

Maggie's Lemon Raspberry Cake

A sourdough layer cake with lemon and almond in the crumb, raspberry between the layers, and lemon cream on top.

THREE 6-INCH LAYERS, 8 TO 10 SERVINGS • 325°F • 40-48 MIN • 3 × 6" × 2" • 8-10

DRY MIX, WHISK TOGETHER

300 g	All-purpose flour (2½ c)
5 g	Salt (1 tsp)
4 g	Baking powder (1 tsp)
4 g	Baking soda (1 tsp)

WET BASE

350 g	Granulated sugar (1¾ c)
2	Lemons, zest only (2)
113 g	Unsalted butter, room temp (8 Tbsp)
3	Eggs, large (3)
240 g	Whole milk (1 c)
125 g	Sourdough starter discard (½ c)
10 ml	Vanilla extract (2 tsp)
1.25 ml	Almond extract, do not exceed (¼ tsp)

RASPBERRY FILLING

340 g	Fresh raspberries (12 oz)
67 g	Granulated sugar (⅓ c)
8 g	Cornstarch, plus 1 Tbsp cold water (1 Tbsp)
5 ml	Lemon juice (1 tsp)

LEMON CREAM FROSTING

226 g	Neufchâtel or 1/3-less-fat cream cheese, room temp, not fat-free (8 oz)
355 g	Heavy cream, very cold (1½ c)
60 g	Powdered sugar (½ c)
1	Lemon zest, plus 2 tsp juice (1)
5 ml	Vanilla extract (1 tsp)
1 pinch	Salt

ORDER OF OPERATIONS

1. Raspberry filling first. It has the longest chill and nothing waits on it.
2. Cake while the filling chills. Mix, bake, cool all the way on the rack, about 45 minutes.
3. Frosting last, right before you assemble. Whipped cream is best the hour it is made.
4. Assemble, chill, coat, chill. Three hours start to finish.

Make ahead. Filling keeps 3 days in the fridge. Layers can be baked a day ahead, wrapped well at room temperature. Frost the day you serve it.

Storage. Refrigerated, 3 days. It cuts cleanest cold and tastes best 20 minutes out.

METHOD

CAKE

1. Heat the oven to 325°F, rack in the center. Parchment round in each pan, butter the sides, dust with flour.
2. Rub the zest into the sugar with your fingers for about 30 seconds, until the sugar is damp and smells like lemon. Fingers, not a spoon. This is where the lemon flavor comes from.
3. Whisk the dry mix in a separate bowl and set it aside.
4. Cream the butter and lemon sugar 3 to 4 minutes, until pale and fluffy.
5. Beat in the eggs one at a time. Add the milk, starter, vanilla, and almond. Mix smooth.
6. Add the dry mix. Mix until just combined and no flour lumps remain, then stop.
7. Divide by weight, about 433 g per pan. Tap each one on the counter to knock the bubbles out.

BAKE

1. All three on one center rack in a triangle. Nothing touching another pan or a wall.
2. 40 to 48 minutes. Rotate at 25. Start testing at 38. Toothpick clean at the center.
3. Cool in the pan 10 minutes, then turn out onto a rack and cool completely before filling.

RASPBERRY FILLING

1. Simmer the berries and sugar 5 to 8 minutes, mashing them as they break down.

2. Stir in the cornstarch slurry. Cook 1 to 2 minutes, until a spoon dragged through leaves a track that holds.
3. Off the heat, stir in the lemon juice. Push half of it through a sieve if you want fewer seeds.
4. Chill it fully, an hour minimum. It has to be jam-thick when cold, not saucy.

LEMON CREAM FROSTING

1. Chill the bowl and the whisk first.
2. Beat the cheese alone 1 to 2 minutes until completely smooth. Add the sugar, zest, vanilla, and salt, and combine.
3. Stream in the cold cream on low, then go to medium-high to firm peaks. Stop the instant the whisk leaves a clean track.
4. Fold the lemon juice in by hand. Add the last teaspoon only if it is still holding firm.
5. If it goes loose, chill it 15 to 20 minutes and it tightens back up.

ASSEMBLY

1. Level the tops if they domed.
2. Layer one, half the raspberry spread to within half an inch of the edge. Layer two, the rest. Layer three goes on upside down so you get a flat top.
3. Chill 20 minutes. Thin crumb coat. Chill 15 more.
4. Final coat, scraped back semi-naked so the layers and the jam show through.
5. Refrigerate. Pull it out 20 to 30 minutes before cutting so the crumb isn't cold.