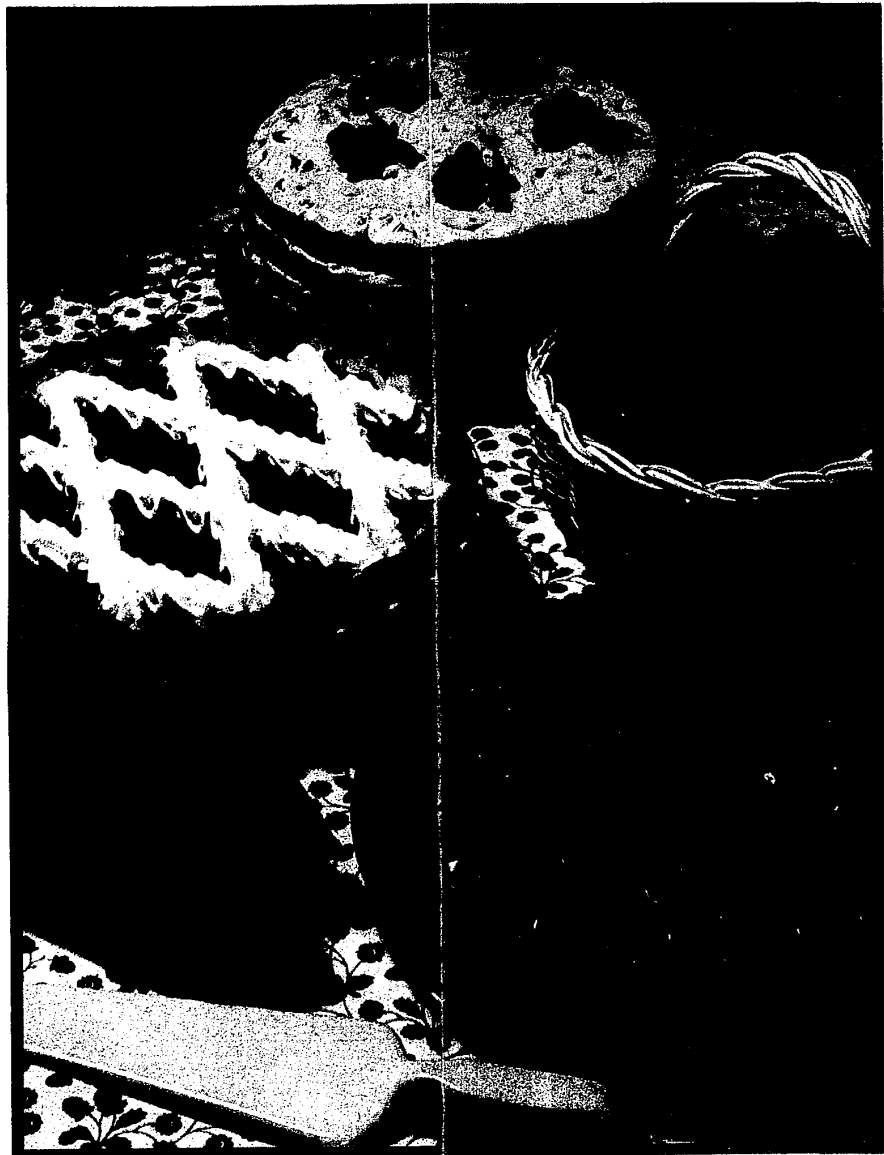


Simply Sumptuous Strawberry Desserts



We know spring is nigh when the first crop of strawberries appears in our markets. What a lift from winter doldrums to greet the beautiful red fruit and ponder the many ways to enjoy it.

Here are three simply sensational strawberry desserts designed for those whose pondering and preparation time is limited! They are beautiful, delicious and streamlined thanks to the cooperative effort between fresh berries and "convenience" products like Jell-O gelatin, Jell-O pudding and Cool Whip frozen whipped topping.

"Elegant but easy" is a good way to describe this Strawberry Chocolate Torte that "marries" two popular flavors in a scrumptious cake that serves 8 to 10 people. If you have the time and inclination, bake four 9-inch layers from "scratch." Or, you may prefer to use a cake mix and bake two 9-inch layers; cut them each horizontally into two. If you choose the quicker route, be sure to cool the layers completely before cutting them with a sharp knife. You may find it helpful to mark off the layers' midpoint with toothpicks before halving them. Incidentally, cake freezes beautifully, so you can bake the cake layers in advance of making the filling and assembling the torte.

For best results, thaw the layers slowly and do not remove the freezer wrapping until you are ready to proceed with the recipe.

