

PISTACHIO POUND CAKE WITH STRAWBERRIES IN LAVENDER SUGAR

| MAKE S ONE 9 B Y 5 - INCH C AKE

The rich flavor and beautiful color of pistachios makes them the perfect addition to this classic pound cake. The strawberries here are sweetened with just a bit of lavender-infused sugar, which imparts a subtle and light floral flavor, perfect for spring. I like to serve this cake in thick slices with generous spoonfuls of juicy berries and a dollop of whipped cream, like strawberry shortcake, but better. Culinary grade lavender is available at many spice shops, farmers' markets, and online, but a tablespoon or so of chopped mint or basil leaves is a fine substitute.

PISTACHIO POUND CAKE

1 cup (130g) shelled pistachios
1 1/2 cups (195g) all purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
3/4 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup (175g) unsalted butter, softened
1 1/4 cups (250g) granulated sugar
3 large eggs, at room temperature
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract (recipe follows)
1/4 teaspoon almond extract
1/2 cup (120ml) whole milk, at room temperature

STRAWBERRIES

1 1/2 pounds (675g) strawberries
1/4 cup (50g) granulated sugar, or less if your berries are particularly sweet
1/2 teaspoon organic lavender buds
1/2 vanilla bean, split lengthwise and seeds scraped from the pod

TO SERVE

Lightly sweetened whipped cream

Position a rack in the center of the oven, preheat to 325°F (165°C/Gas Mark 3). Grease and flour a 9 by 5 by 3-inch loaf pan.

To make the cake: Grind the pistachios in a food processor just until they resemble flour. Be careful to not grind them into pistachio butter, though that would be delicious.

Add the flour, baking powder, and salt to the bowl of the food processor. Pulse until combined.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, or in a large bowl with an electric mixer, beat the butter on medium high speed until smooth, then, with the mixer still running, slowly stream in the sugar. Cream the butter and sugar together until very light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Add the eggs one at a time, beating for 30 seconds after each addition. Occasionally stop the mixer and scrape down the sides of the bowl to ensure even mixing. Add the vanilla and almond extracts.

With the mixer on low speed, alternate adding the flour mixture and the milk to the batter in three additions, mixing until just combined. Finish mixing the batter by hand with a rubber spatula. Make sure to scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl to ensure even mixing.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan, smooth the top, and bake until the cake is golden brown and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, 45 to 55 minutes. Cool for 15 minutes in the pan, then remove the cake to a rack to cool completely.

To make the strawberries: Combine the sugar, lavender, and vanilla seeds in a mortar and grind with a pestle until the lavender is broken up into fine bits and the sugar is fragrant. Alternately, this can be done in a food processor. Hull and slice the strawberries in half if they are small, in quarters if they are larger; combine the sliced strawberries and sugar in a bowl and stir gently. Let the berries macerate for at least 15 minutes at room temperature before serving.

To serve: Slice the cooled cake into thick pieces and top each slice with a generous spoonful of berries and their juices. Top with whipped cream. Extra cake keeps in an airtight container at room temperature for three days.

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VANILLA EXTRACT

MAKES 1 CUP (240ML)

You may have noticed that I use vanilla beans a lot in this book, which I know can be prohibitively expensive. But vanilla beans are quite economical if you buy them in bulk online. I tend to buy a pound of beans once a year, which is enough to make a big batch of vanilla extract,

use whole in recipes, and even give some away to friends. If you don't think you can use an entire pound of beans (usually about fifty), it is worth it to ask a friend or two to split an order with you. Feel free to use this ratio to make more or less extract, depending on your needs.

6 vanilla beans

1 cup (240ml) vodka

1 glass jar or bottle with a tight fitting lid

Slice each vanilla bean in half lengthwise and place them in a glass jar or bottle. Trim the beans to fit the jar if necessary. Pour the vodka over the top, and make sure the beans are completely covered with alcohol. Screw the lid on tightly and give the jar a good shake. Put the jar in a dark, cool place (but not somewhere you'll forget about it) and let it infuse for at least two months before using. Shake the jar every couple of days. After two months, you can strain the extract into another bottle to remove the seeds or continue to let the extract infuse for up to one year.

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