

Louisiana Strawberry Shortcake

*New Orleans Cooking Experience
New Orleans, LA*

Strawberry Shortcake is an easy, delicious way to celebrate the simple goodness of seasonal berries. You can make the strawberry sauce ahead of time, as it should be chilled. Save the prettier berries for slicing. Note: The flour is sifted twice, once by itself, and again with the other dry ingredients.

MAKES 10 SHORTCAKES.

3 1/2 cups all-purpose white flour, sifted
2 teaspoons salt
2 tablespoons baking powder
2 tablespoons granulated white sugar
3/4 cups cold unsalted butter
1 1/2 cups heavy whipping cream
Strawberry sauce, recipe follows
Whipped cream, recipe follows
10 sprigs fresh mint, for garnish

Preheat oven to 450°F. In a large mixing bowl, sift together the flour, salt, baking powder and sugar. Using a hand grater, grate the cold butter into the flour mixture, mixing occasionally to evenly distribute the butter. Mix the butter and flour together with your hands until the texture is like coarse cornmeal. Make a well in the center of the butter/flour mixture. Add the cream to the center of the well. Stir until the dough is fairly free from the sides of the bowl. Do not over-mix.

Turn the dough onto a lightly floured cutting board. Knead gently and quickly, making 8 to 10 folds. Do not overwork the dough. Roll out the dough until 1/2-inch thick. Using a 3-inch ring mold or cookie cutter, cut the dough into rounds and place them on an ungreased sheet pan. Brush the tops with

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melted butter. Bake in a 450°F oven until light golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Remove from oven and transfer the shortcakes to a cool pan or container. When the shortcakes are completely cool, store them covered and airtight until ready to serve.

To serve: ladle 1/4 cup of strawberry sauce onto each serving plate. Slice the shortcakes in half and place the bottom halves onto each serving plate. Place about 3/4 cup of sliced berries on each shortcake. Top the berries with a generous dollop of whipped cream (or use a pastry bag). Place the shortcake tops on top of the whipped cream. Garnish the top of each shortcake with a small dollop of whipped cream, a slice of strawberry and a sprig of fresh mint. Serve immediately.

Strawberry Sauce:

- 1 cup water**
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar**
- 4 cups strawberries, stems removed**

Make a simple syrup: In a small pot, add the water and sugar. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to very low and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and refrigerate until fully chilled. Combine the strawberries and simple syrup. Purée. Strain through a Chinois (fine mesh strainer). Refrigerate until use.

Whipped Cream:

- 2 cups heavy whipping cream**
- 1/2 cup granulated white sugar**
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract**

In a chilled mixing bowl, add all ingredients. Using a thin wire whisk, whip the cream until stiff peaks form. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

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