

Recipes as Promised.

Basic Vanilla / Chocolate / Lemon Flavour Sponge

This is a standard mix that can be used to make sponge cakes, sandwich cakes, fairy cakes and Bakewell type tart toppings and is the standard mix I use for all my sponges.

4 oz self-raising flour (115 g)
4 oz caster sugar (115 g)
4 oz butter/margarine (115 g)
2 eggs (beaten)
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
Vanilla flavouring or essence to taste (about 1 teaspoon (5 ml))

Variations:

If making chocolate sponge omit the vanilla and add 1 dessert spoon of cocoa powder.

If making lemon sponge then omit the vanilla and add 15 ml (3 teaspoons) lemon juice and 1/2 to 1 teaspoon lemon flavouring (2.5 to 5 ml).

Pre-heat oven to 180 - 200 C / 350 - 400 F / Gas 4 - 6

Grease and line with baking paper 2 cake sandwich tins or place paper bun cases in a 12 section Yorkshire pudding/pate/muffin tray.

First mix all ingredients together in large bowl using spatula, knife or wooden spoon.

When mixed and fairly uniform finish mixing thoroughly with electric mixer.

Use the mix as soon as it is ready before it has chance to settle. The air inside the mix generated from the electric mixer will help to make the resulting sponge light and fluffy as it should be, if allowed to settle the air will be gone.

Distribute the mixture evenly amongst the sandwich tins or bun cases, trying not to overfill. 2/3 full is enough.

Bake until golden brown in colour and springy to touch.

How to tell when it's done:

- 1 Your kitchen will smell of cake
- 2 Lightly press the top with your finger, if it's done it will spring back into shape.
- 3 Insert a skewer or thin knife right through the centre, if the skewer or knife comes out clean it's done.

Please note however that a little shrinkage or sinking is likely to occur whilst your cakes are cooling.

For butterfly buns; when cakes are cooled cut out a circle from the top middle using a sharp knife, slice the cut out circle in half. Fill the hole left in the cake with butter cream/butter icing. Insert two halves of cut out circle diagonally into butter cream to represent wings. Dust finished buns with icing sugar.

I would always advise to top lemon sponge or lemon Bakewells with a little icing made by mixing a small amount of water with loads of icing sugar till thick and just spreadable (it will get harder to handle as it sets). Sprinkle this icing with some type of yellow coloured edible decorations, or add a drop of yellow food colouring to the icing mix. This way your guests will not have to guess which buns or cakes are lemon flavoured and which are not. You could also add a drop of lemon flavouring to the icing as well if you wish.

Also I always top individual chocolate fairy cakes with little melted white chocolate and chocolate sprinkles. To melt your chocolate first boil a large pan of water. Whilst that is on break your chocolate into small pieces and place into a ceramic or pot bowl (but not plastic). When the water has boiled take it off the heat and float you bowl of chocolate pieces in it. Keep stirring the chocolate until melted. Cut the peaks off each of the chocolate fairy cakes to leave a small flat surface in the top centre (discard the cut offs or eat them, they are delicious). Dribble a little of the melted chocolate from a teaspoon onto the flat centre. If the chocolate in the bowl starts to harden and set just float it back in the pan of hot water and stir until melted again. Sprinkle with decorations before the chocolate sets. To aid the setting of the chocolate after decorating you can place the finished cakes in the refrigerator for a while.

Icing

Normal frosting / icing

1 dessert spoon of water
Lots of icing sugar

Mix together small amount of icing sugar with water to start.
Keep adding icing sugar a little at a time and mixing thoroughly until it is hard to manage, it will then be thick enough to use and will set OK.
You can add a little food colouring or flavouring to the mix if you wish to get the desired results, but just add a little at a time and mix thoroughly, until the right colour or taste or both is achieved.

Butter cream / butter icing

Soft butter or margarine
A splash of milk
Lots of icing sugar
Vanilla essence or flavouring (or any flavour you like)
You can also use a little food colouring if desired.

Mix butter or margarine, milk and a generous dose of icing sugar together till even.
Now as before for normal icing add a little icing sugar at a time and mix thoroughly, keep adding icing sugar and mixing until the right consistency is formed, the mix should form soft peaks when disturbed with any utensils.
Add flavouring and/or colouring to taste, remembering to mix it in well. If the result makes

your butter icing a bit runny just add more icing sugar and mixing until consistency is right again.

This will keep in an airtight container in the refrigerator for a few days, but no more than 3 days is advisable; however it can be frozen if you wish to store it for longer.

Basic Sweet Shortcrust Pastry

8 oz plain flour (230 g)
4 oz butter or block margarine (115 g) softened
2 oz caster sugar (50 - 60 g)
1 egg, beaten

Mix together the sugar and butter or margarine in a large bowl.

Add beaten egg a little at a time, mixing in thoroughly with each bit.

Add flour and mix all together to form a soft dough, try not to over mix.

Wrap in Clingfilm or put in airtight container and chill in refrigerator for about 20 minutes before use. (This will keep for about 3 days in the refrigerator or can be frozen for use at a later date)

Baking times and temperatures will depend on its intended use; individual bakes will cook quicker and at higher temperature, large bakes will need longer and lower temperature.

I find 180 C / 350 F / Gas 4 to be suitable for just about everything and often only bake at this temperature.

Tart Base

Use sweet shortcrust pastry for base in either lightly greased sandwich tin or lightly greased 12 section Yorkshire pudding/pate/muffin tray.

