

Fresh Strawberry Shortcake

Adapted by Our Young Chefs from WhiteLily.com

Makes 15 to 20 snack-size servings

Strawberry shortcake is an American classic that can be made with biscuit-like or sponge-cake shortcakes. This recipe makes biscuit-like shortcakes. The balsamic vinegar in the marinated strawberries is totally optional, but the tart, full-bodied flavor of the vinegar embellishes and elevates the natural flavors of the strawberries!



INGREDIENTS

STRAWBERRIES

2 quarts (about 2 pounds)
strawberries to yield 6 cups
sliced strawberries



Use the tip of a paring knife to cut out the hull



Hull
Use a strawberry-huller scoop to remove the hull



Use a straw to "pop" or push out the hull of the strawberry from underneath



Cut each strawberry vertically into 1/4-inch slices



Optional: The berries can be sliced using a food processor

DIRECTIONS

Rinse the strawberries: Clean the **strawberries** only just before ready to use. Do not rinse the berries under running water; the pressure of the water can damage the delicate **berries**. Place the **strawberries** in a bowl of **cool water**, a few at a time; gently swish the **berries** around to allow the sand and dirt to fall to the bottom of the bowl. Remove the **berries**; place on a towel-lined surface to drain. Place a towel over the **berries** to pick up surface moisture, very gently pat.

Hull the strawberries: Remove the **stem and leaves** at the top of each **strawberry** (called the **hull**) using one of three methods:

- Use the tip of a paring knife to cut out the **hull**.
- Use a strawberry-huller scoop OR a $\frac{1}{4}$ -teaspoon measuring spoon to remove the **hull**.
- Use a straw pushed in from the bottom of the **strawberry** to "pop" or push out the **hull** from underneath.

Slice the strawberries: Use a knife to cut the **strawberries** vertically into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices; enough to yield at least **6 cups sliced berries**. Place the **strawberry slices** in a medium mixing bowl, preferably a glass bowl.

Alternate method for slicing the strawberries: Fit a food processor with a 4-mm slicing blade; put the food processor lid in place. Position/stack the **strawberries** on their side, in the feed tube of the food processor in such a position that the blade will cut across the height of each **strawberry**, creating vertical slices of **strawberries**. Place only an amount of **strawberries** that exactly fills the feed tube. Place the pusher assembly in place; turn on the machine, gently pushing the **strawberries** through to slice. Repeat until all of the **strawberries** are sliced; stopping to empty the processor work bowl after every two passes of **strawberries**. Place the **strawberry slices** in a medium mixing bowl, preferably a glass bowl.



$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (3.5 ounces) granulated sugar
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar (preferably barrel-aged) *(optional)*
Generous pinch salt
Sliced berries *(prepared earlier)*

SHORTCAKE

2 cups (9 ounces) White Lily *OR* all-purpose bleached flour
2 cups (9 ounces) white whole wheat flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (3.5 ounces) granulated sugar
2 tablespoons (1 ounce) baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup (2 sticks/8 ounces) unsalted butter

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup (5.5 ounces) half-and-half, refrigerator cold
2 large eggs, room temperature

White Lily *OR* all-purpose bleached flour

Lightly flour the work surface (again); roll *OR* pat the shortcake dough to a $\frac{1}{2}$ - to $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thickness. Cut the dough with a floured 2-inch biscuit cutter; cut the circles *as close together as possible*. Gather/slide the dough scraps together; press gently to join the scraps (*do not knead, handle the dough as little as possible*). Pat the shortcake dough to $\frac{1}{2}$ - to $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick; cut one or two more shortcakes. There should be a total of 6 shortcakes.

3 tablespoons half-and-half *OR* cream
Pinch salt

Place the shortcake dough circles 1 inch apart on the parchment-paper-lined baking sheet pan. Using a pastry brush, glaze/brush the tops of each shortcake lightly with the half-and-half *OR* cream mixture.

