

## Strawberry Snacking Cake

BY BRIAN MEDFORD

Growing up, one of my favorite picture books was “Simple Pictures Are Best” by Nancy Willard. The story revolves around a shoemaker and his wife having their photograph taken for their wedding anniversary. The photography session starts simply enough, however to the photographer’s distress the couple begin adding items like a prize-winning squash, hat emblazoned with birds, shoes on their feet and ears and their cat with one eye, among a myriad of other items. Each time the couple adds another frivolity, the photographer returns with a warning that “simple pictures are best.” Of course, the session ends in a proverbial train wreck and the photo is ruined.

This childhood book influenced my culinary viewpoint that simple cooking is the best. At heart, I’m a baker, which according to my friend Marie is “dabbling in the dark arts.” I admit this reputation can seem ominous to home cooks. Baking can feel daunting, fussy and infuriating sometimes. I’m sure Toll House ready-made dough is thankful for these feelings.

While I enjoy a complicated recipe that requires pinpoint precision, my favorite bakes are simple and seasonal. There’s no need to dirty every item in a kitchen, nor have neighbors initiate a wellness check when you embark on a baking project. A single layer snacking cake dappled with fruit is my favorite kind of bake.

I’ve made this particular cake four or five times in some years, until people see me coming to dinner with a cake carrier and think, “oh no, not that strawberry cake again.” Honestly, no one has ever said that. If anything, when I arrive with this cake, they hug me a little tighter.

While this recipe calls for strawberries, feel free to substitute peaches, plums or blueberries depending on what is accessible and in season. The only embellishment that’s ever needed is softly whipped cream



Brian Medford

**Fresh strawberries are the centerpiece of this delicious spring cake.**

with a touch of sugar. Keep it simple. Simple pictures and simple bakes are best.

### Strawberry Snacking Cake

*Adapted from Deb Perelman, serves eight*

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature, plus extra to prepare the cake pan
- 1 1/2 cups all purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup, plus two tablespoons granulated sugar
- One large egg, room temperature
- 1/2 cup whole milk

- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 pound strawberries, hulled and halved.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Butter a 9 inch cake tin and line the bottom with parchment paper.

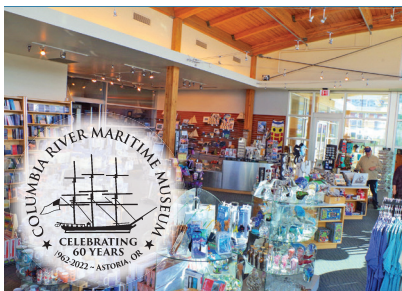
Whisk flour, baking powder and salt together in a small bowl. Set aside. In a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat butter and 1 cup of sugar until pale and fluffy, about four to five minutes. Mix in the egg, milk and vanilla until combined. Add dry mixture gradually, mixing until smooth.

Pour into the prepared cake tin. Arrange strawberries in concentric circles, cut side

down, on top of batter, in a single layer. Sprinkle the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar over the berries.

Bake the cake for 10 minutes, then reduce oven temperature to 325 degrees Fahrenheit and bake the cake until golden brown and a toothpick comes out free of wet batter, about 45 to 55 minutes. Let cool in the pan on a rack. Remove from the cake tin and peel off the parchment paper before serving.

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