For a truly quick and easy dessert treat, try the Strawberry Almond Pie. The delicious fresh strawberry filling is made in minutes by combining packages of fruit flavor gelatin and pudding and pie filling mix with water in a saucepan...bringing the mixture to a boil... then stirring in the remaining ingredients.

Dress up the pie with a garnish of frozen whipped topping or serve it plain. Either way, it's sure to become a "regular" at your house.

Finally, the impressive-looking Strawberry Tart is a perfect example of the wonders you can create when you combine fresh strawberries with handy "staples"—fruit flavor gelatin and frozen whipped topping. Beneath the fresh, gelatin-glazed berries is a wholesome, creamy filling of sour cream and whipped topping. The rich, crisp shortbread crust is easily prepared in a 9-inch springform or flan pan.

Celebrate spring this year with a fresh crop of strawberry desserts made quicker, easier and better with fruit flavor gelatin, pudding and frozen whipped topping.

Strawberry Chocolate Torte

- 1-3/4 cups unsifted all-purpose flour
- 1-3/4 cups sugar
- 1-1/4 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon double-acting baking powder
- 2/3 cup butter or margarine
- 4 squares unsweetened chocolate, melted and cooled
- 1-1/4 cups water
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 3 eggs
- 1 package (3 oz.) strawberry flavor gelatin
- 2/3 cup boiling water
- 2 cups ice cubes
- 1 container (8 oz.) frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 1 cup diced strawberries

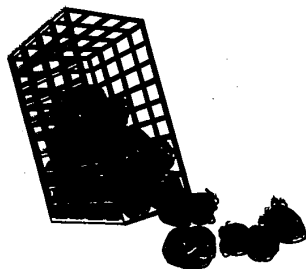
Combine flour, sugar, baking soda, salt, baking powder, butter, melted chocolate, water and vanilla in large mixer bowl. Beat at low speed to blend; then beat 2 minutes at medium speed, scraping bowl frequently. Add eggs; beat 2 minutes longer. Pour into four 9-inch layer pans which have been lined with paper. (Layers will be thin.) Bake at 350° for 20 to 25 minutes, or until cake tester inserted into center comes out clean. Cool in pans about 10 minutes. Remove from pans and finish cooling on racks.

Dissolve gelatin completely in boiling water, stirring about 3 minutes. Add ice cubes and stir constantly until gelatin is thickened, about 2 to 3 minutes. Remove any unmelted ice. Using wire whip, blend in whipped topping, then whip until smooth. Fold in strawberries and chill, if necessary, until mixture will mound. Place 1 cake layer on serving plate; spread with 1-1/4 cups gelatin mixture; top with second layer. Repeat layers. Chill about 1 hour. Garnish with strawberries and mint, if desired. Store any leftover cake in refrigerator.

Strawberry Almond Pie

- 1 package (3 oz.) strawberry flavor gelatin
- 1 package (4-serving size) vanilla flavor pudding and pie filling
- 1-1/4 cups water
- 1-1/2 pints strawberries, hulled and sliced
- 1/2 cup chopped toasted almonds
- 1/4 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 baked 9-inch pie shell, cooled

Combine gelatin and pie filling mix in saucepan. Stir in water. Cook and stir over high heat until mixture comes to a boil. Remove from heat and stir in strawberries, almonds and extract. Let stand about 5 minutes; then pour into pie shell. Chill until set, about 3 to 4 hours. Garnish with thawed frozen whipped topping, if desired.



Strawberry Tart

- 1 package (3 oz.) strawberry flavor gelatin
- 3/4 cup boiling water
- 1/4 cup cold water
- 2 cups ice cubes
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 cup thawed frozen whipped topping
- 1 baked 9-inch Shortbread Crust, cooled
- 2 cups fresh strawberries, hulled and halved

Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Measure 1/4 cup, add 1/4 cup cold water and set aside. Add ice cubes to remaining gelatin; stir constantly until gelatin begins to thicken, about 3 minutes. Remove any unmelted ice. Using wire whip, blend in sour cream and whipped topping and whip until smooth. Spoon into Shortbread Crust. Arrange strawberries, cut side down, on filling. Chill measured gelatin until slightly thickened; spoon over strawberries. Chill until firm, about 2 hours.

Shortbread Crust

Blend 1/2 cup softened butter or margarine and 1/4 cup sugar together with a pastry blender or fork. Add 1-1/4 cups sifted all-purpose flour and mix until crumbs are formed. Then mix thoroughly with hands to form a soft dough. Press evenly onto bottom and sides of 9-inch flan or springform pan. Prick bottom of crust with fork. Bake at 325° for 25 to 30 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool in pan. Loosen sides, and remove carefully. If crust sticks, heat gently a few seconds over low heat.