



Rhubarb and custard trifle

Rhubarb and custard are a classic combination, evoking fond childhood memories for many of us. This trifle is a striking centrepiece for your afternoon tea. It is simple to make and a number of the elements can be prepared in advance and then assembled before serving. The trifle is soft, delicately flavoured and perfect for anyone with chewing or swallowing issues. Rhubarb is a also good source of fibre and vitamin C.

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Ingredients

Sponge base

125g butter, softened
125g golden caster sugar
2 medium eggs
½tsp vanilla extract
125g self-raising flour
2tbsp sweet sherry, such as Pedro Ximenez (optional)

Custard

250ml full cream milk
250ml double cream
1 vanilla pod, cut in half and seeds removed
6 egg yolks
100g golden caster sugar

Rhubarb

150g golden caster sugar
150ml water
1 vanilla pod, split in half and seeds removed
500g rhubarb
2 gelatine leaves

Topping

250ml double cream, softly whipped

Preparation time: 40 minutes
Cooking time: 60 minutes
Serves: 12

Shortcut: buy Madeira sponge and ready-made fresh custard, then simply assemble with the poached rhubarb and cream.

Method

Preheat the oven to 160°C. Grease and line the base of a 22cm springform cake tin.

First make the sponge base. Beat the butter and the sugar together in a standing mixer or with an electric whisk, until fluffy and smooth. Scrape down the bowl and add the eggs one at a time, whisking in each egg until thoroughly incorporated. Stir in the vanilla extract. Sift the flour and gently fold into the cake mixture. Pour the mixture into the prepared cake tin and bake for 45 minutes, until a skewer inserted into the cake comes out clean. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

Prepare the custard. Place the milk, cream, vanilla pod and seeds into a large saucepan and place over a medium heat, stirring occasionally. Heat until almost boiling. In a heatproof bowl whisk together the egg yolks and the sugar until smooth. Gradually add some of the hot milk and cream mixture to the eggs, half a cup at a time, whisking to incorporate. When about half the milk and cream is added to the eggs, pour this mixture back into the pan and return to a low-medium heat. Stir the custard constantly with a wooden spoon. It is ready when it coats the back of a wooden spoon and holds the line that a finger draws through it. Remove the vanilla pod before serving and set aside to cool. Place in the fridge once cooled.

Poach the rhubarb. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Put the sugar, water and vanilla pod and seeds into a large saucepan and bring to the boil. Remove from the heat and set aside. Cut the rhubarb into 3-inch batons and place in an ovenproof dish. Pour the syrup over the rhubarb and place in the oven. Cook for 10-15 minutes until the rhubarb is very soft but just holding its shape. Remove from the oven and allow to cool, then remove the rhubarb batons from the juice and set aside. Retain the cooking juices. Submerge the gelatine in water and leave to soften for approximately 5 minutes. Then remove the gelatine and squeeze out any water. Strain the cooking juices from the rhubarb and combine with the softened gelatine. Place over a medium heat and stir until the gelatine is completely incorporated into the syrup. Strain through a fine mesh into a bowl. Place this inside a larger bowl filled with ice and water so that it cools quickly; stirring will help.

Assemble the trifle. Use a trifle bowl 22cm in diameter. Place the cake inside the bowl and drizzle with the sherry if using. Arrange the poached rhubarb inside the bowl and pour over the cooled rhubarb jelly. Place in the fridge and allow to set. Once set add the custard and softly whipped cream. Serve immediately.