

Strawberry-Mousse-Filled Chocolate Sponge Cake

For the Cake

Scant $\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour
Scant $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sifted cocoa
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
6 large eggs
1 cup sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cream of tartar

For the Mousse

1 quart plus 1 pint strawberries
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar
1 envelope plus 2 teaspoons gelatin
2 tablespoons Kirsch or brandy
1 cup heavy cream

For the Sugar Syrup

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup water
1 tablespoon Kirsch or brandy

For the Cake

Line the bottom of a 10-inch or 9-inch springform with parchment paper, and butter the paper, but not the sides of the pan. Preheat the oven to 350°. Be certain the eggs are at room temperature.

In a bowl whisk together the flour, sifted cocoa, salt, and baking powder.

Separate the eggs. In a large bowl beat the egg yolks and vanilla until thickened. Gradually beat in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the sugar, and continue to beat until the mixture is very thick and forms a slowly dissolving ribbon. In a slow, steady stream, beat in the vegetable oil.

In another bowl, beat the egg whites until foamy, and sprinkle on the cream of tartar. Continue to beat until soft peaks are beginning to form. Gradually beat in the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar until stiff peaks are formed.

Stir in $\frac{1}{3}$ of the beaten egg whites into the yolk mixture with a rubber spatula. Sprinkle $\frac{1}{3}$ of the flour-cocoa mixture through a sieve into the batter and fold in carefully, using a J-shaped stroke. Gently fold in the remaining $\frac{2}{3}$ of the egg white and flour-cocoa mixture, alternately by thirds, ending with the egg whites.

Pour the batter into the prepared springform and bake in the center rack of the oven. If using a 10-inch pan, the baking time should be about 25-30 minutes. If using a 9-inch pan, add another 5-7 minutes to the baking time. Remove the cake to a wire rack, and let it cool for 10 minutes. Carefully remove the sides of the springform. Invert the cake onto the rack and carefully peel off the parchment paper. Allow the cake to cool thoroughly.

For the Sugar Syrup

Combine the sugar and water in a small saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar is dissolved and the liquid becomes clear. Let the syrup cool completely, then stir in the Kirsch.

For the Mousse

Wash and hull 1 quart of the strawberries. Place the sugar in a food processor and process for a few minutes until the sugar becomes very fine. Add the berries to the sugar, and continue to process, while pouring in the Kirsch or brandy. Strain the puréed fruit through a fine sieve into a bowl.

Chill a bowl and beater you will use to beat the cream.

Place $\frac{1}{3}$ of the puréed strawberries in a small saucepan, and sprinkle the gelatin over the mixture. Over very low heat, warm the mixture, stirring constantly until the gelatin is completely dissolved.

Pour the gelatin-purée back into the bowl with the remaining strawberry purée. Place the bowl in ice water, stirring occasionally with a spatula until the mixture just begins to thicken. Do not let it set.

In the meantime, whip the heavy cream until medium peaks are formed. Do not over beat. Remove the gelatin-purée from the ice water, and stir $\frac{1}{3}$ of the whipped cream into it. Gently fold in the remaining whipped cream.

You want the mixture to be thick enough to spread without being too runny, but you do not want it to set. This may require refrigerating it until it reaches the right consistency. Check on it every few minutes to be sure it does not set.

For the Assembly

Split the cake in half, and brush the cut side of each half with the sugar syrup. Use all of the syrup.

Wash, hull, and slice the remaining strawberries, setting a few aside for decoration. Dry the sliced strawberries on paper towels, so they won't leak onto the mousse.

Place the top half of the cake, cut side up, back into the bottom of the springform. Pour half the mousse over the layer, and arrange the sliced strawberries on the mousse. Place the remaining layer, bottom side up, on top the mousse. Pour the remaining mousse over top of the cake layer and smooth out. Refrigerate the dessert for several hours or overnight, until the mousse is fully set.

To serve, remove the sides of the springform. Decorate the top of the cake with the remaining strawberries.