

Billowy dessert named after ballerina

Think of billowy clouds whipped from sugar and egg whites – soft, sweet, delicate. Delightful any time of year, this confection makes an extra-special Sweetheart dessert. The crunchy chocolate crust proves the perfect pedestal for whipped cream, fresh berries and citrus zest.

Pavlova is a meringue-based dessert said to be named in honor of the famous Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova, during or directly following her 1920 tour of New Zealand and Australia. When I think of her namesake, this elegant confection, I can easily envision how beautifully and gracefully she must have danced. It is likely she attracted great attention, just as you will, upon the presentation of Pavlova to your dinner guests. It is also probable that you will find them bickering over who gets the first slice, just as New Zealand and Australia fought for years over who could take the credit for the creation of this glorious dessert!

The recipe

4 large egg whites, room temperature
1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar



1/8 teaspoon table salt
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 1/2 teaspoon cornstarch
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1/4 cup unsweetened Dutch-processed cocoa powder
1 cup heavy whipping cream
1 teaspoon fresh tangerine zest
1 1/2 cups of fresh berries (I like the combination of raspberries, blue berries and black berries, with a bit of chopped kiwi fruit for added color)

Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cut a piece of parchment paper so that it fits flat on a baking sheet. With a pencil, trace a circle around a 9-inch cake or pie pan

with a whisk attachment, whip the egg whites, cream of tartar and salt in a large dry bowl on medium speed until foamy, about 30 seconds. Combine 1 cup of the sugar with the cornstarch and add, a tablespoon at a time, the beaten egg white mixture along with the vinegar; whip on medium high until the whites hold stiff peaks and look very glossy, approx. 3-5 minutes. Add the cocoa powder and mix on low speed until mostly combined, 20-30 seconds, scraping the bowl as needed. Finish folding the cocoa into the meringue by hand, using a rubber spatula, until well combined and no streaks of white remain.

Pile the prepared meringue mixture inside the circle on the parch-

ment paper. Using the spatula, spread the meringue to even it out slightly – it doesn't need to align perfectly with the circle and it shouldn't be perfectly smooth or overworked. (The natural swirls and ridges give the finished meringue character!)

Bake for 10 minutes at 350 degrees, then reduce the oven temperature to 300 degrees and bake until the meringue has puffed and cracked around its edges, another 45-50 minutes. Turn off the oven, prop the oven door open, and leave the meringue in the oven to cool to room temperature, at least 30 minutes. (This allows the meringue time to cool gradually, very important!)

Just before serving, place the cooled meringue onto a serving platter. In a chilled bowl, beat the cream with the remaining 2 tablespoons sugar until it holds soft peaks. Whip in the tangerine zest, making sure it is evenly distributed. Pile the prepared whipped cream onto the meringue, spreading it almost out to the edge and then top with the berries. Slice into wedges with a serrated knife.

Tips for creating perfect Pav-

lova
As you may know, working with egg whites to create meringue can sometimes be tricky. Here are a few tips for taming them:

Eggs separate much easier when cold, yet egg whites gain their maximum volume when whipped at room temperature. Therefore, separate the eggs directly after removing them from the fridge, then let the egg whites sit for 30 minutes to come to room temperature. (I save my yolks to make pudding at a later time.)

Be sure that anything that comes in contact with the egg whites (bowls, fingers, utensils) is as clean and free of oils as possible. If you discover a bit of egg yolk in with your whites, remove it immediately, using a piece of clean eggshell.

Because egg whites are pure protein, they gain volume from being whipped, especially when at room temperature. Start with your mixer on LOW, increasing the speed in small increments, until you get the consistency and volume you desire.

Beat the egg whites until soft peaks form, then add sugar one tablespoon at a time, continuing to beat until the meringue is shiny and

forms stiff peaks. The addition of cornstarch and vinegar is what gives the Pavlova crust its crispness, with a soft marshmallow-y interior.

Certified Personal Chef and Speaker, Chef Alli is a Culinary Instructor for Hy-Vee and a Kansas Press Association contributing columnist. Watch for her new website launch in 2012! For a current list of her culinary classes at Hy-Vee, visit: www.ChefAllis.com.

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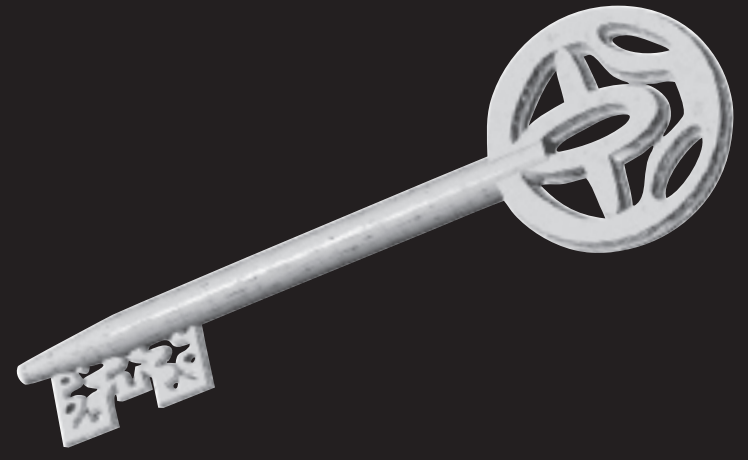
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