

Chiffon Cake: An American Classic Direct From Hollywood

BY MARION CUNNINGHAM

Chiffon cake is the first really new variety of cake we've had in America in more than 100 years.

The secret of how to make chiffon cake was guarded successfully for 20 years by its inventor, Harry Baker, a Los Angeles insurance salesman who created it in 1927. He baked the cake upon request, behind locked doors, for famous Hollywood restaurants and private parties.

In 1948, Baker contacted General Mills in Minneapolis,

LEMON CHIFFON CAKE

INGREDIENTS:

- 2¼ cups cake flour
- 1½ cups sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 8 egg yolks (½ cup)
- ¾ cup cold water
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest (the yellow rind)
- 1 cup egg whites (8 egg whites)
- ½ teaspoon cream of tartar

INSTRUCTIONS: Preheat oven to 325°. Don't grease the tube pan. Put the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt in a bowl and stir with a fork until mixed. Add the oil, yolks, water and lemon zest. Beat briskly with a spoon until the batter is smooth. Put the egg whites in the bowl of an electric mixer and attach the whisk. Beat the whites until foamy. Add the cream of tartar and continue to beat until the whites form stiff but moist peaks.

Turn the speed to the lowest setting and slowly but steadily pour in the yolk batter. Beat only until the batter is pale yellow; this should take only 10 to 15 seconds. Remove the bowl from the mixer and gently fold any streaky whites with a rubber spatula. Pour into the tube pan and bake about 1 to 1¼ hours. Test for doneness with a wooden skewer. Insert the skewer into the center and when it comes out clean remove the cake from the oven and invert until cool.

Light as angel food and rich as butter cake

traveled to its headquarters and sold his recipe. Shortly after, Betty Crocker introduced the cake, with great fanfare, as being light as angel food, rich as butter cake and easy to make.

Summer is fast fleeing, so before it's gone — and with it all the available summer fruits — make lemon chiffon cake and serve with sliced fresh peaches.

LEMON ICING

The addition of egg white in this icing makes a smooth finished texture. Makes 1½ cups.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1½ cups sifted confectioners' sugar
- 1 egg white
- 4 tablespoons butter, room temperature
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 to 4 tablespoons cold water

INSTRUCTIONS: Put the sugar, egg white, butter, lemon juice and 2 tablespoons water in a mixing bowl. Using a whisk attachment, beat the mixture until smooth and light. The icing should be easily spread and almost runny; add a little more water if it seems thick. Spread over top and sides of cake.

Baking Tip: Most people don't have much finesse in folding batter and beaten egg whites together using a spatula. It is a clumsy method and lots of air is lost in the beaten whites. Though unorthodox, folding on an electric mixer, with the whisk attachment at the lowest speed for the briefest time, is a much more successful method than the spatula system. It also is much quicker. Foam cakes such as angel food, angel custard or chiffon cakes are a breeze to make with this folding method.

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