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mary berry recipe for victoria sponge

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Mary Berry Recipe for Victoria Sponge: A Classic British Delight

There are few desserts that carry the same cultural weight in Britain as the Victoria sponge. This light, airy cake, often enjoyed with a cup of tea, has become synonymous with afternoon indulgence. While countless variations exist, the version popularized by the beloved TV chef Mary Berry has become the gold standard for home bakers seeking authenticity and flavor. In this comprehensive guide, we'll walk you through Mary Berry's recipe, share expert tips, and explore ways to personalize this timeless treat.

Why Mary Berry's Victoria Sponge Recipe Is a Must Try

Mary Berry: The Queen of British Baking

Mary Berry is a household name in the UK, known for her gentle, approachable style and encyclopedic knowledge of baking. With over 30 years of experience, her recipes are celebrated for their balance of tradition and innovation. Her Victoria sponge recipe, first featured in her "*Mary Berry's Baking Book*," has stood the test of time, earning praise from both novice bakers and seasoned pastry chefs.

The Victoria Sponge: A Timeless British Treat

Originating in the 19th century, the Victoria sponge was named after Queen Victoria, who was reputedly fond of a simple cake of sponge and jam. Today, it remains a staple at parties, weddings, and afternoon teas. The classic version is composed of two fluffy layers of sponge cake, a sweet strawberry jam filling, and a dusting of icing sugar. Mary Berry's version adds a velvety buttercream layer, elevating the cake to a new level of decadence.

Ingredients: What You'll Need

Standard Ingredients

- 200 /g unsalted butter, softened
- 200 /g caster sugar
- 4 large eggs, at room temperature
- 200 /g self raising flour
- 1 /tsp baking powder
- 1 /tsp vanilla extract
- 1 /tsp lemon zest (optional)
- 100 /ml milk, at room temperature

Filling & Finish

- 200 /g strawberry jam (or raspberry for a twist)
- 100 /g unsalted butter, softened
- 200 /g icing sugar, sifted
- 1 /tsp vanilla extract
- Optional: fresh berries for garnish

Step by Step Guide: How to Make Mary Berry's Victoria Sponge

Preparing the Batter

1. Preheat your oven. Set it to 180 /°C (350 /°F) and line two 20 /cm (8 inch) round cake tins with parchment paper. Grease the tins lightly to ensure easy removal.
2. Cream butter and sugar. In a large mixing bowl, beat the softened butter and caster sugar together until pale and fluffy. This usually takes about 4–5 minutes using an electric mixer on medium speed.
3. Incorporate eggs. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. The mixture should become lighter and more voluminous.
4. Add dry ingredients. Sift the flour, baking powder, and a pinch of salt into the wet mixture. Gently fold in using a spatula, being careful not to deflate the batter.
5. Finish with liquids. Add the vanilla extract, lemon zest, and milk. Fold until just combined. The batter should be smooth and slightly glossy.

Baking the Layers

1. Divide the batter. Spoon the batter evenly into the prepared tins, smoothing the tops with a spatula.
2. Bake. Place in the preheated oven and bake for 20–25 minutes. The cakes should be golden brown and spring back when lightly pressed.
3. Cool. Remove from the oven and allow the cakes to cool in the tins for 5 minutes before turning them onto a wire rack to cool completely.

Making the Filling

1. Prepare buttercream. In a bowl, beat the softened butter until pale and creamy. Gradually add the sifted icing sugar, about 50 /g at a time, until smooth. Mix in the vanilla extract.
2. Assemble. Once the cakes have cooled, place one layer on a serving plate. Spread a generous layer of buttercream over the top, then add a thin spread of strawberry jam. Top with the second cake layer.

Assembling the Cake

- Dust the finished cake with icing sugar using a fine sieve for a classic finish.
- Optional: Garnish with fresh berries or a drizzle of chocolate ganache for an extra touch of elegance.

Tips & Tricks for the Perfect Victoria Sponge

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Over baking. The cakes should be soft inside. Check with a skewer; it should come out clean but still slightly moist.
- Uneven layers. Use a level surface to ensure both cake layers are the same height for a neat presentation.
- Skipping the flour sift. Sifting removes lumps and ensures a lighter texture.

Variations and Personal Touches

- Fruit variations. Swap strawberry jam for raspberry, apricot, or even a citrus marmalade for a different flavor profile.
- Flavor boosters. Add a pinch of ground cardamom or a splash of orange liqueur to the batter for a subtle twist.
- Decoration ideas. Use a piping bag to create decorative borders, or sprinkle toasted coconut for a tropical vibe.

Serving Suggestions and Pairings

The Victoria sponge is versatile. Pair it with a pot of freshly brewed Earl Grey or a light chamomile tea for a traditional afternoon tea experience. For a more modern twist, serve alongside a cup of espresso or a glass of chilled white wine. If you’re planning a brunch or garden party, consider cutting the cake into bite size squares and arranging them on a platter with a selection of fresh berries and mint leaves.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does the cake keep?

When stored in an airtight container, the Victoria sponge stays fresh for up to 3 days. For longer storage, wrap each layer individually in cling film and freeze for up to 2 weeks.

Can I bake the cake in a different sized tin?

Yes, but adjust the baking time accordingly. Smaller tins may require 15–18 minutes, while larger tins may need 25–30 minutes.

What's the difference between a Victoria sponge and a Victoria sponge cake?

The terms are often used interchangeably. However, "Victoria sponge cake" specifically refers to the two layered cake with jam and buttercream, whereas "Victoria sponge" can sometimes refer to the sponge alone.

Conclusion

Mary Berry's Victoria sponge recipe is more than just a cake—it's a piece of British heritage, a testament to the art of simple, elegant baking. By following this step by step guide, you'll achieve a light, moist sponge with a luscious buttercream and jam filling that will impress friends and family alike. Whether you're preparing a traditional afternoon tea, celebrating a special occasion, or simply indulging in a sweet treat, this classic recipe delivers a delightful experience that's both comforting and sophisticated. Happy baking, and may your Victoria sponge bring joy and sweetness to every bite!

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