Bake: Bake at 450°F for 12 to 15 minutes, until golden brown *OR* until the shortcakes register 205° to 208°F on an instant read thermometer when inserted horizontally into a shortcake. Halfway through baking, rotate the baking sheet pan.

Cool and serve: Remove the shortcakes from the oven; set the baking sheet pan on a cooling rack. Allow the shortcakes to cool on the baking sheet pan. Serve *slightly* warm *OR* at room temperature. ⇒

Sweeten the berries: Just before preparing the shortcake, add the sugar, balsamic vinegar *(optional)* and salt to the sliced strawberries; gently stir with a flexible spatula. Set aside, covered, at room temperature *OR* place in the refrigerator, to allow the berries to give off their juices and dissolve the sugar. By the time the shortcakes are done, the strawberries will be bathed in flavorful juicy nectar. In French, this is called "making the strawberries cry."

Prepare the shortcakes: Heat the oven to 450°F. Line 2 baking sheet pans with parchment paper; set aside.

Prepare the flour/butter mixture: Combine the two flours, sugar, baking powder and salt in a large mixing bowl; stir with a whisk to blend. Cut the refrigerator-cold butter into $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon-size pieces (32 pieces); add to the bowl of dry ingredients, distributing the butter pieces evenly around the bowl. Using a pastry blender or 2 knives, cut the butter into the dry ingredients until the texture of the mixture is the size of peas.



Pastry blender

WHIPPED CREAM

2 cups heavy cream,
refrigerator cold
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup powdered sugar
OR 3 tablespoons
granulated sugar
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons vanilla extract
Pinch salt

Prepare the whipped cream topping: While the biscuits are baking, combine the cream, powdered sugar or sugar, vanilla and salt in a large mixing bowl. Use an electric mixer *OR* a large whisk (if opting to whip by hand) to beat the mixture until soft peaks form. *Do not whip until stiff and grainy textured.*

Baked shortcakes (*prepared earlier*)

Sweetened strawberries
(*prepared earlier*)

Whipped cream (*prepared above*)

Assemble and serve the shortcakes: Split the shortcakes in half, horizontally. Spoon half of the sweetened strawberries over the bottom layers, position the top shortcakes in place; spoon over the remaining strawberries. Garnish with the whipped cream; serve immediately.

NOTES ON MAKING SHORTCAKES (AND BISCUITS) SUCCESSFULLY

Shortcakes are made using the method for making biscuits. There are some differences in the ingredients used. For shortcakes, sugar, butter (or margarine), cream and an egg are added or substituted for biscuit ingredients. Take care when handling the dough -- over-mixing will result in a heavy, tough shortcake.

Shortcakes can be varied by simply changing the size or shape. Cut out the shortcakes using a 2-inch biscuit cutter for small individual shortcakes or, pat the dough into a 8- or 9-inch cake pan for a large, traditional shortcake. Use specially-shaped pans for occasions such as Valentine`s Day and the 4th of July.

For a change in taste, serve shortcakes with a variety of fresh fruits and toppings.

Accurately measure ingredients. The most accurate method is to weigh ingredients, but everyone may not have a scale. To accurately measure flour, *do not* scoop the measuring cup into the flour container. Flour is measured by *lightly* spooning it into a measuring cup, then leveling it off with a straight edge. Sifting is not needed for biscuits.

Mixing the liquid ingredients into the dry ingredients can be done effectively with a fork. First, make a well in the center of the flour. Using a fork to gently blend in the milk or buttermilk lessens the chance of over-mixing.

Turn the dough onto a lightly floured pastry cloth or counter. Knead gently *only until* the dough holds together and can be rolled out - about 3 to 4 strokes or less (depending on the size of the batch being made). *Do not add* much additional flour when kneading and rolling.

Roll the dough to $\frac{1}{2}$ - to $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thickness to ensure a shortcake with good height. Cut the shortcakes with a sharp-edged cutter. Cut straight down *without* twisting the cutter to ensure tall, straight shortcakes.

Place on a baking sheet pan 1-inch apart for crusty sides or almost touching for soft sides.
