Pavlova with chocolate mousse and strawberries



Ingredients

Meringue base:
♥ 4 egg whites
♥ 200 g sugar
♥ 0.5 tsp vinegar
♥ 1.5 tbsp corn starch

Chocolate mousse:
♥ 200 g dark chocolate
♥ 1 tsp coffee powder
♥ 0.5 dl hot water
♥ 2 sheets gelatin
♥ 4 eggs
♥ 3 whipping cream
♥ 100 g powdered sugar

Garnish:
♥ 500 g fresh, sweet strawberries
♥ 50 g dark chocolate
♥ 2 tbsp powdered sugar

Instructions

Merangue base:
Whisk the egg whites until stiff. Add the sugar gradually while continuing to whisk vigorously. Whisk for a long time with an electric mixer (at least 10 minutes) until you get a thick and stiff meringue. Carefully mix in the vinegar and cornstarch with a spatula (do not stir more than necessary, so the meringue retains its firmness).

Draw a circle about 22 cm in diameter on a baking paper. Spread the meringue within the circle to make a small, thick cake. Use the spatula to smooth the edges by dragging the spatula from bottom to top. Smooth the surface and create a dip on top of the cake (see tips).

Bake the cake in the middle of the oven at 150 °C for 1 hour. Turn off the heat and let the cake stay in the oven to dry until the oven is completely cold (at least 1 more hour, preferably overnight).

Chocolate mousse:
Break the cooking chocolate into pieces and place them in a small saucepan. Dissolve the coffee powder in boiling hot water and add. Warm on low heat until you see that the chocolate has melted. Stir the mixture smooth.

While the chocolate is melting, soak the gelatin sheets in a bowl of cold water for 5 minutes. Squeeze the water out of the gelatin sheets and place them in a cup. Dissolve the gelatin in 1 tbsp of boiling hot water, or place the cup in the microwave for a few seconds, so the gelatin melts. Stir the warm, melted gelatin into the melted chocolate.

Separate the eggs. Add one egg yolk at a time to the melted chocolate. Stir well between each yolk. Let the mixture cool for a few minutes.

Whisk the cream to thick cream in a separate bowl. First, mix a little of the cream into the chocolate mixture for a slightly more liquid consistency. Transfer the chocolate mixture into the bowl with the whipped cream. Fold them together with a spatula.

Whisk the egg whites stiff in a separate bowl. Add powdered sugar and continue to whisk to a soft meringue. Fold the meringue into the chocolate mixture.

Now it is important that the chocolate mousse mixture stays cold until it starts thickening. Place the bowl in the refrigerator for 2–3 hours, stirring occasionally. The chocolate mousse mixture must become thick enough not to run off the cake. Only when you see that the chocolate mousse is properly thick, can you carefully place it in the dip in the meringue base.

Place the cake in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours, preferably overnight.

Decoration:
Clean the strawberries and cut them into smaller pieces.

Take the cake out of the refrigerator. Place strawberries on top of the chocolate mousse.

Sprinkle over chopped cooking chocolate and sift a little powdered sugar on top.

Tips

♥ Are you puzzled by the fact that there should be vinegar in the meringue? Don't be tempted to omit it. Vinegar is an important ingredient, ensuring that the meringue base gets the right, soft, and slightly chewy consistency. I used balsamic vinegar here, but it doesn't matter which type of vinegar you use.

♥ The stiffer the meringue you whip, the less the meringue base will spread during baking.

♥ Stir as little as possible when folding cornstarch and vinegar into the whipped meringue. It takes very little to stir too much, causing the meringue to become thinner in consistency, and then the meringue cake becomes flat. I use a spatula and gently fold the meringue a couple of times.

♥ It is extremely important that you allow the chocolate mousse mixture to thicken sufficiently before placing it on the meringue base; otherwise, it will just run off the cake.

♥ Use fresh, sweet strawberries and not strawberries that have been frozen, as thawed berries become too runny on top of the cake.

♥ It's perfectly fine to make the cake over several days. The pavlova base can be stored dry and at room temperature for several days. You can make the chocolate mousse and spread it over the cake the day before serving. On the day of serving, decorate with strawberries, chopped chocolate, and a dusting of powdered sugar.

♥ The cake should be eaten the same day it is decorated to prevent it from becoming soggy.

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