

Published April 4th, 2018

Tis the season for this delightful, delicious dessert

By Susie Iventosch



Angel food cake with strawberries and white chocolate mousse filling Photo Susie Iventosch

Angel food cake is one of those desserts that pairs perfectly with fruit, and since strawberry season is coming up soon, I decided to try this cake with a filling of white chocolate mousse and fresh strawberries. It was a great choice, as it turned out! It wasn't a trivial project, however, because I tested three different cakes to see which was best. At first, I just used the regular old Betty Crocker Angel Food Cake box mix, which is my old standby. Betty's is always good, and so easy to make. In fact, I usually have one in the pantry in case of emergencies. But, I got an itch to make one from scratch, and a friend sent me her recipe, which was really delicious, and only marginally more difficult to make. This recipe calls for 10-12 egg whites, or the equivalent of 1 3/4 cup of egg whites. This cake had a better flavor than the box mix, which you might expect, but was not quite as tall or airy. Still, the texture was just perfect for the mousse filling and strawberries.

Next, I tried making the same recipe, but with liquid egg whites from a carton, thinking this would be an easy alternative. This cake was clearly inferior from the get go. The egg whites never really reached stiff peaks, even once the cream of tartar and all of the sugar was added, and the cake didn't rise nearly as much. It also lacked volume and flavor. While liquid egg whites are fine for breakfast, I don't suggest using them in an angel food cake!

As seasonal fruits become available, be sure to try this with your favorite berries or stone fruits, too!



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INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup plus 2 Tbsp. sifted cake flour
- 1 1/2 cups sugar, divided
- 1 3/4 cups egg whites (10-12), at room temperature
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 1/4 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/4 tsp. almond extract
- 1 recipe White Chocolate Mousse (recipe below)
- 1 pint fresh strawberries, leaves removed and thinly sliced
- 1 recipe bittersweet chocolate sauce and/or 1 cup of fresh strawberry puree (recipes below)

DIRECTIONS

In a medium bowl, mix together sifted cake flour with 1/2 cup of the granulated sugar. Set aside. In a large bowl combine egg whites, cream of tartar and salt. Beat on high speed of an electric mixer until soft peaks form. Slowly add remaining 1 cup sugar, 2 Tbsp. at a time, beating well after each addition. The egg whites will become shiny and very fluffy and stiff at this point. Stir in vanilla and almond flavorings. Gently, fold flour into the batter, 1/4 cup at a time. Carefully mix, but do not beat.

Pour batter out into an ungreased 9- or 10-inch removable bottom tube pan and bake at 375 F 30-35 minutes for a 10-inch pan, or 35-40 minutes for a 9-inch pan. The cake will turn golden-brown and a bit crackly on top and will spring back when touched. Remove from oven and cool in pan, upside down for 30 minutes to an hour. (The points on the top of the tube pan are designed for resting the cake upside down, but if you don't have that kind of pan, simply invert it over a nice heavy wine bottle.) Once cooled, carefully slide a knife around the edges of the pan to loosen cake and remove from pan. Then slide the knife between the cake and the bottom of the pan and all around the tube part of the pan. Remove cake from pan entirely. Rest on cooling rack. When ready to fill, cut cake in thirds, horizontally for filling.

White Chocolate Mousse

INGREDIENTS

2 egg whites, at room temperature
1/4 tsp. cream of tartar
6 Tbsp. extra fine granulated sugar
1 cup heavy cream
Optional: Whipped cream stabilizer (*see notes at end of recipe)
6 ounces white chocolate (Baker's packages this kind of chocolate, but be careful to not get the white, vanilla chips, but rather the white chocolate bar.)
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

In a large metal or glass bowl, beat egg whites with cream of tartar until soft peaks form. Slowly add sugar, and continue to beat until shiny and stiff meringue peaks form. Set aside.

Melt white chocolate in a sauce pan or the microwave. Cool to room temperature.

Beat heavy cream until stiff peaks form. Slowly fold cooled white chocolate into whipped cream. Gently stir in vanilla. Then fold whipped cream mixture into meringue mixture. Cover and chill until ready to fill cake.

To Assemble Cake:

Remove angel food cake from the pan entirely, tube and all, and orient the cake with the widest part at the bottom or upside down. Then slice it into 3 equal layers horizontally. Remove the first two layers and set them aside. Place first layer on your cake plate. Spread 1/3 of the filling on top of the bottom layer, and place thinly sliced strawberries over the entire layer. Place second layer on top of strawberries and repeat the process ending with the top layer of cake. Reserve final third of mousse for garnish. Dust the top of the cake with sifted powdered sugar and decorate with fresh flowers in the cavity. Serve with a spoonful of reserved white chocolate mousse and either or both bittersweet chocolate sauce and/or strawberry purée.

Bittersweet Chocolate Sauce

INGREDIENTS

1 cup of bittersweet chocolate chips
1/4-1/3 cup water
2 Tbsp. agave syrup
2 tsp. vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Place chocolate chips in a small sauce pot. Add water, agave and vanilla. Heat over medium heat until all is melted. Bring to a boil and stir until well-incorporated. Remove from heat.

Strawberry Purée

Remove stems from 1 pint of fresh strawberries and wash berries. Place in a food processor and purée. Add a dash of sugar if berries are not very sweet.

NOTE* When using whipped cream in desserts it is a good idea to add a stabilizer if you want the cream to hold up for any length of time. If you plan to serve the cake within a few hours, no need to worry about this, but whipped cream begins to wilt or weep after several hours. However, with the addition of a stabilizer, it will hold up for days. I used a powdered stabilizer that I purchased at a cake decorating supply store for a wedding cake I made a couple of years ago, but you can also use bloomed plain gelatin to stabilize the whipped cream. Here is a link that illustrates how to do that:
<https://ourbestbites.com/2015/11/how-to-make-stabilized-whipped-cream/>.

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