



pink lady cake

I know what you're thinking: *another dessert*, Deb? Are you trying to kill us? But let me explain; you see, when your house guests *fill your fridge and freezer with sausage and cheese and bread* and you buy some wonderful *Satur Farms* arugula (now available at Whole Foods! Oh, how happy this makes me.) and make daily vinaigrettes with your new *French Dijon*, it turns out you don't have to cook dinner at all. For days. And that's pretty much where we're at with things that do not involve sugar.

Alas, they left us with no dessert, and more poignantly, no pretty pink princess birthday cakes (the nerve!), and so when the call arose on Monday to make one for *Liz's* (of *spaghetti and meatball photography fame*) birthday, I jumped in with two feet.

Because everyone has a pretty pink princess in their life, be she four or 34, and when that pretty pink princess has a birthday, you need a cake that is appropriate. And there is nothing more darling and swell, more coquettish and eyelash-batting, than a pink lady cake. Simply nothing.

Of course, the process of getting from "my favorite cake growing up was called a Pink Lady Cake" to the recipe you see below, was surprisingly difficult. You see, the Pink Lady Cake my friend knew and loved, as outlined by *AllRecipes* and a dozen other sites, is a white cake mix with a box of strawberry *Jell-O* and bag of frozen strawberries mixed in. And while I do not judge you if you wish to put *such things* (oh, there I go being all passive-aggressive again) in your birthday cakes, I was bent on finding a more natural way to approach things.

I looked in *The Joy of Cooking*. I checked out Martha. I Googled until the letters "P" and "L" on my laptop were worn down to nubs. I begged some of my *Monday lunch dates* for leads. And then? Then I opened *my favorite cake book in the entire world* (yes, I know I *sound like a broken record* but if you like to bake birthday and celebration cakes, step to it, *get this book*) and *le voila!* A white cake with pureed strawberries.

Like every recipe I have tried in the book, the cake was surprisingly easy to make and tasted better than every white cake I'd tried previously—richer, and more buttery. It also has a tremendous "ta-da!" effect, clocking in at easily six inches tall, knocking into the lid of the cake box, so eager to make its entrance, so like a princess.

Oh, and it tasted so very darling, and pink, if such a thing is possible.

One year ago: *Pumpkin Butter and Pepita Granola*

Two years ago: *Spinach Quiche*

Pink Lady Cake [Strawberry Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting and Filling]

The cake recipe is adapted from [Sky High](#), and the only thing I would change next time would be to add a drop or two of red food coloring because when cake is called Pink Lady, well, it should really be pink.

The cream cheese frosting is not from the book (which has a Swiss buttercream-based one I am eager to try when I am not rushing to finish) but a classic, standard recipe. I have upped the amount of cream cheese frosting from what I used, which you can see is spread a tad thin. Pretty pink princesses should never be deprived of fluffy vanilla cream cheese frosting on their birthdays, you know?

For the cake

4 1/2 cups cake flour
3 cups sugar
5 1/4 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 teaspoon salt
3 sticks (12 ounces) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 1/2 cups pureed frozen strawberries*
8 egg whites
2/3 cup milk
1 to 2 drops red food dye, if using (to make the pink color pop more)

For the cream cheese frosting

3 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks; 6 ounces) unsalted butter, softened
3 cups sifted confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Make the cake

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter three 9-inch round or 8-inch square cake pans. Line with parchment or waxed paper and butter the paper.
2. Put the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large mixer bowl. With the electric mixer on low speed, blend for 30 seconds. Add the butter and strawberry puree and mix to blend the ingredients. Raise the speed to medium and beat until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes; the batter will resemble strawberry ice cream at this point. (Deb note: I must warn you *not* to try the batter at this point. Not even a smear of it. How unbearably good it is will shock you, and lead to more dipping. Only you can stop this from coming to pass.)
3. In another large bowl, whisk together the egg whites, milk and red food dye, if using, to blend. Add the whites to the batter in two or three additions, scraping down the sides of the bowl well and mixing only to incorporate after each addition. Divide the batter among the three prepared pans.
4. Bake the cakes for 30 to 34 minutes, or until a cake tester or wooden toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Allow the layers to cool in the pans for 10 to 15 minutes. Invert and turn out onto wire racks and peel off the paper liners. Let stand until completely cooled before assembling the cake, at least an hour.

Make the cream cheese frosting

5. In a medium bowl, cream together the cream cheese and butter until creamy. Mix in the vanilla, then gradually stir in the confectioners' sugar. Store in the refrigerator after use.

Frost and assemble the cake

6. Place one cake layer on a cake board or platter. Tucking scraps of waxed paper under the edges of the cake will protect the board or plate from any mess created while frosting the cake. (I forgot, as can be clearly seen above.)


Spread about 2/3 cup frosting over the layer, spreading it to the edge. Repeat with the second layer. Add the top layer and frost the top and sides of cake with remaining frosting, reserving a small amount if you wish to tint it and pipe a decoration on the cake. If not, you can decorate the cake top with thinly-sliced strawberries. Remove the waxed strips to reveal and neat, clean cake board.

7. Serve with pink candles on pink plates to the sort of person who dreams in pink. I suspect you know *at least* one.

* Huntsman notes that it may seem surprising that frozen strawberries are used here, but they're always available and their quality is consistent. I suspect you could swap fresh ones, but given that the ones in the store in October are so lackluster, and cruelly unlike the astounding ones we had in Paris last week, I went with her suggestion. This will be from about half a one-pound bag.

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