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mary berry victoria sponge cake recipe

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Mary Berry Victoria Sponge Cake Recipe – A Classic British Delight

There's nothing quite like the sight of a perfectly golden Victoria sponge on a tea time platter, its fluffy layers separated by a generous spread of buttercream and a drizzle of jam. The recipe is simple, the technique is elegant, and the result is a cake that has become a staple in British households for generations. If you've ever watched Mary Berry, the beloved BBC cooking icon, prepare this iconic treat, you'll know why her version is the gold standard. In this guide, we'll walk you through every step of the **Mary Berry Victoria sponge cake recipe**, share insider tips, explore variations, and help you master the art of this timeless dessert.

Why the Victoria Sponge? A Brief History

The Victoria sponge, also known simply as the Victoria sponge cake, is named after Queen Victoria, who reigned during the 19th century. According to culinary lore, the cake was invented to honor the queen's birthday celebrations in 1838. Though the exact origins are debated, the cake's popularity grew in the Victorian era, becoming a quintessential component of afternoon tea.

Mary Berry's rendition pays homage to this heritage while adding her own touch of modernity. Her version is celebrated for its lightness, balanced flavors, and the way it showcases the simple ingredients that make a great sponge cake. The recipe has become a rite of passage for home bakers, and mastering it can elevate your baking repertoire.

What You'll Need – Ingredients

Before you dive into the baking process, gather all the ingredients. Having everything on hand will keep the workflow smooth and prevent last minute substitutions.

- 200 /g unsalted butter, softened
- 200 /g caster sugar (superfine)
- 4 large eggs, at room temperature
- 200 /g self raising flour, sifted
- 1 /teaspoon baking powder (optional, for extra lift)
- 2 /tablespoons milk, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest (optional, for brightness)
- For the filling: 200 /g unsalted butter, softened
- 200 /g icing sugar, sifted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 200 /g strawberry jam or raspberry jam (your choice)

Step by Step Guide – How to Make the Mary Berry Victoria Sponge Cake

1. Preparation – Preheat and Prep

1. Preheat your oven to 180 /°C (350 /°F). A consistent temperature is crucial for even baking.

2. Grease and line two 20 /cm (8 inch) round cake tins with parchment paper. This ensures the cakes release cleanly and prevents sticking.
3. Set the tins aside; you'll need them for the next step.

2. Creaming Butter and Sugar

The base of any sponge cake is a well creamed butter and sugar mixture. This process incorporates air into the batter, giving the cake its signature lightness.

1. Place the softened butter in a large mixing bowl. Beat with an electric mixer on medium speed until pale and fluffy. This takes about 3–4 minutes.
2. Add the caster sugar gradually, 50 /g at a time, ensuring each addition is fully incorporated before adding the next. This helps the mixture remain airy.
3. Once the sugar is fully blended, the mixture should be light, pale, and have a slightly glossy sheen.

3. Adding Eggs – The Key to Structure

Eggs act as a binder and provide structure. They should be added one at a time to maintain the batter's volume.

1. Crack the first egg into a small bowl, whisk lightly, then pour it into the butter sugar mixture. Beat for 30 /seconds.
2. Repeat with the remaining eggs, ensuring each egg is fully incorporated before adding the next.
3. After the last egg, beat the mixture until it's thick and pale. This indicates the eggs have been fully integrated.

4. Folding in Dry Ingredients

Dry ingredients are folded in gently to preserve the air pockets created during creaming.

1. In a separate bowl, sift together the self raising flour, baking powder (if using), and a pinch of salt. Sifting removes lumps and aerates the flour.
2. Add the dry mixture to the batter in two portions, alternating with the milk and vanilla extract.
3. Use a spatula to fold the mixture gently. The goal is to keep the batter light and avoid over mixing, which can deflate the cake.
4. When the batter is smooth and homogenous, add the lemon zest if you're using it for an extra zing.

5. Baking the Cakes

1. Divide the batter evenly between the two prepared tins. Tap the tins gently on the counter to release any large air pockets.
2. Bake in the preheated oven for 20–25 /minutes. The cakes are done when a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean or with just a few crumbs.
3. Remove the cakes from the oven and let them cool in the tins for 5 /minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

6. Making the Buttercream Frosting

Mary Berry's buttercream is silky, sweet, and the perfect complement to the sponge's mild flavor.

