

FRESH FRUIT TART ON HOMEMADE ALMOND POUND CAKE

INGREDIENTS

1/2 pound (2 sticks) butter, softened
1/2 cup vegetable shortening
3 cups sugar
5 eggs
3 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for pan
1/2 teaspoon fine salt
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1 cup milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoons almond extract

For the pudding base

1 cups milk
1/4 cup white sugar
3 tablespoons cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon butter

The fruits

1 pound strawberries, cleaned of stems and sliced
1 pint raspberries
1 pint blueberries
1 11-ounce can mandarin slices (reserve the juice for the glaze)
1 11-ounce can pineapple slices (reserve the juice for the glaze)
2 kiwis, skinned and sliced

For the glaze

Reserved liquids from the mandarin and pineapple slices
(total should be 6 ounces, so you may need to add some water)
1 1/2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/4 cup granulated sugar
Whipped cream, for garnish

DIRECTIONS

To make the pound cake: Preheat oven to 350F. Grease and flour a tart pan with a removable bottom (in this case, mine is a square tart pan, but round is more common).

With a mixer, cream butter and shortening together. Add sugar, a little at a time. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating after each addition. Stir dry ingredients together in a bowl and add to mixer alternately with milk, starting with the flour and ending with the flour. Mix in vanilla. Pour into a greased and floured tart pan. Tap the tart pan against the counter a few times to let any air bubbles escape. Bake for 1 hour, until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean. Let cool in the pan on a wire rack for 30 minute; then invert and remove from pan and continue to cool.

To make the pudding base: In medium saucepan over medium heat, heat milk until bubbles form at edges. In a bowl, combine sugar, cornstarch and salt. Pour into hot milk, a little at a time, stirring to dissolve. Continue to cook and stir until mixture thickens enough to coat the back of a metal spoon. Do not boil. Remove from heat, stir in vanilla and butter. Set aside to cool while the cake cools and you prepare the fruits.

Assembling the tart: lay a base of pudding on the tart, basically acting like a glue for the fruits. Arrange your fruits in a pleasing symmetrical pattern on the pudding layer, starting from the center and working your way to the edges, until the entire tart is covered. You should press the fruits and berries firmly, because there is apt to be some shifting.

To glaze: Finally, combine the fruit juices, cornstarch, and sugar in a small saucepan and cook over medium heat until clear and thick, about 2 minutes. Let cool. With a pastry brush, glaze the entire tart. This will act as a second layer of "glue" to hold the tart together. You will not use all of the glaze. Note that despite your best efforts, this tart is somewhat fragile, so handle with care.

This tart needs to be refrigerated. Set out 20-30 minutes before serving to bring to room temperature. Serve with a spoonful of whipped cream (optional).