



Fresh Strawberry Mousse

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 15: Springtime Sweets

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

There's a good reason that strawberry mousse recipes aren't very prevalent: The berries contain lots of juice, which can ruin the texture of a mousse that should be creamy and rich. Plus, the fruit flavor produced by most strawberry mousse recipes is too subtle. We start by processing berries into small pieces and macerating them with sugar and a little salt. This causes them to release liquid, which we then reduce to a syrup before adding it to the mousse—a technique that not only limits the amount of moisture in the dessert but also concentrates the berry flavor. Then we fully puree the juiced berries, which contribute bright, fresh berry flavor. Finally, we choose our stabilizers carefully: gelatin for structure, and cream cheese, an unusual addition, for richer, creamier body.

Serves 4 to 6

This recipe works well with supermarket strawberries and farmers' market strawberries. In step 1, be careful not to overprocess the berries. For more complex berry flavor, replace the 3 tablespoons of raw strawberry juice in step 2 with strawberry or raspberry liqueur. In addition to the diced berries, you can serve the mousse with Lemon Whipped Cream (see related content). If you'd like to use frozen strawberries instead of fresh strawberries, please see our recipe for Strawberry Mousse with Frozen Strawberries (see related content).

INGREDIENTS

- 2** pounds strawberries, hulled (6 1/2 cups)
- 1/2** cup (3 1/2 ounces) sugar
- Pinch salt
- 1 3/4** teaspoons unflavored gelatin
- 4** ounces cream cheese, cut into 8 pieces and softened
- 1/2** cup heavy cream, chilled

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Cut enough strawberries into 1/4-inch dice to measure 1 cup; refrigerate until ready to garnish. Pulse remaining strawberries in food processor in 2 batches until most pieces are 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick (some larger pieces are fine), 6 to 10 pulses. Transfer strawberries to bowl and toss with 1/4 cup sugar and salt. (Do not clean processor.) Cover bowl and let strawberries stand for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 2.** Strain processed strawberries through fine-mesh strainer into bowl (you should have about 2/3 cup juice). Measure out 3 tablespoons juice into small bowl, sprinkle gelatin over juice, and let sit until gelatin softens, about 5 minutes. Place remaining juice in small saucepan and cook over medium-high heat until reduced to 3 tablespoons, about 10 minutes. Remove pan from heat, add softened gelatin mixture, and stir until gelatin has dissolved. Add cream cheese and whisk until smooth. Transfer mixture to large bowl.
- 3.** While juice is reducing, return strawberries to now-empty processor and process until smooth, 15 to 20 seconds. Strain puree through fine-mesh strainer into medium bowl, pressing on solids to remove seeds and pulp (you should have about 1 2/3 cups puree). Discard any solids in strainer. Add strawberry puree to juice-gelatin mixture and whisk until incorporated.

4. Using stand mixer fitted with whisk, whip cream on medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to high and whip until soft peaks form, 1 to 3 minutes. Gradually add remaining 1/4 cup sugar and whip until stiff peaks form, 1 to 2 minutes. Whisk whipped cream into strawberry mixture until no white streaks remain. Portion into dessert dishes and chill for at least 4 hours or up to 48 hours. (If chilled longer than 6 hours, let mousse sit at room temperature for 15 minutes before serving.) Serve, garnishing with reserved diced strawberries.

TECHNIQUE

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF SUPERMARKET STRAWBERRIES

Supermarket strawberries rarely deliver the bright flavor and concentrated sweetness that you find in farmers' market specimens. By macerating the finely chopped berries and then using both fresh and cooked forms of the fruit, we were able to capture the bright, deep strawberry flavor that we wanted.

A LITTLE CONCENTRATED JUICE: By reducing the shed berry juice (about 2/3 cup) to just 3 tablespoons, we were able to deepen its flavor and control the amount of liquid we're adding to the mousse.



A LOT OF FRESH PUREE: Pureeing and straining the macerated chopped berries yields about 1 2/3 cups of puree—enough for a punch of bright, fresh berry flavor.



TECHNIQUE

CREAM CHEESE FOR CONSISTENCY

In addition to using whipped cream and gelatin, we fortify our Fresh Strawberry Mousse with an unusual ingredient: cream cheese. The rich, soft-but-dense texture of the cultured dairy lends the mousse just enough body and a bit of subtle tang.

BODY BUILDER: Cream cheese gives mousse a thick, creamy texture without turning it dense.



RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT



Cuisinart Custom 14-Cup Food...



StemGem Strawberry Hull Remover...



CIA Masters Collection Fine-Mesh...



KitchenAid Pro Line Series 7-Qt...



Pyrex 2-Cup Measuring Cup