



From Aunt Olivia's Kitchen

by Lydia Lovell

If, as some history books declare, Wampanoag Indians introduced strawberries to the English who arrived in Plymouth, the newcomers must have been city-bred, for surely strawberries grew on hillsides of the British Isles long before the Pilgrims landed. Someone in England, perhaps a child, must have discovered their succulence prior to Oliver Cromwell's time.

Captain John Smith found strawberries at Jamestown, Virginia, and wrote in his diary they were four times bigger and better than those of England. Roger Williams found them, wild, in Rhode Island. Strawberries were assuredly familiar treats.

Since those days, American cooks have discovered many ways to use strawberries. Debate has raged over recipes for shortcake. Early shortcakes may have been made from cornmeal, but today choices range from biscuits to rich cakes. Recipes abound.

To 2 cups of flour, for example, recipes specify from 2 to a dozen tablespoons of shortening; Maryland cooks use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup; in Oregon and Philadelphia, 5 tablespoons are called for; in Boston, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup; in Minneapolis, 6 tablespoons; in New Jersey, Vermont, and Virginia, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup; in Florida, 1 cup. In Manhattan, where sour cream is a favorite topping, 3 ounces of cream cheese and 2 tablespoons of butter are blended with the flour.

As for liquid, again few recipes agree. Fresh milk, buttermilk, sour cream, light cream, or heavy cream are possibilities. And question of an egg arises. Some regional recipes include one; others do not.

Cakes to serve with strawberries range from pound and sponge to angelfood and butter. Some people prefer scones. None of these is a shortcake. For real shortcake, try this recipe: Wash, hull, crush and sweeten 2 quarts strawberries. Refrigerate for at least an hour, then allow to come to room temperature for another hour.

2 C flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ t. salt	$\frac{1}{2}$ C margarine
4 t. baking powder	2 T sugar	$\frac{3}{4}$ C milk

Mix flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar in a bowl. Cut in shortening with fork. Add milk all at once, mixing until just blended. With floured hands, form dough into 8 to 12 large round biscuits. Place on ungreased cookie sheet and bake at 450° for 12 to 15 minutes. Split hot biscuits and butter. On bottom half of each, ladle crushed and sweetened berries; cover with top half, and add more berries. Top with whipped cream or pass a pitcher of heavy cream. Serve immediately to six to eight people.

Some people prefer strawberry pie to shortcake, and pie offers cooks dozens of ways to vary menus. If chiffon pie is a family favorite, make one with strawberries.

Wash, hull and slice thin one quart of strawberries. Sprinkle with $\frac{1}{4}$ C sugar and let stand at room temperature several hours. Strain, reserving juice and discarding pulp. Soak 4 T unflavored gelatin in a third of juice. When dissolved, add 1 T lemon juice and combine with remainder of juice, stirring well. Refrigerate until cool but do not allow to set.

Meanwhile, add a pinch of salt and $\frac{3}{4}$ C sugar to 6 un-beaten egg whites and heat on top of double boiler over hot

(not boiling) water until lukewarm. Remove top pan and beat egg whites stiff. Fold into juice and gelatin mixture. Turn into baked pie shell and chill until firm. Top with half-pint whipped heavy cream sweetened with 2 T confectioners sugar and flavored with $\frac{1}{4}$ t lemon extract.

If piecrust is lacking, prepare a delicious meringue substitute. Using electric mixer, beat 3 egg whites with $\frac{1}{2}$ t baking powder, $\frac{1}{8}$ t salt, 1 t vanilla extract, 1 t vinegar, and 1 t cold water, until stiff. Add, one tablespoonful at a time while beater is at high speed, 1 C sifted sugar. Continue beating another few minutes after all sugar is added. Grease lightly a 9" pieplate. Spread meringue, shaping like a pie crust. Bake at 275° about $1\frac{1}{4}$ hours. Cool thoroughly.

Immediately before serving, combine 1 quart washed and hulled, whole fresh strawberries with half-pint whipped heavy cream. Fill meringue with mixture. This pie should serve six.

Intrigued by strawberries and sour cream?

8 oz. container of sour cream

$\frac{1}{2}$ C sifted confectioners sugar

1 t lemon juice, 1 t grated lemon rind

1 qt. fresh strawberries, washed but not hulled, whole.

Beat sour cream, sugar, lemon juice and rind until smooth. Pour into small serving bowl. Set bowl on a platter and surround with whole berries. To eat, pick up berry by stem-end, dip in dressing, and pop into mouth. This may be served as an appetizer. If used as dessert, serve dressing in individual cups with berries arranged on a plate. Serves four.

Whether you pick your own strawberries from a field warmed by early-morning sun while the dew is still on the plants, or choose a quart on display at the supermarket, June is the season for fresh Cape Cod strawberries.