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TEST KITCHEN



PASTRY PRO

how to master meringue

ORANGE-FLOWER PAVLOVAS WITH STRAWBERRIES, P. 86

You'd never know it from those showstopper looks, but a Pavlova—a crispy meringue shell filled with fresh fruit and cream—is not as difficult as it seems. Often the dessert is one big shell, but our recipe calls for making smaller-size individual Pavlovas. Here are the crucial steps.

1/ Line a large baking sheet with parchment. Using a cookie cutter or drinking glass, trace six 2½-inch circles on the parchment, spaced 2 or so inches apart. Turn the parchment over.

2/ Beat the egg whites until soft peaks begin to form. Add the sugar-cornstarch mixture as directed in the recipe.

3/ Beat the meringue until stiff, glossy peaks form. Beat in the white balsamic vinegar (it helps stabilize the meringue—don't worry, you won't taste it) and the orange-flower water.

4/ Divide the meringue among the circles on the parchment, spreading to fill. With the back of a spoon, form a slight depression in each meringue. Bake and cool the meringues as directed. Assemble the strawberry coulis, fruit, and whipped cream.

5/ Spoon a small dollop of whipped cream in the center of each serving plate (this helps anchor the meringues so they don't slide all over the plate).

6/ Set the meringues atop the whipped cream. Spoon a generous dollop of whipped cream atop each meringue. Spoon the strawberry coulis around the meringues, then top with sliced strawberries. »