

# *Piece be the Journey*

## Strawberry Cream Cake

Yield: 3 layer 9-inch cake

*The cake portion can be made ahead of time, wrapped in plastic wrap, and frozen. Thaw the frozen cake, unwrapped, at room temperature for two hours before proceeding with the recipe.*

*The recipe makes enough whipped cream for the middle and top of the cake; if you want enough to cover the cake, double the whipped cream recipe.*

### INGREDIENTS

#### Cake:

- 1¼ cups cake flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoons table salt
- 1 cup granulated sugar (7 ounces)
- 5 large eggs (2 whole and 3 separated), room temperature
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons water
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

#### Strawberry Filling:

- 2 pounds fresh strawberries, washed, dried, and stemmed
- 4-6 tablespoons granulated sugar
- pinch salt

#### Whipped Cream:

- 8 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
- ½ cup granulated sugar (3½ ounces)
- 1 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ⅛ teaspoon table salt
- 2 cups heavy cream

### DIRECTIONS

1. **For the cake:** Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Grease and flour round 9 by 2-inch cake pan or 9-inch springform pan and line with parchment paper. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk flour, baking powder, salt, and all but 3 tablespoons sugar. Whisk in 2 whole eggs and 3 yolks (reserving whites), butter, water, and vanilla; whisk until smooth.

2. In bowl of standing mixer, beat remaining 3 egg whites at medium-low speed until frothy, 1 to 2 minutes. With machine running, gradually add remaining 3 tablespoons sugar, increase speed to medium-high, and beat until soft peaks form, 60 to 90 seconds. Stir one-third of whites into batter to lighten, add remaining whites and gently fold into batter until no white streaks remain. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake until toothpick comes out clean, 30 to 40 minutes. Cool in pan for 10 minutes, then invert cake onto greased wire rack; peel off and discard parchment. Invert cake again and cool completely, about 2 hours.
3. **For the strawberry filling:** Halve 24 of the best-looking berries and reserve. Quarter remaining berries and toss with 4-6 tablespoons sugar (depending on sweetness of berries) in medium bowl and let sit 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Strain juice from berries and reserve (you should have about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup). In food processor, give macerated berries five 1-second pulses (you should have about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups). In small saucepan over medium heat, simmer reserved juice until syrupy and reduced to about 3 tablespoons, 3 to 5 minutes. Pour reduced syrup over macerated berries, add pinch of salt, and toss to combine. Set aside until cake is cooled.
4. **For the whipped cream:** When cake has cooled, place cream cheese, sugar, vanilla, and salt in bowl of standing mixer. Whisk at medium-high speed until light and fluffy, 1 to 2 minutes, scraping down bowl with rubber spatula as needed. Reduce speed to low and gradually add heavy cream; when almost fully combined, increase speed to medium-high and beat until mixture holds stiff peaks, 2 to 3 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Should make about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  cups.
5. **To assemble the cake:** Using a large serrated knife, slice cake into three even layers. Place bottom cake layer on cake plate and arrange ring of 20 strawberry halves, cut sides down and stem ends facing out, around perimeter of cake layer. Pour half of pureed berry mixture (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups) in center, then spread evenly to cover cake. Gently spread about one-third of whipped cream (about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups) over berry layer, leaving  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch border from edge. Place middle cake layer on top and press down gently (whipped layer should become flush with cake edge as you press down). Repeat with 20 additional strawberry halves, remaining berry mixture, and half of remaining whipped cream. Gently press final cake layer on top. Spread remaining whipped cream over top and decorate with remaining strawberry halves. Serve or chill for up to 4 hours.

