

Vicky Mess

Serves 12-16

Hands-on Time 40 minutes

Baking Time 18 minutes

Ingredients

45g Unsalted butter plus extra for greasing (softened)
190g plus 1 tbsp Caster sugar
6 Eggs, medium
190g Plain flour
Fine salt, pinch
60ml Full-fat milk
400g Strawberries
50g Raspberry or Strawberry seedless jam
600ml Double cream
50g Icing sugar
1 portion of Swiss Meringue made using 100g of Egg whites and 190g of Caster sugar

Equipment

Baking parchment
Scissors
2x20cm Cake tin (springform or fixed bottom)
Small microwavable bowl
Microwave
Large bowl
Electric whisk
Sieve
Spatula
Wire rack
Chopping board
Knife
Bowl
Spoon
Bread knife or long serrated knife
Plate
Palette knife
Blowtorch

Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C (Fan)/350°F/Gas mark 4.

Measure and cut out two circles of baking parchment to line the bottoms of your cake tins.

Before placing the parchment in your tins, grease them with butter.

Add 45g of butter to the small microwavable bowl. Pop into the microwave for no longer than 20 seconds at a time until it has melted. Set aside.

Add 190g of caster sugar and 6 eggs to the large bowl. Whisk on a high speed until thick and voluminous. This should take no more than 5 minutes.

Sieve 190g of flour along with a pinch of salt over the egg mixture.

Gently fold in using a spatula, ensuring you scrape upwards through the mix now and then so there is no flour left sitting at the bottom of the bowl.

Pour the melted butter on top of the mixture and fold again until incorporated.

Divide the mixture between the two tins. Tap them onto the worktop to remove any bubbles, and pop into the oven on a middle shelf for 18 minutes.

Once they are baked, leave them to cool in their tins for 15 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack. Remove the parchment.

When you are ready to assemble the cake, clean the microwaveable bowl and add the milk to it. Pop into the microwave for 30 seconds.

Add 1 tablespoon of caster sugar to the hot milk and stir until dissolved.

Set aside 3 to 4 strawberries. Wrap them in a piece of kitchen paper and store in the fridge for later.

Remove the tops from the rest of the strawberries and cut up into small chunks.

Add the jam to a bowl. Give a stir with a spoon to loosen it up. Add the chopped strawberries and stir again until they are coated.

Add the cream and icing sugar to the clean large bowl and whisk the cream until it thickens up and loses its shine.

Take a bread knife and halve the sponges. Take your time doing this. There's no need to rush!

Smear a little of the cream onto a serving plate or cake board.

Place one of the cake bases, cut side up, onto the plate. I think it's best to use the bases for bottom and top.

Sprinkle one tablespoon of the sugared milk over the sponge. Add 1/3 of the cream on top and spread out using a palette knife. You want to ensure the outside edge is raised so you create an area in the middle to add the strawberries.

Add 1/3 of the strawberries and place another slice of cake on top, again cut side up.

Repeat until you get to the last remaining sponge. Sprinkle the last tablespoon of milk over the cut side of the sponge and turn over so that it makes contact with the cream and strawberries.

Gently press down on the top sponge, don't use too much force though!

Using the palette knife, or a clean finger, spread around any cream which is sticking out of the joins to neaten up the cake.

Pop the cake into the fridge at least for an hour to set. You can leave the cake overnight and decorate the next day.

Prepare the Italian meringue as per the recipe instructions.

Remove the cake from the fridge. Dollop 1/3 of the meringue on top of the cake and spread until neat.

Taking the rest of the meringue, spread it around the outside of the cake. Ensure you do leave a little in the bowl for the strawberries you set aside. Do try and work a little swiftly as it is likely still warm

and so will soften the cream. It's also not the end of the world if you end up with crumbs in the meringue.

Take out the strawberries you reserved. Remove their tops and halve.

Dip them into the meringue and place them on top of the cake.

Take your blowtorch and gently work around the meringue until it looks gloriously golden.

If you don't have a blowtorch you can either leave the cake as it is, OR you could place the cake under the grill and colour the top. That is if you can fit your cake under the grill. You do need to keep an eye on it though in case it catches!

This cake will keep in the fridge. If you keep it in a sealed container, the meringue shouldn't lose any crispness.

Enjoy!