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Little Lemon Layer Cakes

Makes 10-12 servings

A layer cake says "It's a special occasion." Miniature layer says "It's extra special. These individual cakes are definitely not a cupcake, perhaps more of an overgrown *petit four*. However you'd like to term them, they're wonderfully delicious, and a stunning presentation for any celebratory occasion.

Cake Ingredients:

2-1/4 cups sugar
1 cup butter (2 sticks), softened
4 eggs
2 egg yolks
2 teaspoons lemon extract
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/4 cup lemon zest
4 ounces white chocolate, melted and cooled
3 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup buttermilk
1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

Fillings:

1 cup apricot jam, warmed and strained
1/2 cup raspberry jam, warmed and strained

Poured Lemon Fondant Icing:

Makes about 6.5 cups

1 cup (5 ounces) white confectionery coating or white chocolate chips
8 cups (2 pound) powdered sugar
2/3 cup light corn syrup
1/2 cup hot water
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon lemon extract
1 drop yellow food coloring

Garnishing:

Mint leaves
Lemon zest

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Cake Instructions:

- (1) **PREHEAT** the oven to 350°F. **PREPARE** a rimmed half sheet pan by buttering well and dusting with flour, or by spraying with a flour-infused oil baking spray.
- (2) **BEAT** together the softened (room temperature) butter and sugar in a large mixing bowl, or in the bowl of a stand mixer until light and fluffy. (This is where the texture of the cake is formed.)
- (3) **ADD** the eggs to the butter-sugar mixture one at a time beating after each addition until incorporated.
- (4) **ADD** the white chocolate, extracts and lemon zest to the mixture. **BEAT** on low until incorporated.
- (5) **COMBINE** in a separate medium bowl, the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. **WHISK** until the dry ingredients are evenly distributed.
- (6) **WHISK** together the buttermilk and lemon juice.
- (7) **ADD** one-third of the flour mixture to the butter-sugar mixture and **BEAT** on low until combined. **POUR** in one-third of buttermilk mixture, combine until incorporated.
- (8) **REPEAT** with the addition of the second third of the flour, followed by the second third of the liquid. **ADD** the final third of flour and final third of liquid.
- (9) **POUR** the batter into the prepared half-sheet pan. Smooth the batter evenly across the pan.
- (10) **BAKE** in the preheated 350°F oven for 20-25 minutes, or until a finger pressed in the middle of the cake springs back. Do not overbake.
- (11) **COOL** the cake in the pan for 15 minutes, then **INVERT** onto a cooling rack and continue to cool for an hour.
- (12) **CUT** the cake in half for easier management. **SPLIT** each half horizontally with a long-bladed bread knife. There should be 4 equally-sized layers.
- (13) **PLACE** the first layer, top side down on a working surface. **SPREAD** a thin layer of strained apricot jam on top.
- (14) **SET** a second layer of cake and **PLACE** on top of the apricot jam layer
- (15) **SPREAD** a thin layer of raspberry jam on top of this second layer. **ADD** a third cake layer.

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(16) **SPOON** and spread another layer of apricot jam on top, and **PLACE** the fourth and final cake layer.

(17) **CUT** the layered cake into 12 squares, or using a biscuit cutter, cut 10 rounds.

(18) **BRUSH** any extra crumbs away from the cut sides and working surface. Set aside while preparing the icing.

Poured Fondant Glaze Instructions:

(19) **SIFT** the powdered sugar into a large glass bowl. Add the hot water and corn syrup and mix until smooth by folding with a spatula. (Avoid vigorous stirring or whisking – bubbles are the enemy in this icing situation).

(20) **MELT** the white chocolate in the microwave in 30-second intervals. Allow the chocolate to stand between intervals to permit the chocolate time to melt; stir between intervals until smooth. Alternatively, melt the chocolate in a glass bowl over boiling water.

(21) **ADD** the melted chocolate to the sugar mixture and stir until smooth. Add the vanilla and lemon flavorings.

(22) **DIVIDE** the icing into separate bowls for coloring. We chose white and pale yellow for our cakes. **ADD** the food coloring by dipping a toothpick in the color, then into icing. This allows the color to be gradually added. Resist the urge to just plop in a drop.

(23) **PUT** the icing over a hot water bath with the water kept at a simmer. The fondant will harden quickly as it cools, but will become nicely fluid whenever reheated.

(24) **PLACE** a cooling rack inside a baking pan; this will catch any excess icing that drips away. **POSITION** the cake stacks on the rack.

(25) **SPOON** the icing over the cakes starting with a covering on the sides, follow with a final spoonful over the top. A slight jiggling of the pan will help the icing to settle into a smooth coat and for any excess icing to drip away. The icing will harden fairly quickly. While the icing is still hardening and pliable, cut away any excess icing with a knife at the base of unit.

Garnishing Instructions:

(26) **GARNISH** the little cakes with a mint leave and a pinch of lemon zest on each cake.