Eton Mess

Rating

added by Every Day to the River Cottage Community
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Though sadly unheard of at Eton in my day, this delicious pudding is now a British classic. It's really just a fool sweetened with broken meringue instead of sugar - but that extra element of texture makes so much difference. I love it with the traditional strawberries alone, but including raspberries adds a whole new dimension to it.

Prep time: 5 - 10 mins

Cook time: 2 hours

Servings: 6

Ingredients

- * 250g strawberries
- * 250g raspberries
- * 35g caster sugar
- * 350ml double cream, lightly whipped

- For the meringue

- * 2 medium egg whites
- * 100g caster sugar

Directions

1. Start with the meringue: put the egg whites into a spotlessly clean bowl and whisk until they hold soft peaks. Now add half the sugar and whisk to blend well with the egg white. Add the remaining sugar and whisk again until the mixture is thick and shiny and holds stiff peaks. You should be able to turn the bowl upside down without anything sliding out.

2. Line a baking sheet with baking parchment. Dollop dessertspoonfuls of meringue on the sheet and place in an oven preheated to 120°C/Gas Mark ½. Leave for 2 hours, until the meringues are completely dry and crisp on the outside (they will still be a bit squidgy in the middle) and can be lifted off the paper easily. Remove and leave to cool completely.

3. Meanwhile, halve the strawberries, thickly slicing any whoppers. Put in a large bowl with the raspberries and sugar. Roughly crush and squeeze a few of the berries with your hands so the juices start to run. Cover and leave to macerate in the fridge for an hour or two.

4. To assemble the mess, break the meringues into rough pieces, then fold into the whipped cream. Now lightly fold in the chilled fruit, so everything is rippled together rather than thoroughly blended. Pile into glasses and serve. You can make it an hour or so in advance, but not more, or the meringue will go weepy in the cream.

Variation: Gooseberry Eton mess

Replace the strawberries and raspberries with gooseberry compote

Variation: Bramley Eton mess

Replace the berries with Bramley apple compote and use 250ml (rather than 350ml) cream.