Strawberry and white chocolate cake

Ingredients

For the sponge

- 150g good-quality white chocolate, broken up
- 200g unsalted butter, diced and softened
- 3 large free-range eggs, at room temperature
- 150g caster sugar
- Finely grated zest of ½ orange
- 200g self-raising flour

For the filling and topping

- 400g ripe strawberries
- Finely grated zest and juice of ½ orange
- 1 tablespoon caster sugar
- 200ml double or whipping cream, chilled
- 50g good-quality white chocolate, for decorating
- (2 x 20.5cm sandwich tins, greased and the bases lined with baking paper)

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas 4. Place the white chocolate into a heatproof bowl and set it over a pan of steaming but not boiling water (do not let the base of the bowl touch the hot water). Melt the chocolate very gently and slowly, stirring frequently. White chocolate easily burns so be patient. Remove the bowl from the heat and stir until smooth. This can be done in the microwave also, again using a heatproof bowl, in 10 second intervals on medium heat, stirring frequently.

2. Add the butter to the melted chocolate and stir until it has incorporated and all has melted.

3. Crack the eggs into a large mixing bowl (no shells!) and whisk with an electric mixer until frothy.

4. Add the sugar and orange zest and whisk on a high speed until the mixture has thickened and leaves a ribbon-like trail when lifted from the bowl. This will take about 4-5 minutes.

5. This will give the butter and chocolate a bit of time to cool. Give it another stir, then add the butter and chocolate mixture to the egg mixture and stir it briefly – it should be just combined. Do not over mix.
6. Sift the flour into the bowl and gently fold it in using a large metal spoon. Try to follow a cutting/folding motion. Again, take care not to over mix.

7. Divide the mixture between the prepared tins and smoothing the top with a palette knife and spreading evenly. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until the sponges are light golden brown and spring back when touched. Try not to open the oven door before the optimum time; you do not want your cakes to sink!

8. Run a knife around the inside of the tins to loosen the sponges away from the edge of the tins, before carefully turning out your cooled sponges onto a wire rack. Leave to cool completely before icing and assembling.

9. Whilst the cake is cooling, wash, dry and hull the strawberries. Save one-third (the good-looking ones) for decorating; thinly slice the rest into a bowl.

10. Add the orange zest and juice along with the sugar and mix together gently. Leave for approx 30 minutes to allow the flavours to develop.

11. In the meantime whip the cream until it thickens.

12. Place one sponge, browned top down, onto your serving plate and spoon the strawberry/juice mixture onto the sponge to cover evenly. Spread out the strawberries leaving a 1cm border from the edge.

13. Next spread half of the whipped cream on top and place second sponge, browned top up, onto the cream. Carefully spread the rest of the cream on the top of the cake, and then decorate with the reserved strawberries, cut into halves.

14. Keep the cake chilled, in an airtight container, until ready to serve (up to 12 hours). Remove from the fridge 30 minutes before serving and decorate the top with curls or gratings of white chocolate, if you’ve not eaten it all already!