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How to make a Rainbow Cake

VANILLA CAKE

2 ¾ cups plain flour
2 tsp baking powder
200g softened unsalted butter
1 ¾ cups castor sugar
4 eggs
1 tbsp vanilla extract
1 cup milk

Preheat oven to 340F/170C. Line baking tin with baking paper.

1.   Sift together the flour and baking powder.
2.   In a separate bowl, cream the butter for 1-2 mins. Gradually add the castor sugar.
        Beat until the mixture is light and fluffy and the sugar has almost dissolved.
3.   Add eggs one at a time, beating after each addition or until mixture is light and fluffy.
4.   Add the vanilla extract and beat until combined.
5.   With mixer low speed, add a third of the flour, beat until combined. Add half of the
        milk and beat. Repeat then add remaining flour and beat until combined.
6.   Spoon mixture into baking tin. Bake for 20-30 mins or until a fine skewer inserted
        comes out clean.

BUTTERCREAM

250g butter
500g icing sugar
1 tbsp milk
1/2 tbsp vanilla extract

1.   Cream the butter for 1-2 mins.
2.   Gradually add the icing sugar. Beat until light and fluffy.
3.   Add milk and vanilla extract.

SWISS MERINGUE BUTTERCREAM

5 large egg whites (150g)
1 1/4 cups (250g) sugar
340g butter, cut into cubes and cool (not cold)
2 tsp vanilla extract
Pinch of salt

1.   Add egg whites and sugar. Heat over a pot of hot water, whisking gently until
        mixture temperature reaches 150F/65C, or until sugar has dissolved and egg whites are hot.
3.   Using whisk attachment of mixer, whip until meringue is thick and glossy, and the bottom
        of bowl is no longer warm (10 mins). Mixture that is too hot will melt the butter in the next
        step, resulting in a runny mixture.
4.   Change to paddle attachment. With mixer on low speed, add butter one cube at a time
        and mix until mixture is silky smooth. If mixture is too runny, place in freezer for 5-10 mins
        to firm up and whip again. If mixture becomes lumpy/curdled, keep mixing and it will
        become smooth again.
5.   Add vanilla and salt
6.   Add food colouring if desired.

Make two quantities of the above vanilla cake recipe and split batter evenly into 6 bowls.
Add enough food colouring to each to create shades as shown. Remember that the colour will darken slightly once baked.
Bake each colour one at a time (unless if you have more than one tin in the same size).
Once baked, leave cakes to cool completely before wrapping each layer in cling-wrap. Refrigerate before levelling.

Remove cakes from fridge.
Working with one layer at a time, unwrap cling wrap and insert toothpicks as guides at regular intervals around the cake at a height of around 2-2.5cm.
Level off the domed part of the cake by placing knife just above the toothpick and slicing to the middle of the cake. Turn, and repeat all around the cake until the domed part lifts off easily.

Trim off browned edges around cake, and on underside of cake. This will ensure that your rainbow cake is bright without bits of brown between the layers.

Prepare either buttercream or swiss meringue butter-cream icing.

Once all the layers are trimmed, begin stacking your rainbow cake by first spreading a smear of icing on cake board.
Place violet layer on board, top with a big dollop of icing, spreading it to the edges of the cake. Repeat with other layers.

Use a spirit level to ensure that the cake is level when stacked.

'Crumb coat' cake with a layer icing. This traps the crumbs so that you will not have colourful crumbs mixed into the icing covering.
Refrigerate until icing firms up.
Remove cake from fridge and let it stand for 30-45 mins before applying another layer of icing (Swiss meringue buttercream could separate if cake is too cold). Smooth icing with a pastry scraper or a clean plastic ruler.
Refrigerate cake again before applying final coat of icing.