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STRAWBERRY AND LEMON CURD PAVLOVA

What could be more delicious than a dessert with a meringue crust and a marshmallow center? Add lemon curd, a creamy whipped topping, and fresh spring strawberries and you've just about reached dessert perfection!

Serves 6 to 8

TO MAKE

PREPARE THE LEMON CURD: Wash and dry the lemons, then zest them, taking care to avoid removing any pith along with the zest. Set the zest aside. Juice the lemons and strain the juice over a fine-mesh sieve to remove any membranes or seeds. Set the juice aside.

Break the eggs into a medium metal bowl and beat lightly to incorporate the whites into the yolks. Fill a medium saucepan with about 2 inches of water and place over medium heat. Bring to a gentle simmer.

Put the bowl filled with the eggs on top of the pan of gently simmering water to form a double boiler. Add the sugar, butter, lemon juice, and lemon zest and

whisk gently until the sugar dissolves and the butter melts. Stir the mixture with a wooden spoon until it thickens and coats the back of the spoon, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove the curd from the heat. Transfer to a lidded container. Leave at room temperature while you prepare the rest of the recipe.

PREPARE THE MERINGUE: Preheat the oven to 250°F. Place the oven rack in the center of the oven.

Line a baking sheet with baking parchment. Use either a mixing bowl or a compass to draw an 8-inch circle in the middle of the parchment. Flip the parchment over so that the drawn side faces down on the baking sheet but is still visible through the paper.

In a large bowl, beat the egg whites on medium speed until foamy peaks appear. Increase the speed to high and gradually beat in the sugar until the mixture becomes stiff and glossy, 6 to 8 minutes. In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, vanilla, cornstarch, and ¼ cup of the beaten egg and sugar. Add the mixture to the rest of the beaten egg in the mixing bowl; beat on high speed for 3 to 4 minutes, until firm, stiff peaks appear.

Pile the meringue onto the parchment circle. Dab small bits of meringue onto the underside of the four corners of the parchment to keep it secure. Use a spoon to spread the mixture into an 8-inch circle and make a small indentation in the

YOU WILL NEED

FOR THE LEMON CURD

- 6 large lemons
- 4 large eggs
- 2 cups superfine sugar (see Note)
- 10 tablespoons unsalted butter, chilled

FOR THE MERINGUE

- 4 large egg whites
- 1¼ cup superfine sugar (see Note)
- 1 teaspoon white or apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch, arrow root, or potato starch

FOR THE WHIPPED

TOPPING

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

FOR THE TOPPING

- 2 cups fresh strawberries, sliced
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meringue circle (this is where the lemon curd, whipped cream, and fruit will go once the meringue is baked).

Place the baking sheet in the oven; bake for 1 hour, or until the meringue appears dry and very pale in color. Turn off the heat, leave the oven door slightly open, and allow to cool completely.

PREPARE THE WHIPPED TOPPING: Combine the heavy cream, powdered sugar, and vanilla in a mixing bowl. Beat on high speed until billowy clouds of cream appear. Set aside.

ASSEMBLE THE PAVLOVA: Transfer the meringue from the parchment to a serving platter. Mound the lemon curd in the center of the meringue. Use a spatula to spread it around evenly. Pile the whipped cream on top of the lemon curd. Use the spatula to distribute it evenly. Top the whipped cream with the sliced strawberries. Serve immediately, or refrigerate and serve within several hours.

Note: If you can't source superfine (caster) sugar, simply pulse granulated sugar in a food processor several times until it becomes more fine and then measure from there.