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A perfect stack of sumptuous strawberries and cream

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Cornmeal Strawberry Shortcake with Creme Fraiche
Photos Susie Iventosch

both sides of the argument, but not being a nutritionist, I cannot really say for sure. For information, visit www.simplyhydro.com/strawberries.

This recipe has five layering components: shortcake, strawberry glaze, strawberry creme fraiche strawberries and whipped cream. You can arrange them however you please, but my order is: shortcake, strawberry glaze, strawberry cream fraiche, strawberries, whipped cream and repeat. While I normally use heavy whipping cream for the topping, this time I discovered CocoWhip, which is a coconut milk-based topping. It was delicious, but Cool Whip or homemade whipped cream would also be perfect!

Shortcake

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/ cup cornmeal
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1 cube butter, (1/2 cup) unsalted, chilled and cut into small pieces
1 large egg
1/2 cup milk or cream (or Half & Half - your choice)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 425 F.

Place all dries in a mixing bowl. Cut in butter with fingers or a pastry cutter, until crumbly and fine.

Stir in egg, milk and vanilla. Mix until dough comes together. Turn dough out onto a floured board or cloth and roll or press into a circle about 1-inch thick. Using a 3-inch diameter biscuit cutter or a glass, cut out 6 rounds of dough. Place on parchment paper and bake for about 12 minutes, or until tops are golden-brown. Remove from oven and cool. When ready to assemble split shortcakes in half horizontally.

Strawberry Glaze

INGREDIENTS

1 pint fresh strawberries, stems and leaves removed
1 cup water
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Place strawberries and water in a medium sized pot. Bring to a boil and cook for about 4-5 minutes, occasionally stirring with a spoon to mash the berries as it cooks. Remove from heat, and strain berries through a sieve, smashing the pulp with the bottom of the spoon to get as much of the pulp through the sieve as possible. Discard any remaining pulp.

Return strawberry puree to the same pot. Mix the cornstarch and sugar together, and whisk into strawberry puree. Bring to a boil and cook over medium heat, stirring frequently with the whisk, until sauce begins to thicken and will coat the back of a spoon. Remove from heat, stir in vanilla and cool to room temperature.

Strawberry Creme Fraiche

8 ounces creme fraiche
3/4 cup of the strawberry glaze
Gently fold together.
Strawberries

I found some hydroponic strawberries at the market the other day, which not only piqued my curiosity, but also totally reminded me that we're getting close to strawberry shortcake season! Soon we will have beautiful, local strawberries adorning the produce shelves, but for now, if you can find hydroponic berries, give them a try. Those I bought were very jammy and delicious. Hydroponics is a method of growing plants without soil. The roots are exposed either directly to a mineral nutrient solution in a water solvent or they can be exposed through an inert medium such as perlite, clay pellets, vermiculite or peat moss. This is a more efficient growing method, because in soil, the roots expend time and energy searching the soil for nutrients and water, whereas in hydroponics, the roots are constantly exposed and these things are readily available for the plant's growth. For this reason, the plants grow much faster than in soil. The nutritional value may or may not be on par with plants grown in soil. I've read

- 2 pints fresh strawberries, stems removed and sliced or cut into bite-sized pieces
- Whipped Cream or CocoWhip Topping
- 1 cup whipping cream, or
- 1 container CoolWhip or CocoWhip

To assemble, cut shortcakes in half horizontally. Spread a spoonful of the strawberry glaze over the bottom half. Next drop a spoonful of the Strawberry Creme Fraiche, followed by sliced strawberries and finally whipped cream. Add top half of shortcake and repeat the process, ending with one or two strawberry slices on the very top.



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