

FRAISIER CAKE

(adapted from many sources)

for the cake:

6 eggs
5 tbs butter
1 cup (225g) sugar
1 + 3/4 cup (210g) flour
1/2 tsp vanilla paste

For simple syrup:

6 Tablespoons water
6 Tablespoons sugar
3 tsp Cointreau

For creme mousseline:

2½ cups (600ml) whole milk
1/2 tsp vanilla bean paste
3 large eggs
2 egg yolks
3/4 cup (150g) granulated sugar
1/2 cup (56g) corn starch
454g butter, softened, divided
100 g white chocolate, melted and cooled

For decoration:

Hulled and halved strawberries for perimeter of the cake (I used 19 halves)
Diced strawberries for the filling (about 12 large strawberries)
100 g almond paste
powdered sugar for rolling

Equipment: One 10-inch round cake pan; one 9.5-inch cake ring or springform pan.

Heat the oven to 350 F. Prepare a 10 inch cake pan by buttering the interior. Then dust with flour and set aside.

Place the butter in a small dish and cover then melt in the microwave. Set aside to let cool. Fill a pot with about 1 inch water over medium high heat. Once it starts to simmer, sit the bowl of a stand mixer over the pot. Put the eggs and sugar in the bowl and beat with a whisk until it warms up to a temperature between 130 to 140 degrees F. Return the bowl to the stand mixer with a whisk attachment. Whisk the mixture on high-speed. Continue to beat until the batter is cool to the touch. The end result should be a light batter that has tripled in volume.

Set aside 2 tbs of the batter in a small bowl. Add the flour to the large bowl of batter in increments, gently folding until no dry streaks remain. Blend together the 2 tbs of batter with the melted butter. Pour into the large bowl of batter and stir until incorporated. Fill the prepared cake pan with the batter. Place pan in oven and bake until cake springs back when lightly touched. Baking time should be about 30 minutes. Remove pan and invert cake onto a rack to cool.

While the cake is cooling, make the simple syrup by heating the water and sugar in a small saucepan. Once it comes to a boil, remove from heat and stir the Cointreau. Set aside to cool.

Make the mousseline cream by combining in a saucepan the milk and vanilla paste, then bringing to a simmer over low-heat. Do not let the milk come to a boil. Reserve. Place the eggs, egg yolks and sugar in a mixing bowl. Whisk vigorously until the mixture turns a light shade of yellow and becomes slightly thick and frothy, about 3 minutes. Add the cornstarch and whisk vigorously until completely incorporated.

Slowly pour about 1/4 cup of the warm milk into the egg mixture, and whisk continuously to temper the eggs. Add the rest of the milk, always whisking. Once all the milk has been added to the eggs, pour everything back into the saucepan, and over low heat keep whisking until the cream comes to a full boil, but do it slowly. Keep removing from the heat and placing it back if you feel it is boiling too quickly. Do not stop whisking, and make sure to go over each little spot of the bottom of the pan to prevent the cream from scorching.

When large bubbles start coming to the surface, continue whisking for 15 seconds, then remove from heat, let it stand for a couple of

minutes and add half of the butter, then the melted and cooled chocolate. Pass it through a fine sieve to remove any little lumps and place in the fridge for a couple of hours or overnight, with a plastic film on top to prevent a skin from forming.

When fully cold, remove from fridge, place in a Kitchen Aid and beat at full speed for 5 minutes or longer, to bring it to room temperature. Now add the other half of the butter, which must be softened. Beat until fully smooth. The mousseline cream is ready to use.

Assemble the cake: Place a piece of acetate film against the inner surface of the cake ring. If needed, trim the top crust of the sponge cake, to level it. Split in half and place the bottom half (cut side face up) in a 9 1/1 inch cake ring set over a cardboard cake round of the same size. Brush with half of the Cointreau syrup.

Place each strawberry half upright inside the ring, forming an interior circle. The stem top should be face down and the cut side facing the inside of the flan ring. Smooth one cup of the mousseline cream over the split cake inside the flan ring. The cream should cover all exposed cake. Then place diced strawberries covering the center of the cake. Fill all spaces with the mousseline cream by using a piping tip and covering until you reach the top of the flan ring. Then place the other cake half over the cream layer and brush the top with the remaining syrup. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Roll a piece of almond paste very thin, make a pattern on the surface if you have an embossing rolling-pin. Cover the cake with a very thin layer of mousseline cream, then set the rolled almond paste on top, with the pattern facing up. Decorate with strawberries, if desired.

Refrigerate until serving time.