



Summer Sponge with Berries

It's the combination of textures, flavours and colours that really makes this cake special. I love the rich colours of berries – from bright, cheerful strawberries and raspberries to deep, jewel-like blackberries, they really are the taste of summer. Combine them with light, airy sponge cake and a sweet, indulgent cream filling and you might just have the perfect summertime treat.

Ingredients

For the fatless sponge

butter, for greasing
8 large free-range eggs
240g caster (superfine) sugar
Zest of 2 lemons
2 teaspoons crushed fennel seeds (toasted)
240g self-raising (self-rising) flour

Lemon syrup

50g caster sugar
Juice of 2 lemons

For the cream filling

300ml double (heavy) cream
50g icing sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste

For assembly and decoration

600g mixed summer berries – you can use a selection of raspberries, blueberries and blackberries, if you use strawberries, halve or quarter them
Edible flowers

Method

Preheat the oven to 170°C (Fan). Grease three 15cm cake tins with butter and line with baking paper.

In a mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs and sugar using an electric whisk for about 8–10 minutes until the mixture has tripled in volume. A good way to check if it's ready is to lift the whisk and draw a figure of eight with the batter. It should sit on top of the batter for at least 5–10 seconds before disappearing. This is called the ribbon stage.

Add the lemon zest and crushed fennel seeds, then sift the flour on top of the batter. Carefully fold them in using a spatula or metal spoon, starting at the sides of the bowl and moving quickly towards the centre. You must be gentle but quick to make sure you don't knock much air out from the batter.

Divide the batter equally between the prepared tins and bake for 25–30 minutes, or until the cakes start to shrink away from the sides of the tins. Remove from the oven and let the cakes cool in their tins for 5–10 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

Make the lemon syrup by warming lemon juice with the sugar and bringing it to boil. Boil for couple of mins, then set aside to cool. For cream filling, whisk the double cream with sugar and vanilla till you have soft peaks.

Once cooled, place the first sponge on a cake board. Then soak the sponge in lemon syrup and spread one third of the cream on top. Sprinkle the berries. Place the second sponge on top and repeat. Enjoy in this refreshing dessert in a warm summer day with your friends and family.