Classic Victoria Sandwich

Ingredients

- 200g caster sugar
- 200g softened butter
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 200g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 2 tbsp milk

For the filling

- 100g butter
- 140g icing sugar, sifted
- Drop of vanilla extract (optional)
- Half a 340g jar of good-quality strawberry jam (Tiptree, for example)
- Icing sugar to decorate

Method

1. Heat oven to 190C/fan 170C/gas 5. Butter two 20cm sandwich tins and line with non-stick baking paper.
2. In a large bowl, beat 200g caster sugar, 200g softened butter, 4 beaten eggs, 200g self-raising flour, 1 tsp baking powder and 2 tbsp milk together until you have a smooth, soft batter.
3. Divide the mixture between the tins, smooth the surface with a spatula or the back of a spoon.
4. Bake for about 20 mins until golden and the cake springs back when pressed.

5. Turn onto a cooling rack and leave to cool completely.
6. To make the filling, beat the 100g softened butter until smooth and creamy, then gradually beat in 140g sifted icing sugar and a drop of vanilla extract (if you're using it).
7. Spread the buttercream over the bottom of one of the sponges. Top it with 170g strawberry jam and sandwich the second sponge on top.
8. Dust with a little icing sugar before serving. Keep in an airtight container and eat within 2 days.

History

A quintessential English teatime treat, the Victoria Sandwich (or Sponge), is one of a number of cakes associated with Queen Victoria. It is widely thought that this sponge cake sandwiched together with jam and dusted on the top with caster sugar was the Queen's favourite.

Originally, the Victoria Sandwich may have started in the nursery. In the early Victorian period, afternoon tea consisted of seed cake and fruit cake. For safety reasons, it was believed that children should not eat a cake containing pieces of fruit or seeds. The light, harmless Victoria Sandwich was prepared as a teatime treat for them instead! Only later on did it make its way to the adult tea table.