

Lemon Poppy-seed Lady Cake

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature, plus more for pan
3 cups sifted cake flour (not self-rising), plus more for pan
1 ½ tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt
1 ¾ cups sugar
1 ¼ tsp vanilla extract
2 tsp poppy seeds, plus more for garnish
1 T finely grated lemon zest
1 cup milk
8 large egg whites, room temperature
pinch cream of tartar
1 cup heavy cream
lemon curd

Seven Minute Frosting

1 ¾ cups sugar
2 T light corn syrup
6 large egg whites

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter two 8 X 2 inch round pans; line bottom with buttered wax paper. Flour the pan, shaking out the excess.

Prepare cake: Into a medium bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, and salt twice; set aside. In a mixing bowl, using the paddle attachment, cream the butter on low speed until soft. Increase speed to medium; beat until pale and fluffy. Gradually add 1 ½ cups sugar; beat until fluffy, about 3 minutes. Beat in vanilla, poppy seeds and lemon zest. With mixer on low speed, add the flour mixture in two batches, alternating with the milk; beat until thoroughly combined after each addition. Scrape sides of the bowl; beat 10 minutes more. Set aside. In another mixing bowl whisk the egg whites and cream of tartar on low speed until foamy. Increase speed to medium-high; gradually add remaining ¼ cup sugar until peaks are just stiff. Gently fold in whites; do not overmix. Divide batter between prepared pans; bake until golden and a cake tester inserted in the centers comes out clean, about 40 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. To remove cakes, invert onto plates; peel off parchment paper, and reinvert so the top side is up.

Make filling: In a small bowl, whip heavy cream to soft peaks. Fold in lemon curd; cover with plastic and refrigerate until chilled and firm, about 2 hours.

Assemble cake: Using a serrated knife, carefully trim tops of both cakes to make level, if desired. Slice each in half horizontally to make a total of 4 layers. Place one of the bottom layers on a serving platter; spread with 1 cup lemon filling. Top with another cake layer; spread with 1 cup filling. Repeat with another cake layer and filling; top with remaining cake layer. Cover entire cake with plastic wrap and carefully transfer to the refrigerator, steadying it with your hands to keep the layers from sliding.

Prepare icing: In a small saucepan, combine 1 ½ cups sugar with the corn syrup and ¼ cup water. Place over medium heat, stirring occasionally until sugar has dissolved. Raise heat and bring to a boil, washing down sides of pan with a wet pastry brush to prevent crystals from forming. Continue boiling 5 to 7 minutes or until a candy thermometer registers 230°. Meanwhile, in a mixing bowl, whisk egg whites on medium speed until soft peaks form, about 2 ½ minutes. Gradually beat in remaining ¼ cup sugar. Reduce speed to medium low. Beat 2 minutes or until mixture stands in stiff peaks. Cool.

When ready to serve, frost cake and garnish with poppy seeds.