

Strawberry Shortcakes

Course - Dessert

Cuisine - American

Keyword - Strawberry Shortcake

Prep Time - 30 minutes

Cook Time - 30 minutes

Serving - 6 Servings

Skill level - Moderate

Author - Swans Down - Bake Like A Champion, 1936

Let's Make Strawberry Shortcakes!

Nostalgia is a pretty major aspect of what my entire brand is about, so when I'm thinking of the dishes that trigger that the most, Strawberry Shortcakes take the win.

And to be clear, we are not talking about the spongy, golden checkerboard pieces that you buy in plastic bags at your grocery store - no. We are talking about the original Shortcakes, which fall more in the realm of a delicious biscuit.

When made properly, these are not only delicious and buttery, but flakey, crumbly and utterly perfect with macerated strawberries and freshly whipped cream.

This recipe came from the Swans Down cookbook, "Bake Like A Champion" in 1936, and the company was kind enough to send me three vintage cookbooks from their archives! I was a little skeptical on how this would work, since normally you'd use an All Purpose flour with a higher gluten % to make biscuits. I was so pleasantly surprised using Swans Down Cake Flour for this recipe!

Let's get into it!

Questions About Strawberry Shortcakes

What kind of flour can I use to make Strawberry Shortcakes?

- Generally, you want to use an All-Purpose flour (11% protein), as it will hold nicely while forming the shortcakes. I used Swans Down flour (8% protein) and it yielded similar results with a slightly lighter shortcake.

Can I substitute a different fruits for this recipe?

- Absolutely! Strawberry Shortcake is the classic, but a Peach Shortcake or other berry would be absolutely delicious also! Get creative!

How should I handle the butter for a Shortcake recipe?

- I recommend taking a stick of butter and freezing it for an hour or two. Once it's totally firm you can very easily grate it into your flour with a box grater, rather than using a dough cutter or warm hands. The objective is to handle the butter as little as possible, to prevent the butter melting.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Cups Swans Down Cake Flour, sifted
- 2 teaspoons Baking Powder
- .5 tablespoon of Kosher salt
- 6 tablespoons butter (frozen)
- .5 Cups Whole Milk
- 1 quart Strawberries
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- .5 Cups Heavy Cream
- 2 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

METHOD

Begin by preheating your oven to 450°F/232°C - You want that oven ripping hot to have the shortest time cooking and have the butter release steam to help it rise.

Onto the strawberries

Grab your strawberries and wash them thoroughly and then remove the leafy bits. Depending on the size of your strawberries, half or quarter them and place in a large bowl, reserving a couple smaller whole strawberries as garnish on top. Spoon a few tablespoons of sugar onto the cut strawberries and toss them around, allowing them to sit in the sugar until you're ready to plate. This is called macerating and the sugar will help draw out excess moisture from the berries, while also intensifying their flavor. By the time your Shortcakes are done, the strawberries will be ready, but this can be done a day in advance for the best results.

Onto the Shortcakes

In a large mixing bowl, sift your Swans Down Cake Flour and add your Baking Powder and salt, whisking the bowl for a moment to fully blend the mixture. Remove your frozen butter from the freezer and with box grater or large Microplane zester process your butter into the flour. You want large bits of grated butter, so if you don't have a box grater, you can cut into very tiny pieces with a knife and add back to the freezer to harden. After grating the butter, toss together with the flour and then add all of your milk. Quickly mix together by tossing the flour to form a "Shaggy Dough." It will be very dry and flakey - this is good. Turn onto a lightly-floured countertop and with a dough scraper cut under and around to form a loose ball of dough, kneading for only about 30 seconds or so. You'll want it to still be a shaggy dough, but any small dry bits should get tucked into itself.

Gently press your dough down to form a thick “Coin” that is about an inch or two tall, then with either a circular cutter or a knife, cut the dough and place on a baking tray.

I personally put the whole tray of cut biscuits back in the freezer or refrigerator for another 5 minutes or so, so my butter gets cold again.

Brush the top of the shortcakes with melted butter and pop into your hot oven, setting a timer for 25 minutes.

While those are baking, do not open the door at all! You want the heat to melt the butter in the Shortcakes rapidly, releasing the moisture as steam. This will help give some rise to the Shortcakes, so they’re not dense bricks.

Now add about a half cup of heavy cream in a mixing bowl and with a balloon whisk, quickly whip your cream until it begins to thicken. At this point, if you’d like it slightly sweetened, add a couple tablespoons of powdered sugar and some vanilla extract or other flavors. Continue to whisk until the cream holds on the end of the whisk, but careful not to take it too far, or you’re making butter.

Add to a piping bag, or a gallon ziplock bag with a corner cut out.

Remove the Shortcakes from the oven and allow to cool for a few minutes before carefully cutting in half with a serrated knife.

Generously top the bottom half with the macerated strawberries, top it with the other half and bury it in the freshly-made whipped cream. Give it a little Strawberry Hat and you’re done!

You have just made a delicious, simple and infinitely better version to the spongy checkerboard pieces that I had growing up as a kid.

NOTES:

- You can prepare the strawberries a day before for the best results.
- Freezing your butter and grating with a box grater is the best way to work the butter into the dough. Keep it COLD!
- You can make this with any fruits you love, so get creative!
- The biscuits will hold well for a couple days, if covered, but they’re so good I don’t think they’ll last that long.