

Pavlova for Shavuot

From Vera Abitbol & Michael Benayoun

Ingredients

5 egg whites
1 cup icing sugar
½ cup caster sugar
2 teaspoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons white vinegar
1 vanilla pod
2 cups heavy cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons sugar
Fruits (e.g. kiwis and strawberries)
Food coloring (optional)

Directions

Meringue

- Preheat oven to 200 F. Spread butter and sugar the edges of a springform pan.
- Beat the egg whites with a pinch of salt, while slowly adding sugars, cornstarch, vinegar, and the seeds extracted from the vanilla bean.
- Beat until stiff peaks form. The meringue should be shiny and firm.
- Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Place the springform pan on the parchment paper (or on the removable base).
- Using a pastry bag, form meringue sticks (or other shape) around the springform pan.
- Coat the entire bottom with a thick layer of meringue (about 2 inches). Make sure to create a well where the cream will be placed after cooking.
- Bake for 2 hours.
- Turn off the oven and leave the meringue inside until completely cooled.
- Unmold the meringue gently and set aside.

Cream

- Whip the heavy cream while gradually adding coloring and vanilla extract.
- Spread the whipped cream on the meringue with a spatula or a pastry bag.
- Place fruits on top (kiwis, strawberries or others).

Tips for making a meringue

1. The meringue is a very soft base: all shapes and sizes are therefore possible.
If you don't have a pastry ring or a removable mold, here are some ideas:
 - Circle: individual or cake size. To make it perfectly round, using a large black marker, draw a circle with the desired diameter on parchment paper. Turn the parchment paper over with the ink facing down on the tray.
 - Rectangle: very practical to cut.
 - Nest: circle slightly hollowed in the center.To get the right shape for your meringue, use a plate as a guide to draw an 8-inch circle on non-stick baking paper. Turn it over, with the ink facing down on the baking sheet.
2. A dash of vinegar or lemon is essential to obtain a crisp meringue on the outside and a soft inside.
3. Bring the eggs to room temperature before separating them. Cold egg white takes longer to beat, so it doesn't incorporate as much air.
4. To make sure that no yolk gets into the egg white, separate the eggs one at a time before transferring them to the bowl. If there is yolk in the egg white, do not use it.
5. Beat the egg whites in a dry container until firm peaks form.
6. To make the meringue shiny and firm, gradually incorporate the sugar.
7. To test if the sugar is dissolved, rub the mixture between your fingers. If it looks grainy, continue beating until the mixture is smooth and shiny.
8. Make sure utensils are dry before you start. The humidity prevents the aeration of the egg white, so the meringue may not rise at all. Do not use a plastic container as it retains moisture.
9. Use caster sugar rather than crystal sugar; its texture is finer and dissolves more easily. Any undissolved sugar can ruin the texture of the meringue.
10. Leave the meringue in the oven after baking, with the door closed, to cool and dry completely.