

JAPANESE KASUTERA

aka CASTELLA CAKE

It's fluffy, spongy, boingy and bouncy like you wouldn't believe. Yes it is a simple cake, yes it tastes pretty simple but it is simple done simply brilliantly. I know many like to eat this cake without any toppings or additions but the ever so slightly mild eggy undertone sends me sideways (DO NOT SCRIMP ON THE VANILLA) so decided to pair it with a velvety smooth chantilly spiked with plenty of vanilla bean and fresh fruit and my my, she is gorgeous.

Recipe Serves: 6

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SPONGE

100 ml Whole Milk
100 g Unsalted Butter
80 g Plain Flour, sifted
20 g Potato Starch, sifted
0.5 tsp Vanilla Bean Powder
OR 1 tsp Vanilla Bean Paste
6 Large Eggs*
100 g Caster Sugar

TOPPING

150 ml Double Cream
15 g Icing Sugar, sifted
¼ tsp Vanilla Bean Paste
Fresh Fruit (eg berries)

* yolks & whites separated

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- Preheat the oven to 150C/300F/Gas Mark 2 and overline your 18 by 18 cm / 7 by 7 inch square tin with greaseproof paper – make sure the paper extends by about 2 inches over the tin edge.

- Add the butter and milk to a saucepan and place over a gentle heat. Allow the butter to melt before removing off the heat (you are looking for a temperature of about 50C/120F – anything hotter will cook the flour too much before going into the oven).

- Add the flour and potato starch to a bowl and mix to combine.

- Pour in the milky butter and use a balloon whisk to mix until smooth.

- Once smooth, add the vanilla bean paste and yolks and again mix until smooth. Leave to one side.

- Add the egg whites and sugar to a bowl.

- Whisk until the whites reach soft peaks (it holds a peak but the top flops over ya know?) – anything firmer will cause your cake top to crack when baking.

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- Boil your kettle before pouring the whisked flour mix into the egg white bowl. Use a balloon whisk to gently fold through. Run a rubber spatula around the edge and base of the bowl to ensure the two are thoroughly combined.

- Transfer the batter into your lined tin and place the tin into a larger, deep, baking tray. Fill the tray with boiled water to make a water bath.

- Place the tray into the oven and bake for 1 hour.

- Remove the cake from the oven once the top is golden brown and spongy. Carefully remove the sponge from the tin and peel back the greaseproof paper.

- Use a serrated knife to cut – the cake will slightly deflate as you do this.

- Serve warm or leave to cool before popping into Tupperware and leaving overnight in the fridge (it somehow gets moister and softer the next day?)

- I served mine alongside some whipped cream and fruit. To make the cream, whisk the double cream, icing sugar and vanilla until you reach soft to medium peak. You want this to be silky smooth. Dollop on top of a slice, add some fresh fruit, and enjoy.