

Strawberries are in, so it must be spring

There is just something festive about strawberries. I'm not really sure what it is that makes them so special but even young children get excited when you mention strawberries. Maybe it's the way that they seem to signal the true beginning of spring. Well, whatever the reason, they are in season now and it is time to enjoy these luscious berries.

Whether you buy them at the store or pick your own, there are a few things to remember when working with strawberries. Try to choose the freshest, ripest berries that you can. Look for a deep red color, a glossy sheen, a firm texture and fresh cap. Strawberries will not ripen off the vine so pick carefully. Keep them as cool as possible on the way home and plan on taking care of them as soon as you can once you get there. Do not wash them until you are ready to use them, but do put them in the refrigerator.

When you're ready to work with them, wash gently leaving the cap on. The best way is to put them in a collander and spray them with cold water. Then pull or cut the caps off, slice them or leave whole depending on your recipe.

Strawberries really taste better fresh from the vine but they do freeze well. You can freeze whole berries on a cookie sheet then transfer them to containers. Or you can slice them, mix with sugar and freeze in containers. Or you can slice them, mix with sugar and freeze in containers. Use about 8 cups sliced berries with 1 cup sugar, allow the sugar to dissolve then stir gently and place in containers. They will keep frozen for up to 12 months.

It's hard to beat the taste of just plain fresh strawberries but it is fun to try new recipes. I guarantee that you will enjoy the recipes this week. The Strawberries and Lemon Cream are pretty and dainty and just perfect for springtime showers or receptions. The Strawberry Butter makes a great gift to give along with a fresh baked loaf of bread. You might consider the Strawberries and Cream Crepes if you're hosting a brunch in the near future.

If you have a craving for some good old Strawberry Shortcake, I think that the recipe on the box of Bisquick is hard to beat, but I've included a true shortcake recipe for those of you who prefer to make it from scratch. Also, a great pound cake recipe that tastes even better when topped with berries and cream. Don't forget how good fresh strawberries taste when dipped into confections sugar, fresh whipped cream or chocolate sauce. Have a "berry" good week!

Strawberry Angel Delight

1 cup sugar
1 (12-ounce) container non-dairy whipped topping
1 (16-ounce) container sour cream
3/4 cup confectioners sugar
1 (5 1/2-ounce) can evaporated milk

1 package strawberry glaze mix or 1 jar strawberry glaze
1 quart strawberries
Break angel food cake into 1-inch pieces and set aside.

Mix whipped topping, sour cream, confectioners sugar and milk together until smooth. Fold in cake pieces.

Combine strawberries and glaze. If you are using the mix, prepare it according to package directions. In a large bowl, pour in the cake-cream mixture and top with the strawberry glaze. Chill several hours.

Strawberry Rubarb Pie

1 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 cup water
1 pound fresh rubarb washed and cut into 1-inch pieces
1 package (3-ounce) strawberry jello
2 pints fresh strawberries
1 9-inch baked pie shell
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon confectioners sugar

Mix sugar and cornstarch in large sauce pan. Stir in water and rubarb. Cook gently until rubarb is tender and mixture is thick and bubbly. Boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in jello until dissolved. Refrigerate until the mixture mounds when dropped from a spoon. Stir in the strawberries. Pour into pie shell and refrigerate. Whip cream with confectioners sugar and serve with pie.

Deluxe Strawberry Pie

4 cups fresh strawberries, washed and capped
3 tablespoons cornstarch
1 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
few drops red food coloring
1 baked pie shell, 9-inch
whipped cream (optional)

Spread 2 cups of berries over bottom of cooled, baked pie shell. Mash or break remaining berries; add sugar, cornstarch, baking powder and mix thoroughly. Put over heat and bring to boil gradually; reduce heat and cook, stirring constantly about 10 minutes. Add few drops of red food coloring to deepen red of mixture. Cool, then pour over raw berries in pie shell and refrigerate, until thoroughly chilled. Garnish with whipped cream if desired.

