

SUMMER STRAWBERRIES

Strawberries are one those things that form a strong part of my childhood memories, maybe some indication that food was an inevitable career path. It is not just the eating I remember though, it is the picking, planting and growing too. Self pick was a significant source of our food, the fruit and veg grown in the garden was also important and I guess this in part led my parents to buy a small holding in Cornwall and, in partnership with another couple, open a farm shop. Strawberries were an early crop my dad planted in a long, narrow, sloping field. The jousting field we called it. I think it was about an acre and a half and planting by hand on his own was a big task. It took the rabbits much less effort to destroy his work, the true realisation that the farm had serious rabbit problem! This flan recipe is inspired by my childhood; a bought flan case, tinned fruit and quick gel were often the key ingredients of a 70's pudding. I hope this refines things just a touch!

For the poached strawberries

200g strawberries
Juice of a large orange and half the zest
1 tbsp honey
1tsp vanilla extract
water to cover

For the flan

100g unsalted butter
100g golden caster sugar
2 large free range eggs, beaten
pinch salt
100g self raising flour
milk to consistency

For the jelly

100ml of the strawberry poaching liquid
1 leaf gelatine soaked in cold water.

To assemble

200g hulled, halved strawberries

For the poached berries place in a pan that will hold the fruit in a single layer. Zest the orange directly into the pan either with a citrus zester or fine grater. Add the juice, honey, vanilla and just enough water to cover. Bring to the boil and immediately turn off the heat, allow to cool in the liquid. The berries will go pale and soft, if very ripe you may want to drain them before the liquid has cooled but keep the juice.

For the flan, cream the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Gradually add the egg in about four lots interspersing with a spoon of flour.

Fold in the remaining flour and the salt. Loosen the sponge to dropping consistently with the milk. Pour the batter into a greased, non-stick, 20cm, raised bottom flan tin.

Bake in a pre-heated oven at 170°C for approximately 20 minutes until risen, golden and just firm. Transfer to a wire rack to cool for 10 minutes before turning out.

For the jelly warm a quarter of the liquid and stir in the soaked gelatine. Add the remaining liquid and mix thoroughly. Pour through a fine strainer into a small bowl and allow to cool. Transfer to the fridge until just starting to set.

When the flan is cold fill with the halved berries and spoon over half the jelly. Chill for 10 minutes and then spoon on the remaining jelly.

Serve with plenty of cream.

