

## A Strawberry Cake for Midsummer's Eve

(Recipe excerpted with permission from Lagom: The Swedish Art of Eating Harmoniously by Steffi Knowles-Dellner, published by Quadrille February 2018)

This is a classic Swedish cake that is made up and down the country through the summer months, in particular for Midsummer's Eve. It also happens to be the cake that I have every year for my birthday in July. It consists of a sponge made without added fat, which I think makes it a lot more straightforward – there is no risk of splitting the creamed sugar and butter when the eggs are added. Instead the eggs and sugar are whisked until custard-coloured and airy before adding the dry ingredients. The result is an extra-light, fluffy sponge which soaks up any strawberry juices really well or, in this case, a minty syrup.

Serves 8

[you will need]

For the cake

butter, for greasing

4 large eggs

175g [1 cup] caster [superfine] sugar

1 tsp vanilla extract or ½ tsp vanilla powder or paste

100g [¾ cup] plain [all-purpose] flour

40g [scant ½ cup] cornflour [cornstarch] or potato flour

1 tsp baking powder

For the syrup

75g [scant ½ cup] caster [superfine] sugar

1 lemon, zest and juice

1 bunch of mint, roughly chopped

For the filling & decoration

400g [4 cups] strawberries

2 Tbsp caster [superfine] sugar

250ml [1 cup] double [heavy] or whipping cream

dash of vanilla extract, powder or paste

1 small bunch of mint, leaves picked (optional)

Preheat the oven to 175°C/350°F and move a shelf to the bottom. Grease and line a 24-cm [9.-in] round, loose-bottom cake tin. To make the cake, in a large bowl, whisk the eggs and sugar until pale and creamy. Add the vanilla.

Mix the flours and baking powder in a small bowl, then fold into the egg mixture, carefully incorporating all the ingredients. Pour into the prepared tin and bake on the bottom shelf for

30 minutes, until risen, golden and a cake tester comes out clean. Cool a little before releasing from the tin, then move to a wire rack to cool completely.

Make the syrup by combining the sugar, lemon juice, zest, mint and 200ml [scant 1 cup] water in a small saucepan. Heat gently until the sugar has dissolved, then bring to a simmer for about 5 minutes. Cool completely before straining into a jug.

For the filling and decoration, hull half the strawberries and chop. Place in a bowl with the sugar and mash together with a fork to form a rough fresh jam. Halve the remaining strawberries, keeping their stalks on. Whip the cream quite loosely – take care not to overwhip! Stir through the vanilla.

Split the cooled cake in half through the middle. I like to trace the outline with a knife, all the way around the side, then use a long piece of strong thread to cut through the cake.

To assemble, drizzle the bottom layer of cake with half the syrup. Spread with the strawberry jam and half the whipped cream. Top with the remaining cake layer and drizzle this with more syrup. Decorate with the last of the cream, the halved strawberries and mint sprigs, if desired.

