

Vanilla Bean and Passion Fruit Cake

Recipe c/o marissarothkopf.substack.com

Makes one large heart-shaped double-layer cake, which generously feeds 12 to 15 people.

To make a heart shape, you will need one 9" x 2" circular cake pan and one 9" x 2" square pan.

Of course, you do not have to make this as a heart. It works perfectly nicely as a 9-inch layer cake.

What You'll Need:

For the cake:

- 1 cup (227 grams) whole or 2% milk
- 6 large egg whites (you can freeze the yolks for another use)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon coconut extract
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon extract
- 2 1/4 cups (270 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 3/4 cups (350 grams) granulated sugar
- 12 tablespoons butter (171 grams) softened, cut into 12 pieces

For the Frosting

- 8 ounces (226 grams) butter
- 4 1/2 cups (575 grams) confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 2 teaspoons vanilla bean paste or extract (see note above)
- 1/4 cup (60 grams) heavy cream, plus more if necessary

For the curd: See recipe above.

What You'll Do:

1. Make the curd at least 6 hours in advance so it has time to chill before using.
2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
3. Grease and flour the cake pans, or spray with a product such as Baker's Joy. Line the bottom of each pan with parchment paper.
4. Whisk the milk, egg whites and extracts in a small bowl. I use the same Pyrex measuring cup that I measured the milk in, because: one less dish.
5. With a hand or stand mixer, mix together the flour, baking powder, salt and sugar on low speed until just blended, about 30 seconds. Drape a clean dish towel over the stand mixer leaving a little gap at the front of the mixer (see photo) to keep the flour from flying everywhere. With the mixer on medium-low speed, add the butter one piece at a time. Continue mixing after all the butter has been added until the mixture looks like wet sand. If some pea-sized pieces of butter remain, that's fine.
6. Add half the milk mixture and blend on medium speed until it looks like a thick batter. Beat for 30 more seconds on medium speed, to help build structure. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the remaining milk and mix until just blended, scraping down the sides of the bowl once or twice. If you look closely, the batter may look a wee bit curdled. Don't worry.
7. Evenly distribute the batter between the two pans. Give the pan a sharp drop on the counter to pop any air bubbles and settle the batter.
8. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes, or until golden on top. A toothpick inserted in the middle will come out dry, perhaps with a crumb or two. Touch your finger to the middle of the cake and it should bounce back. (Why the range for timing? Your oven is different than mine. Your pans are different, too: Maybe they're made of dark, thick metal or light, reflective aluminum.
9. Let the cakes cool in the pan for 10 minutes. Turn the cakes out of their pans and let cool completely before you ice them. You can make these cakes a few days in advance, wrap them completely in plastic wrap and refrigerate or freeze. Defrost before icing.

While the cake is baking, make the frosting:

How to make the frosting:

Using a hand or stand mixture, beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and extract/ flavorings(s) first on low, then medium speed, until well-blended. Add the heavy cream and mix on medium-high speed until the mixture is light, fluffy and frosting-y. If the frosting is too thick, beat in a tablespoon or three of cream until you and Goldilocks agree it's just right.

To assemble the cake:

1. Using a large serrated knife, cut the square cake horizontally to create two layers. With the same knife, cut the circular cake the same way. Then cut the circular cake in vertically in two, to make two halves.

2. On the bottom half of each layer (there should be 3!), spread a layer of vanilla bean frosting. Then spread a thick layer of curd over the frosting, leaving a 1" edge. Replace the top halves of the cakes.
3. Place the square cake in a diamond position on the plate or board you will serve it from. Place one half of the circular cake on the top left straight side of the diamond, and the other half on the right side. Ta-da! Heart shape.
4. Refrigerate the cake for an hour to help set the curd. While this step isn't utterly necessary, it does help prevent the cake from sliding about as you ice it.
5. Frost the top and sides of the cake. Where half-moon cakes meet the square cake will require more icing to obscure the join.
6. Decorate with sprinkles, flowers, candies, gold leaf, poems written on edible rice paper or whatever pleases. If using flowers, make sure they are not toxic (top tip!) wrap the stems tightly in plastic wrap and instead of jamming the flower in, use the tip of a knife or a chopstick to poke a hole first.
7. Refrigerate. Remove from the refrigerator 20 minutes before serving to your Valentines. This cake improves with flavor, so I like to make it a day in advance. But wrap it well to prevent the cake from tasting like your leftover bibimbap.

Passion Fruit Curd

Makes about 2 cups

What You'll Need:

- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup (90 grams) passion fruit puree
- 1/4 cup (57 grams) fresh lemon juice
- 2 egg yolks
- 3 large eggs
- 8 ounces (226 grams) butter, cut into 16 pieces
- pinch of salt

What You'll Do:

1. In a microwave-safe bowl (preferably glass), whisk together all the ingredients.
2. Place the bowl in the microwave and heat for 45 seconds on high heat.
3. Remove the bowl from the microwave and whisk for about 10 seconds, being sure to scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl.
4. Repeat the 45-second blasts and 10-second whiskings until the mixture looks uniformly thickened. It should measure at least 175 degrees F. Dip a spoon in the mixture. Draw

your finger across the back of the spoon. Your finger should leave a clean line. And probably hurt from being stuck in a 175-degree liquid.

5. Let the mixture cool on the counter for about 20 minutes. Press a piece of plastic wrap to the surface of the mixture. Tightly wrap the bowl and refrigerate until cold before using.