1. Place the softened butter in a bowl. Beat with an electric mixer on medium speed until light and fluffy.
2. Gradually add the sifted icing sugar, 25 /g at a time, whisking well after each addition to avoid lumps.
3. Add the vanilla extract and a splash of milk if the frosting seems too stiff. Beat until the frosting reaches a smooth, spreadable consistency.

7. Assembling the Cake

1. Place one cooled sponge on a serving plate. Spread a generous layer of buttercream across the top.
2. Spread a thin layer of jam over the buttercream, ensuring it's evenly distributed.

3. Top with the second sponge layer, pressing gently to secure.
4. Spread a final thin layer of buttercream over the top and sides of the cake.
5. If desired, decorate with fresh berries, edible gold leaf, or a dusting of icing sugar.

8. Serving and Storing

The Victoria sponge is best enjoyed fresh, but you can store it for up to 2 days in an airtight container at room temperature. If you need to keep it longer, wrap it tightly and refrigerate; bring it back to room temperature before serving.

Tips and Tricks – Perfecting Your Victoria Sponge

- Room Temperature Ingredients: Eggs and butter should be at room temperature to blend smoothly and prevent curdling.
- Gentle Folding: Over mixing can collapse the batter's airy structure. Fold until just combined.
- Check Oven Calibration: An oven that runs hotter can brown the top before the center is cooked. Use an oven thermometer if you're unsure.
- Use Fresh Flour: Old flour can lose its leavening power, resulting in a denser cake.
- Buttercream Consistency: If the frosting is too thick, add a teaspoon of milk. If too runny, add a few more grams of icing sugar.
- Jam Quality: Choose a high quality jam with real fruit pieces for better flavor and texture.

Variations – Adding a Personal Touch

While the classic Mary Berry recipe is a triumph, you can experiment with flavors and fillings to suit your taste or dietary preferences.

1. Fruit Infused Sponge

Stir a handful of finely chopped fresh berries (strawberries, blueberries, or raspberries) into the batter before baking. The fruit will release juices that infuse the sponge with subtle fruit notes.

2. Lemon Orange Twist

Add zest of one lemon and one orange to the batter, and replace the vanilla with orange extract. Finish the frosting with a splash of lemon juice for a citrusy brightness.

3. Dark Chocolate Layer

Fold in 2 tablespoons of cocoa powder into the batter for a chocolate variant. Use a dark chocolate ganache for the filling instead of jam.

4. Gluten Free Option

Replace the self raising flour with a gluten free blend that contains a leavening agent. Ensure the blend is suitable for baking and that you're using a gluten free butter and sugar.

5. Vegan Adaptation

Use vegan butter, plant based milk, and a flaxseed or chia seed "egg" substitute. Replace the sugar with a vegan-friendly alternative and use a vegan buttercream.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: Can I use a different type of jam?

A: Absolutely! Strawberry, raspberry, apricot, or even a fruit free jam works well. The key is to choose a jam that's not overly sweet or watery.

Q: How long does the cake stay fresh?

A: Store it in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days. For longer storage, refrigerate for up to a week, then allow it to return to room temperature before serving.

Q: What if my cake is too dense?

A: Ensure you're using fresh ingredients and that you're not over mixing the batter. Also, check that your oven isn't running too hot, which can cause the outside to set prematurely.

Q: Can I bake the cakes in a different oven size?

A: Yes, but you may need to adjust the baking time. Smaller tins may require a few minutes less, while larger tins may need a bit more time. Always check for doneness with a skewer.

Q: How do I prevent the buttercream from sliding off the cake?

A: Make sure the cake is fully cooled before frosting. A warm cake will melt the buttercream, causing it to slide. Additionally, spread the buttercream evenly and press lightly to secure.

Conclusion – The Sweet Legacy of Mary Berry's Victoria Sponge

Mastering the **Mary Berry Victoria sponge cake recipe** is more than just following a set of instructions; it's an invitation to partake in a centuries old tradition of British baking. With its airy layers, luscious buttercream, and the subtle sweetness of jam, this cake offers a comforting, familiar flavor that suits any occasion—from a relaxed afternoon tea to a celebratory gathering.

By paying attention to ingredient quality, mixing technique, and baking precision, you'll consistently produce a cake that rivals the best from a bakery. And with the variations outlined, you can customize the classic to your taste, ensuring that each bite is uniquely yours.

So preheat that oven, gather your ingredients, and let the aroma of freshly baked sponge fill your kitchen. With Mary Berry's guidance, you'll soon find yourself creating a Victoria sponge that's not only delicious but also a testament to the joy of home baking.

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