

Ivey's In My Kitchen™

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Well Throw Me Down and Roll Me Around in a Strawberry Field

We are entering dangerous territory, my love, my lust, my passion, the summer strawberry. I grew up on Long Island in the 70's and pick your own signs were guaranteed for two straight weeks at the end of June off of exits all along the LIE, that's Long Island Expressway for those of you never having been stuck in it's traffic. I was almost born on it, that's how bad the traffic is! But every year the week of my birthday I could count on getting my strawberries. I still have the stained paper of pick your own recipes and care sheet from 1978. I used to make jam. When I was little it was going picking with my parents and sister, as I got older it became almost a destination adventure with my friends, then as age tuned to the Hamptons, I'd stop at simply the front table and buy a whole flat. The local strawberries in the Hudson Valley are delectable as well. I was grateful



when I moved up here. This is so ingrained in my life, that to share with you what I do with my tiny bursts of joyous flavor is nothing short of exhilarating! You're gonna LOVE this!

This is what I want you to do; get local fresh strawberries when they arrive, don't wait. They have only a few days of ripeness. Now, if you do not have access to locally grown you are welcome to use conventional strawberries, however I encourage you to be heavy handed with the sugar. Get as many as you can. Washing strawberries is easily done by, filling a bowl with cool water, sliding the berries in and letting the berries sit in the water. Use your fingertips to gently agitate them in the water to shake off any dirt or travelers. But don't leave them in the water too long or they will go limp on you, and nobody likes limp. If you have too many to enjoy simply dry them on paper towel then lay them out on a sheet and freeze them. They will keep beautifully for cooking and smoothies. I normally dislike gadgets, for most of my cooking I own an opposable thumb I can do a lot. However, when dealing with a large batch I recommend an inexpensive strawberry nipper, yeah that's what it's called. It's a thin V shaped utensil that pinches the green top off of the berries with speed and accuracy. While it is my inclination to simple use that thumb I previously mentioned to remove the tops could result in a mild acidic reaction. Done over an entire flat of strawberries, you will hurt your finger.



My favorite recipe is called a Lady Strawberry Sue. You know Tiramisu? It's a strawberry homage to it. You will need:

- Fresh summer strawberries, cleaned, leaves removed and cut in half.
- For every cup of berries add a teaspoon of sugar (Tbs. if using conventional strawberries.)
- Whipping cream, whipped to soft peaks
- Room temperature cream cheese
- Ladyfinger cookies
- Dish to chill and serve it in. I use half tins, you can use anything food safe.

Yes I know I'm being slightly sketchy on the portion sizes, but we'll get back to that. Let me give you a mental image first.

Fresh cut strawberries tossed with sugar begin to macerate, which softens and releases a lot of strawberry liquid. This is liquid gold! Let the cut strawberries tossed with sugar sit for approximately 20-30 minutes at least.

Now lets discuss the whipping cream and the cream cheese. First whip up your softened cream cheese until it is smooth then set it aside. Whip your whipping cream to medium peaks, don't work her too hard or you will get butter.

Fold the two ingredients together. That is place them in the same bowl and using a paddle or spatula, and scraping downward in the center of the bowl, drag it across the bottom of the bowl and bring the spatula up to the edge, folding the cream mixture onto itself. Fold. This is to allow for combination without releasing too much air. I like to turn the bowl with each "fold". Once the cream cheese and whipped cream are completely combined it is time to assess the strawberries. They will be softer and very sweet. Use a slotted spoon to remove them, leaving all of the juices behind. Fold (yes again) the strawberries into the cream mixture in the same way you united the whipped cream with the cream cheese, gently. You don't want to smash and squish the strawberries. The liquid, after your berries have sat in the tossed sugar, will now be your strawberry syrup. Make sure the liquid is in a bowl, big enough to lay a ladyfinger down on her back. Ladyfinger cookies have been used for making Tiramisu, dunking into coffee or just eating out of hand. There is a top and a bottom, the sugary coated shiny side of the ladyfinger is the face, the front, the other side is very absorbent, it is the back. So now you will need the dish you plan to use to serve it in. This dish needs to be deep because this recipe is layered. See why it's difficult to tell you measurements?? I'm using a half tin.

Take a ladyfinger hold her with her sugary front facing upwards and gently dip her entire back into the strawberry sauce, letting it absorb slightly. Then lay the ladyfingers down in the serving dish in an even layer wet side down sugar side up. Once you have covered the entire bottom of your dish with the slightly soaked ladyfingers go back to your filling. Remember you need the strawberry syrup to last so be light handed when dipping.

Take a large spoonful of the strawberry cream mixture and gently spread it across the top of the ladyfingers. Again, this is a lady, be gentle. Till you have to eat her of course.

Repeat this process of a layer of strawberry dipped ladyfingers and top with the strawberry cream. The goal is to get at least two layers of cookies (can't go wrong with more layers btw) but no matter how many layers you make the top must be the strawberry cream. In addition, you want to make sure the cream is completely covering everything. Now lay a piece of parchment paper over the top, it's ok to press it down gently then cover with foil and place in the refrigerator for a minimum of four (4) hours. Yes overnight is even better.

Now is the season and I have just given you the reason so get you berries out there and try this dish. I swear it will change your life forever!

