



THE FRONT BURNER

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Berry Trifle

12 Servings – Fills a 4-quart trifle bowl

Trifle, “a little bit of something.” That may be the definition of “trifle,” but an English trifle is both *more* than a little bit, and is *quite* something. It’s a layered dessert with five essential elements, cake, syrup, custard, whipped cream, and fruit that’s sometimes fresh, and other times in the form of jam. This trifle celebrates the berry season with a threesome of strawberries, blackberries, and raspberries along with an almond sponge cake, vanilla custard, and sweetened whipped cream. It’s a stunning layered dessert that showcases berries to perfection.

Almond Sponge Cake

1/2 cup all-purpose flour
2 cups sugar, divided
1 cup slivered almonds
1/2 teaspoon salt
4 large eggs, separated
4 large egg yolks
3 tablespoons whole milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon almond extract

Berry Syrup

1 pint raspberries
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
5 tablespoons agave syrup (or honey)
2 tablespoons Grand Marnier (optional)

Vanilla Custard

4 cups whole milk
12 large yolks
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup cornstarch, sifted
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter

Sweetened Whipped Cream

4 cups heavy cream
1/4 cup sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Berries

1 pint strawberries
1 pint raspberries
1 pint blackberries

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For the Almond Sponge Cake

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Prepare a half-sheet baking pan (10" x 15") by buttering the pan, lining it with a sheet of parchment paper, buttering the parchment, and dusting with flour. Tap out excess flour and set aside.
2. In a food processor, combine the flour, 1-1/2 cups of sugar (reserving 1/2 cup for later), the blanched almond slivers, and salt. Pulse until the almonds are finely ground and the ingredients appear like fine sand.
3. In a large mixing bowl, place the 8 egg yolks, milk, and extracts. (Reserve the 4 egg whites). Mix the wet ingredients together well. Transfer the dry ingredients from the food processor to the mixing bowl and mix together well.
4. In a small bowl, beat the egg whites until they reach the soft peak stage. Add the remaining 1/2 cup of sugar a tablespoon at a time on low speed, then finish beating the egg whites until they form stiff peaks and appear glossy.
5. By hand, fold in one-third of the beaten egg whites into the batter and gently stir to combine. Add the remaining egg whites a third at a time carefully folding to retain airiness.
6. Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until the top springs back when touched with a fingertip. Remove from the oven and place on a cooling rack allowing the cake to cool in the pan.
7. Once cool enough to handle, place a cookie sheet or cutting board on top of the cake pan and turn upside down to remove the cake from pan. Remove the parchment paper from the bottom of the cake by peeling it away carefully.

For the Berry Syrup

8. In a small saucepan, place the raspberries, lemon juice, and agave syrup (or honey) over medium heat. Allow the mixture to gently simmer for 2 minutes or until the berries become tender and fall apart. Remove from heat. Add the Grand Marnier if using.
9. Once cooled, place the syrup mixture in a sieve and allow the liquid to drain into a small bowl. Discard the seeds.
10. With a pastry brush, liberally brush the cake with the berry syrup. Allow the cake to absorb the syrup. Any extra syrup may be served later as a side accompaniment.

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For the Vanilla Custard

11. Heat the milk in a small saucepan or microwave until quite hot, nearly boiling.
12. In a 3 quart saucepan, place the egg yolks, sugar and cornstarch. Whisk to combine. Temper the eggs by adding a 1/2-cup of the hot milk to the egg yolk mixture whisking vigorously. Continue adding the hot milk in 1/2-cup increments, continuously whisking.
13. Over medium heat, place the saucepan. Cook the mixture, continuously whisking. The mixture will begin to thicken, then reach the boiling point. Remove from heat. Add the vanilla. Add the butter, one tablespoon at a time, whisking until melted after each addition.
14. Transfer the custard to a large glass bowl and allow the custard to cool, stirring periodically. Set aside until ready to assemble the trifle. If assembling later, place a piece of plastic wrap directly on the surface of the custard and store in the refrigerator.

For the Sweetened Whipped Cream

15. In a deep narrow bowl, add the cream, sugar, and vanilla. Stir until the sugar is dissolved. With an electric hand mixer, or immersion blender, whip the cream until it reaches the soft peak stage.

For the Berries

16. Carefully rinse the berries and allow them to air dry while spread in a single layer on a paper towel. Pick over the berries, discarding any subpar berries.

To Assemble

17. Trim the outer edges of the cake to remove any hard crusts. Cut the cake into small, bite-sized triangles.
18. In a 4-quart trifle bowl, or other large, clear glass dish, place a thin layer of the vanilla custard. (Individual dishes may be used instead). Add a layer of cake triangles leaving crevices between the pieces. Top with a layer of whipped cream.
19. Add the first fruit layer – in this case, strawberries – by placing halves along the side of the dish. Top with a layer of custard, then cake, and one more layer of whipped cream. Add the second fruit layer. Repeat with a third layer, topping the final layer of whipped cream with raspberries.
20. Chill the trifle thoroughly before serving. To serve, spoon generously helpings of trifle onto dessert plates.