust

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- Preheat oven to 190C/170C Fan/375F/Gas Mark 5 and grease and line 2 x 20 cm / 8 inch cake tins.

- Add the butter, caster sugar and vanilla bean paste into a bowl and beat well using a paddle attachment till its light and fluffy. You want to work this until the butter has lightened in colour so give it time to do it's thing.

- Pour in the vegetable oil and give it another good mix until combined.

- Beat in the eggs one at a time, ensuring you mix well between each addition. Give each egg about a minute or two before you add the next.

- In a separate bowl, mix together the plain flour, potato starch and baking powder before adding to the main bowl and gently mixing through. Do not overmix as this will result in dense crumb so keep it light until there are little to no flour streaks remaining.

- Add the buttermilk and fold through using a rubber spatula until just combined.

- Transfer the batter between the two tins and pop in the oven to bake for 20 to 22 minutes.

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- Once baked, remove from the oven and leave to sit in the tins for 5 minutes before turning out and leaving to cool on a cooling rack for another 5. Whilst the sponges are still warm, wrap them in clingfilm/saran wrap and leave to completely cool. TIP: I like to leave them to cool sitting upside down to flatten any domed tops.

- When cool, place one sponge on your serving plate. Generously slather over the raspberry jam on top.

- Pour the double cream, icing sugar and vanilla into a bowl and mix until you reach medium peak. You want this to be a velvety smooth consistency without being too stiff.

- Dollop the cream on top of the jam and place the remaining sponge on top.

- Liberally dust the top with icing sugar and pop in the fridge for 30 minutes before serving.