

Pavlova with Summer Peaches

NADINE INGRAM

Ingredients

4 ripe peaches
2 tablespoons demerara sugar 1 teaspoon
unsalted butter
200g mascarpone
200ml thickened cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

PAVLOVA SHELL
6 egg whites (180g), at room temperature
Pinch of sea salt
360g caster sugar
2 tablespoons cornflour 1 tablespoon
white vinegar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract



Everything that comes out of Nadine Ingram's Flour and Stone bakery is utterly delicious and this pavlova is no exception. And let's face it, who doesn't love a pav? You can top it with any seasonal fruit you have. Nadine was inspired by childhood memories of eating fresh peaches, but nectarines, apricots and plums would all work well. She briefly caramelises the fruit in butter to soften it slightly before serving.

Preheat the oven to 140°C. Line a baking tray with a large square of baking paper.

To make the pavlova shell, place the egg whites and salt in the dry and scrupulously clean bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Beat on medium speed until the egg whites start to form soft ribbons, then gradually add the caster sugar, a spoonful at a time. The most important thing here is not to add the sugar too quickly, to ensure the centre of the pavlova is pillowy and light. If you work too quickly, the egg whites will become saturated and the pavlova will be dense and heavy. After you have added the last spoonful of sugar, beat for a further 2 minutes, then remove the bowl from the machine. Sift the cornflour evenly over the surface of the egg white and trickle the vinegar and vanilla around the edge of the bowl, then gently fold them all through using a spatula or a large metal spoon.

Spoon the meringue onto the prepared baking tray. Piling it up into a big mound in the centre. Now, using a palette knife or a spatula, smooth the meringue over to form a big beehive shape. This will help to 'compact' the egg white so there are no air bubbles in the pavlova. Once you have the beehive shape in front of you, the dome with your spatula to make a more conventional pavlova shape, then smooth around the outside to keep the sides upright. Of course it is not essential to do all this fancy shaping - you can just spoon the egg white onto the baking sheet and create any shape you like.

Put the tray in the oven and immediately turn the temperature down to 100°C. Bake for 50 minutes, then turn the oven off and leave the pavlova to cool in the oven overnight or for a minimum of 4 hours. Remove the pavlova from the oven and using a long palette knife or long blade, lift it off the baking tray and onto the plate you intend to serve it on.

Now for the topping. Cut each peach in half, discarding the stone, then cut each half into three wedges. If the peaches are cling stone as opposed to slip stone this will make cutting the peach in half nearly impossible. In this case, just carve the pieces into thick wedges from around the stone. Toss the peach pieces in the demerara sugar.

Melt the butter in a medium non-stick frying pan over medium heat. Working in batches, add the peach pieces one at a time so they lie flat in the pan. Be careful not to overcrowd the pan, otherwise they will begin to stew rather than become beautifully caramelised. Cook each side for 30 seconds, then remove from the heat and cool completely.

Place the mascarpone, cream and vanilla in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment (or use a hand whisk) and whisk to soft peaks.

Spoon the vanilla cream over the pavlova, then decorate with the caramelised peach and serve.

TIP: If preferred, you can grill the peaches on the barbecue - just omit the butter. Simply toss the peaches in sugar, add to a hot barbecue plate or grill and scorch briefly on both sides. If you happen to own a blowtorch, you could also use this.



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