

Victoria Sponge Cake

Till Death Do Us Part

(Oxford Tearoom Mysteries ~ Book 4)

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 eggs of approx. 50g each, at room temperature
(*in the U.S. use “Large Size Eggs”*)
- 200g unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
(plus some extra for greasing the cake tins) - (*U.S.: 1 cup*)
- 200g caster sugar (*U.S.: 1 cup & 2 tbsp superfine sugar*)
- 200g self-raising flour (*U.S.: 1-3/4 cup & 2 tbsp, using the spoon and level method*)
- 1 tsp baking powder
- A pinch of salt
- 1 tsp vanilla essence
- 3 tbsp milk (to loosen batter if necessary)



For the filling:

- 250ml double cream or whipping cream (*U.S.: 1 cup*)
- 1 jar of good quality strawberry jam

To finish:

- Fresh strawberries, halved
- Icing (powdered) sugar

Note: U.S. measurements are in brackets but be aware that results may vary since the recipe will not be as accurate as weighing the ingredients.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Preheat the oven to 180C / 160 C fan (350F/gas mark 4)
- 2) Add the butter and caster sugar to a bowl (or mixer) and combine thoroughly, taking your time. Keep mixing until the mixture is smooth and creamy and you cannot feel any of the sugar granules.

Do not rush this step—even if it takes five minutes—as it is the key to making your sponge cake light and fluffy. The longer you can mix the butter and sugar, the better your cake will be.

- 3) Whisk the eggs in a bowl and then add it to your butter & sugar mixture a little bit at a time, making sure to mix thoroughly after each addition before adding more. Again, take the time to cream the mixture as much as possible—the smoother it is, the better the texture of the cake will be.
- 4) Finally add in the vanilla extract and mix well.
- 5) Sieve the flour into the mixture, together with the baking powder and a pinch of salt, then fold very gently to combine, using a figure of 8 motion. This keeps as much air in the mixture as possible (If using a mixer, keep it on the lowest, gentlest setting) You must not overwork the batter otherwise the cake will come out tough and dense.
- 6) Keep mixing gently until the batter is smooth and passes the “dollop test”, ie. when you lift some of it up with the spatula, it falls easily off in a dollop. If it sticks to the spatula and is too dry, add a bit of milk to loosen it and mix gently again. Be careful not to add too much milk as you don’t want the batter to be runny.
- 7) Get two 8-inch round cake tins and lightly grease the insides, then lay a circle of greaseproof paper at the bottom.
- 8) Divide the batter evenly between the two tins, using the spatula to smooth the tops until they are flat. (Don’t worry if they are not perfectly even—they will melt and even out in the oven)

** Tip - Weigh the batter as you divide between the cake tins to have equally even cakes.*

- 9) Place in the middle layer of the oven and bake for 20 – 25mins, until the cakes are golden and have risen nicely. To check that they’re done, slid a sharp knife or skewer into the centre and it should come out clean. The cake will also spring back when gently pressed and the edges should be shrinking slightly away from the sides of the tin.

10) Take them out and allow to cool for 10 mins in the tin, then remove from the tins, peel off the greaseproof paper and cool on a wire rack, flat side down.

* It is important to allow the cakes to cool completely otherwise it will cause the cream in the filling to melt and will ruin the cake.

11) While the cakes are cooling, prepare the filling by whipping the double cream until it forms soft peaks.

12) Take the “uglier” cake and use that as your base. Spread the top with a generous portion of strawberry jam, being careful not to go too near the edge. Follow with a layer of fresh whipped cream, using a spatula to carefully spread it over the jam. Finally, place the second cake gently on top to form the “sandwich”

** Variation: some people may also like to include fresh sliced strawberries in the filling, between the jam and the cream.*

13) Decorate the top of the cake with the strawberry halves and then dust everything with icing sugar.

Enjoy!