Strawberry Shortcakes

1 quart strawberries, sliced
1 cup sugar
1/3 cup shortening
2 cups plain flour
2 tablespoons sugar
3 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup milk
margarine or butter, softened
whipped cream

Mix strawberries with 1 cup sugar; let stand one hour. Heat oven to 450 degrees. Cut shortening into flour, 2 tablespoons sugar, the baking powder and salt until mixture resembles fine crumbs. Stir in milk just until blended. Gently smooth dough into a ball on lightly floured cloth-covered board. Knead 20-25 times. Roll to 1/2-inch thickness; cut with floured 3-inch cutter. Place about 1



From My Kitchen To Yours by Shearra Miller

inch apart on ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake until golden brown, 10-12 minutes. Split crosswise while hot. Spread with margarine; fill and top with cream and strawberries. Yield: 6 servings.

Crusty Cream Cheese Pound Cake

1 cup butter or margarine, softened
1/2 cup shortening
3 cups sugar
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
3 cups sifted cake flour
6 eggs
1 tablespoon vanilla extract

Cream butter and shortening; gradually add sugar, beating well at medium speed of an electric mixer. Add cream cheese, beating well until light and fluffy. Alternately add flour and eggs, beginning and ending with flour. Stir in vanilla.

Pour batter into a greased and floured 10-inch tube pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes; remove from pan, and let cool completely on a wire rack. Yield: one 10-inch cake.

Strawberries Romanoff

1 quart strawberries
1/2 cup powdered sugar
1 cup chilled whipping cream
1/4 cup orange-flavored liqueur or orange juice

Sprinkle strawberries with powdered sugar; stir gently. Cover and refrigerate 2 hours.

Just before serving, beat whipping cream in chilled bowl until stiff. Stir in liqueur gradually. Fold in strawberries. Yield: 6 servings.

Strawberries With Lemon Cream

1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
1/3 cup confectioners sugar
1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 pints strawberries

Beat cream cheese, sugar, lemon peel and lemon juice until smooth; cover and refrigerate (this can be made ahead of time).

Wash strawberries and remove

hulls, place on paper towels hulled end down. Cut an X through the top of each berry (not all the way through) and pull slightly apart. Using a small spoon or pastry bag with star tip, put a heaping teaspoon of cream filling in each berry. They can be filled 2 hours before serving. Place in paper petit-four cups or on a doily-lined tray. Makes about 3-1/2 dozen.

Strawberry Butter

1/2 pound butter
1 cup strawberries
1/2 box confectioners sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla

Mash strawberries; cream butter, confectioners sugar and vanilla. Beat in strawberries and mix well.

Berried Treasure

2 (3-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened

1 (8 ounce) carton sour cream
1/3 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
1 quart fresh strawberries, halved and chilled
1/4 cup firmly packed light brown sugar

Combine first 3 ingredients in a small mixing bowl; beat at medium speed with electric mixer until smooth. Chill 1-2 hours.

Spoon strawberries into 8 individual compotes or dessert dishes. Top with cream cheese mixture; sprinkle each with 1-1/2 teaspoons brown sugar. Yield: about 8 servings.

Strawberries and Cream Crepes

10 to 12 cooked crepes
3 cups fresh strawberries
1/3 cup sugar
1 cup cottage cheese
1 cup sour cream
1/2 cup powdered sugar

Slice strawberries; add granulated sugar and set aside. In blender, whip cottage cheese until smooth; stir in sour cream and powdered sugar. Fill crepes with 2/3 of creamy mixture and berries; fold over. Top with sour cream mixture, then remaining strawberries.

Basic Crepe Recipe

3 tablespoons margarine
3 eggs
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup water
3/4 cup plain flour
1/4 teaspoon salt

Combine all ingredients in blender and pour well until smooth. Pour about 1/4 cup into heated crepe pan and swirl around until pan is coated. Cook until bubbles appear, then carefully turn it over and cook for a short time.

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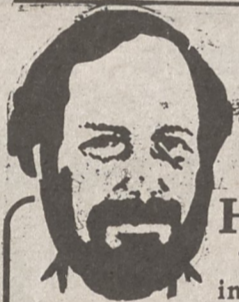
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