

## **Traditional, To-Die-For-Yummy, Strawberry Shortcake**

Seasonal sweet berries, with their own puree, sit atop mouth-watering traditional biscuits and a cloud of freshly-whipped cream. Decadent, yes, but this dessert can only be done justice for the few short weeks of strawberry season each June.

### **Make the biscuits:**

Note: If your kitchen is warm (i.e. above 20°C), cool off the food processor bowl and dry ingredients in the refrigerator for about a half hour before making the dough. Butter and cream should be at about 4°C (normal refrigerator temperature). This will help make a flakier biscuit.

In the bowl of a food processor, put:

**13 ½ ounces (about 3 cups, well-aerated) all-purpose flour**  
**3 Tbsp granulated sugar**  
**1 ½ Tbsp baking powder**  
**¾ tsp table salt**

Pulse 4-5 times to mix, then add:

**6 ounces (12 Tbsp; or 1 ½ sticks) cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces**

Pulse just until the mixture looks sandy, with a few larger bits of butter still visible. About 10 short pulses should do it. Now to add:

**1 ½ c of heavy cream!**

Add about half the cream, then pulse 2-3 times again; add the remaining cream then pulse just until the dough comes together.

Dump the bowl's contents onto a well-floured, cool, surface and knead briefly. Pat into a 9-10-inch circle. Transfer the dough to a parchment-lined baking sheet and cut into 8 evenly-sized wedges, then refrigerate (covered) for 15-20 minutes.

Heat the oven to **425°F**; meanwhile, prepare the berries.

### **Berries:**

**1 qt fresh strawberries**, rinsed just to rid them of sand; tossed with 1-3 Tbsp granulated sugar or vanilla sugar (amount depends on tartness of berries) – allow berries to stand at least 30 min but no more than 2 h

**1 pt fresh strawberries**, rinsed as above, then mashed roughly with 1-2 Tbsp granulated sugar or vanilla sugar: this will create a rough puree to mix with the whole berries at serving time

[Having berries alone creates loose, uncontrolled berries rolling around, while mashing them all creates a syrupy mess. Experience and experimentation has shown that the above proportion of whole berries to mashed ones gives a nice balance of juiciness and whole fruit.]

### **Meanwhile, back to the biscuits:**

Remove from the refrigerator, separate slightly (about 1 cm), and brush with **2-3 Tbsp heavy cream**;

Sprinkle tops with **2-3 Tbsp sanding sugar** if you have it (alternatively, roughly crush some sugar cubes so you get large pieces of sugar; only if you're stuck, use regular granulated sugar)

**Bake for 18-20 minutes** in the top third of the oven until tops are nicely brown;  
Cool slowly under a light tea towel when done.

### **Prepare the whipping cream:**

Beat just until first soft peaks form:

**1 ½ c heavy cream**

Whip in:

**2 Tbsp granulated or vanilla sugar**

**¾ tsp vanilla extract (1/2 tsp if using vanilla sugar)**

Whip until soft and billowy but without signs of curdling.

### **Serve:**

Use a large soup bowl or plate with high rim! Split each warm biscuit horizontally, and scoop a generous serving of berries atop; add a small dollop of cream. Place the top of the biscuit atop all of this, and scoop another serving of berries as well as a large dollop of whipped cream atop the berries. Garnish with a clean berry that still has its hull.

An alternate method of plating would be to put about 2/3 to ¾ of the berries and whipped cream per serving on the lower half, then adorn the top with the lesser amounts of berries and whipped cream. This creates a more pyramidal effect compared to the more vertical effect of the former.

If you have lovely white service wear, consider making a separate batch of strawberry coulis and decorating the plate/bowl with a nice design before assembling the strawberry shortcake.

However you do it, be prepared to bask in oohs and ahhs. This is one time when diners should ignore calories, fats, etc! If you have a guilty conscience about this, precede the dessert with some low-fat courses so the whole meal balances out.

### **Timings:**

Make the biscuits: 10 min including measuring

Prepare the berries: 15-20 min for hulling, washing, and mashing (while the biscuits chill)

Bake the biscuits: 20 min, plus 10 min cooling (while the berries macerate)

Whip the cream and plate the desserts: 10 min

Start to dessert heaven: 1 hour

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### **Advance prep:**

Biscuits can be prepared up to 2 h in advance, but they'll be cold rather than warm. Live with that rather than risking re-heating (and toughening them up). Biscuits to last 48 h, still with good flavor, but do not expect the same flakiness as the same day they were made.

Berries should be prepared no more than 2 h in advance.

Cream can be whipped until the first soft peaks form after sugar and vanilla have been added: this can hold for up to a half hour. Just before serving, finish whipping with a hand whisk.

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Bill Lundy

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Based on recipes from:

*Fine Cooking*

*Cook's Illustrated*

*Epicurious.com*