

Italian Sponge Cake (Pan di Spagna)

Italian sponge cake is a simple, airy sponge cake flavored with vanilla or lemon zest. It's made with only 3 ingredients: eggs, sugar and flour...no baking powder, no butter and no oil! Sponge cake can be used to create a variety of desserts like Cassata and Tiramisù. Sponge cake can be soaked with your favorite mixture and layered with cream fillings, covered with fondant or just eaten on its own sprinkled with powdered sugar.

The secrets to baking a perfect Italian Sponge Cake include:

1. Use extra large eggs. Eggs have to be at room temperature, not cold from the fridge. If they are too cold, soak them for a few minutes in a bowl of warm water.
2. It's better to use a low protein flour such as cake flour or use all-purpose flour.
3. Beat the eggs and sugar for no less than 15 minutes. It is during this stage that air is incorporated. The eggs should turn a pale yellow.
4. Sift the flour before you add it to the batter folding it in gently, a little bit at a time.
5. If you pour in too much flour too quickly it will sink to the bottom of the bowl and may result in a lumpy batter.
6. Bake the cake at 380 degrees for about 15 minutes. Do not open the oven too soon as this may cause the cake to deflate.
7. When it's ready, it should have a gentle crust and golden color. Take the cake out of the oven and let cool.

Ingredients

- 1 cup+3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 8 extra large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest or vanilla extract (optional)
- 2 cups+ 2 tablespoons cake flour, sifted (if you use all-purpose flour 2 cups)

Instructions

1. Take the eggs out of the refrigerator ahead of time as the eggs need to be room temperature or soak them for a few minutes in a bowl of warm water not hot, (you will cook your eggs).
2. Preheat the oven to 380 degrees F.
3. Butter and flour (or spray with baking spray) a 20 cm (2-8 inch) pans.
4. Put the eggs, sugar, and lemon zest in the bowl of your stand mixer.
5. Beat the eggs until very fluffy and pale yellow (about 15 minutes on medium/high speed).