

FRENCH FRAISIER CAKE

AKA STRAWBERRY CAKE

This delightfully delicious number is made up of 2 super light genoise sponges soaked in a sugar syrup, a vanilla creme mouselline (think custard buttercream), fresh strawberries and topped with either a layer of marzipan or strawberry compote. She's SO pretty. I mean look at her, so worthy of being a centerpiece to any dinner, Sunday lunch or as part of your Easter menu. If you like a Vicky Sponge, then I URGE you to make her classier, sophisticated, and all-round elite sibling. It's a real crowd-pleasing bake – light and refreshing, perfect for Spring.

Recipe Makes: 2 x 20 cm / 8 inch sponges

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GENOISE

15 ml Vegetable Oil
3 Large Eggs
130 g Caster Sugar
100 g Plain Flour*
30 g Potato Starch*
Pinch of Salt
0.75 tsp Baking Powder*
1 tsp Vanilla Bean Paste
Zest of ½ Lemon

*sifted

SYRUP

65 ml Water
35 ml Lemon Juice, fresh
60 g Caster Sugar
0.25 tsp Vanilla Bean Paste

CUSTARD CREAM

500 ml Whole Milk
1.5 tsp Vanilla Bean Paste
125 g Caster Sugar
5 Large Egg Yolks

CREAM CONT.

20 g Plain Flour, sifted
20 g Cornflour, sifted
160 g Unsalted Butter, fridge
160 g Unsalted Butter, room

TO FINISH

600 g Fresh Strawberries
Strawberry Jam, to glaze
Marzipan, optional

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- Begin by preheating the oven to 150°C Fan/340°F/Gas Mark 4 and grease and line 2 x 20 cm / 8 inc cake tins, bottom and sides.

- First up, let's make the **genoise sponge** by adding the eggs and sugar to a stand mixer bowl. Use the whisk attachment to mix the eggs for 8 minutes on a high speed, until light, fluffy and doubled in volume.

- After 8 minutes, reduce the speed to the lowest setting and slowly and carefully pour in the oil down the side of the bowl. Don't get sad when the volume reduces slightly.

- Into a separate bowl, add the flour, potato starch, salt and baking powder. Give that a mixy mix before adding 1/3 of the flour to the stand mixer bowl. Use a rubber spatula to gently fold in. Once there are little flour streaks remaining, go in with the second 1/3.

- Fold again before adding the vanilla bean paste, lemon zest and remaining flour. Fold one last time until no flour streaks remain – remember to scrape the sides and base of the bowl to ensure no flour pockets remain.

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- Divide the batter evenly between the two tins and use the back of a spoon to level out the batter. Pop the tins into the oven and bake for 21 to 22 minutes until the tops are golden and bouncy – you want the tops to spring back when gently touched.
- Let the sponges sit in the tins for a few minutes before turning them out and wrapping in clingfilm/saran wrap to completely cool.
- Whilst it's cooling, make the **sugar syrup** as it's an easy, speedy win that can just chill till when needed. Add all the ingredients to a pan and place over a medium heat. Allow that to come to a boil before reducing the heat to a simmer and let it do its thing for about 5 minutes until it has turned slightly syrupy. Leave to one side to cool.
- Make the **crème mouselline** by starting with the custard base. Add the milk to a saucepan alongside the vanilla bean and place over a medium heat.
- In another bowl, add the yolks, caster sugar and both flours. Use a balloon whisk to mix until smooth – work through the gritty, clumpy stage. It will take a few minutes so hang in there!
- Once the milk is at a near boil, pour 1/3 of it into the yolk bowl. Use a balloon whisk to whisk immediately and thoroughly until smooth. Pour the mixed milk back into the saucepan and place it back over the heat.
- Stir continuously until the custard has thickened considerably – you will know when it's good when the custard 'burps' or bubbles. Remove from the heat before adding in the 160 g fridge temp butter. Mix well until smooth.
- Transfer the custard to a shallow tray to cool at room temperature and cover with either clingfilm or baking paper to prevent the top crusting over. NOTE: if you are leaving to cool overnight, pop the custard in the fridge and then bring to room temp the next day.
- When the custard has completely cooled, add 160 g room temp butter to a mixing bowl. Use the paddle attachment to mix the butter until light and fluffy. Add a good scoop of the custard to the butter and mix until just combined. Continue to add the custard in batches. Once all the custard has been added and the buttercream is smooth, pat yourself on the back cause you just made crème mouselline.
- Transfer the crème to a piping bag and pop in the fridge.
- Before **constructing**, cut the green tops off the strawberries and vertically slice each one in half.
- If you have a loose bottomed baking tin, construct your cake inside that for ease. For smooth edges, overline the side of the tin with acetate or baking paper.
- Brush the tops of both sponges with the lemon sugar syrup. Place one of the sponges into the base of the tin.

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- Tightly line the edge of the tin with the strawberries, facing the sliced edge outwards. Try to leave no space in between each for a neater finish. Add whole strawberries to the middle to cover the base.

- Grab your piping bag of crème mousseline from the fridge and gently pipe the crème between each strawberry. Once done, pipe the remaining crème over the top and use the back of a spoon to level out.

- Place the second sponge on top and use a pastry brush to glaze the strawberry jam on top (this just helps to glue on the marzipan).

- Roll out the marzipan to a thickness of about 3 mm and use the tin base to cut around for an exact measuring. Carefully place on top of the strawberry jam and gently use your hands to press down.

- Use any remaining strawberries to decorate how you wish but PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE, **leave your cake to set overnight**. The flavours will undoubtedly be better and the slice will be so nice you'll go in for thrice (I know this doesn't make sense but we had to finish off the rhyme).