Spread thin layer of jam onto base - red jam for Bakewell tarts, and coconut tarts - lemon curd for lemon Bakewells.

Add your topping of choice; Bakewell, coconut or lemon sponge (normal lemon sponge mix is used to top lemon Bakewells)

Bake 180 - 200 C / 350 - 400 F / Gas 4 - 6 until done.

Test toppings on Bakewell tart and lemon Bakewell as you would for sponge cake.

For normal jam tarts or lemon curd tarts

Use sweet shortcrust pastry in lightly greased 12 section Yorkshire pudding/pate/muffin tray.

Fill each with approximately 1 teaspoon of jam or lemon curd.

Bake as above until pastry golden.

Coconut Tart Topping

8 oz desiccated coconut (230 g)
4 oz butter or margarine (115 g) softened
2 oz sugar (50 - 60 g) caster or granulated

1 egg, beaten

Basically the same as sweet pastry but desiccated coconut instead of flour.

Mix coconut, butter or margarine, and sugar together in large bowl (this is best done with bare hands).

When well mixed and an even consistency add the beaten egg and mix in thoroughly.

Use as a topping for sweet shortcrust pastry and jam base.

Bake at 180 - 200 C / 350 - 400 F / Gas 4 - 6 until pastry golden and coconut topping starts to brown.

Bakewell Tart Topping

4 oz ground almonds (115 g)

4 oz caster sugar (115 g)

2 oz butter (50 - 60 g) softened

3 eggs, beaten

1/4 teaspoon almond essence or flavouring

Beat ground almonds with sugar, eggs, butter, and almond essence in large bowl. Best to use an electric mixer.

Pour filling over sweet shortcrust pastry and red jam base.

Bake at 180 - 200 C / 350 - 400 F / Gas 4 - 6 until filling is set, test the same way as sponge cake.

Puff Pastry

There are two main types of puff pastry you can make; Rough Puff Pastry and Normal Puff Pastry. Both are adequate for our needs and I will cover both here.

Puff pastry can be a pain in the butt to make, not because it is difficult but because it is very time consuming. For this reason it is always best to make it a day or two in advance and store it wrapped or airtight in the refrigerator until needed. You certainly won't have time to make it on the day.

This of course can also be applied to any pastry; make it a day or two in advance and store it wrapped or airtight in the refrigerator. This will save time on the day. Of course you can always freeze both puff and shortcrust pastry until it's required.

Puff Pastry (the proper way)

8 oz plain flour (230 g)

8 oz butter (230 g)

1/2 teaspoon salt (2.5 ml)

1 teaspoon lemon juice (5 ml)

Cold water

Sieve flour and salt into large bowl.
Make a well in middle of flour and add the lemon juice, stir with a knife adding enough water to form an elastic dough.
Place onto a floured surface and knead gently for 5 minutes until dough is smooth and does not stick to the fingers.
Roll out dough to form a piece large enough to cover the butter.
Place butter (straight from refrigerator) in middle of dough.
Fold over the ends one at a time.
Flatten in one or two places with rolling pin, then roll out gently and evenly into a long strip, ensure the butter does not come through or comes from between the edges.
Fold 1/3 towards middle, then remaining 1/3 into middle to form 3 layers, pressing down gently, do not seal the edges.
Leave to rest in cool place or refrigerator for at least 15 minutes.
Place on floured surface with unsealed edge towards you, roll and fold again as before.
Turn and repeat this 3 more times, remembering to chill for 15 minutes or more between each time.
Leave to rest in cool place or refrigerator for at least 10 minutes.
Place on floured surface with unsealed edge towards you, roll and fold again as before.
Turn and repeat 3 more times, remembering to chill for minimum of 10 minutes in between.
Finally your pastry will be ready to use.

Rough Puff Pastry

This method is both quicker and easier and produces good results, still a bit time consuming though. This can be used for anything that the above can.

8 oz plain flour (230 g)
6 oz butter or margarine (170 g) chilled and diced
1 teaspoon salt (5 ml)
1 teaspoon lemon juice (5 ml)
5 fl oz iced water (150 ml)

Mix all ingredients together with round bladed knife to form a soft dough.
Turn onto floured surface and carefully roll out to a 12 inch x 4 inch (30 cm x 10 cm) rectangle (this doesn't have to be exact) about 3/4 inch (2 cm) thick.
Fold bottom 1/3 up to centre, then top 1/3 down over top.
Turn so join is on left and seal edges with fingertips.
Roll out to slightly larger rectangle about 1/2 inch (1.25 cm) thick.
Fold into thirds in same way as before and give it 1/4 turn.
Wrap in Clingfilm and chill for at least 20 minutes.
Repeat rolling, folding and turning 4 more times in all, chilling for minimum 20 minutes after every 2 turns.
Wrap in Clingfilm and chill for minimum of 20 minutes before use.

Cheese Straws

Puff pastry

Mature cheddar cheese, grated

English mustard, made from powder & water mix or straight out of the jar, ready to spread

Ground cayenne pepper (optional)

Roll out ready-made puff pastry into large but thin rectangle or square.

Spread half generously with mustard, and cover other half generously with grated cheese.

Sprinkle over all with cayenne pepper, but don't overdo it.

Fold the two halves together on top of each other and roll out thinly.

Cut long narrow strips with sharp knife.

Lay out strips on baking tray lined with baking paper.

Bake for approximately 10 minutes in a hot oven at about 220 - 230 C / 400 - 425 F / Gas 7 -8 until crisp and golden.

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prenterprises2010@gmail.com