

The Goldilocks Cake {Lemon Pistachio Layer Cake}

Blog post: <https://korenainthekitchen.com/2019/06/09/the-goldilocks-cake-lemon-pistachio-layer-cake/>

The various components of this cake have been inspired by [Bon Appetit](#), [Sky High Cakes](#) via [Leite's Culinaría](#), the [BraveTart book](#) and [blog](#), [Tartine](#), and [Sweetapolita](#), however I've done significant scaling, tweaking, and modifying to come up with the recipe below. Makes one 3 layer, 6" round cake, 8-10 servings. Can be doubled for a 3 layer, 9" round cake.

Lemon Curd

In a small bowl, weigh out **5 large egg yolks** - this weight is **1 part** (which for 5 yolks, should be about 90 g). In 2 other bowls, reserve **2 egg whites for the cake**, and **3 egg whites for the Swiss meringue buttercream**.

In a medium bowl, place **1 part granulated sugar** (about 90 g) and rub in the **zest of 1 lemon** with your fingers, until fragrant. Add the egg yolks and whisk until pale.

Juice enough lemons to get **1 part lemon juice** (about 90 g). Bring the lemon juice to a simmer in a small pot. Slowly add the simmering lemon juice to the egg yolk-sugar mixture, whisking constantly.

Once all the lemon juice is added, pour the mixture back into the pot and set over medium-low heat. Cook, stirring constantly with a heat-proof spatula, until very thick, like pudding. It should be thick enough to leave a bare trail on the bottom of the pot and mound up on the spatula, about 185°F.

Press through a strainer into a bowl, and allow to cool to 140°F.

Measure out **1.5 parts cold unsalted butter** (about 135 g). With an immersion blender (or pour it into the jar of a blender) blend in the butter in 1 tbsp pieces, until opaque, thick, and creamy. Press plastic wrap directly to the surface and chill until cool.

Lemon-Pistachio Sponge Cake Layers

Makes 3 x 6" round cakes.

Preheat oven to 350°F (325°F convection). Butter and flour three 6-inch-diameter cake pans with 1 1/2-inch high sides; line bottoms with parchment paper.

Toast **55 g shelled pistachios** in the preheating oven for 7-10 minutes, until lightly coloured and fragrant. Cool, then chop coarsely and set aside 2 tbsp for decoration.

In the bowl of a food processor, place:
the remaining pistachios
50 g granulated sugar

Process until finely ground. Set aside.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, combine:
4 large egg whites (2 reserved from the lemon curd plus 2 additional whites - save the 2 yolks for later in the recipe)

1/8 tsp cream of tartar

Beat on medium speed until soft peaks form. Gradually add in **100 g granulated sugar**, beating on medium-high until a stiff-but-not-dry meringue forms. Scoop meringue into another bowl and set aside.

In the electric mixer bowl (don't worry about washing it), place:

90 g cake flour
the pistachio-sugar mixture
1 1/4 tsp baking powder
3/8 tsp salt
2 large egg yolks (*reserved from earlier*)
2 tbsp vegetable oil
2 tbsp orange juice
zest of half a lemon
90 g lemon curd (*reserve the rest for assembling the cake*)

Beat this yolk mixture with the whisk attachment until smooth. Fold one-third of the meringue into the yolk mixture to lighten it, then gently fold in the remaining meringue until uniform and light.

Divide the batter equally among the prepared pans (about 200 g batter in each pan) and wrap each pan with a strip of wet towel to help insulate the cake so it bakes evenly. Bake the cakes in the preheated 350°F (325°F convection) oven until a tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 25 minutes. Cool cakes in pans on racks 15 minutes. Turn cakes out onto racks; peel off parchment. Cool cakes completely.

Vanilla Swiss Meringue Buttercream

Cut **275 g unsalted butter** into cubes and set aside to soften to room temperature (about 65°F).

In the scrupulously clean metal bowl of an electric mixer, place:

90 g egg whites (*about 3, reserved from the lemon curd*)
180 g granulated sugar
1/8 tsp cream of tartar

Place the bowl over a simmering pot of water to make a bain marie, and gently heat the egg whites, stirring constantly with a heat-proof spatula, until they reach 185°F on an instant read thermometer.

Transfer the bowl to the electric mixer with a scrupulously clean whisk attachment, and whip on high speed until you have a glossy, thick, stiff meringue that is completely cool to the touch (about 90°F).

With the mixer on medium speed, gradually add the softened cubed butter, 1 cube at a time. Allow it to mix in before adding the next cube.

Once all the butter is added, increase the speed to medium-high and mix until it is smooth, thick, and fluffy and the temperature is about 72°F. Scrape down the inside of the bowl a few times.

Mix in:

1 1/4 tsp pure vanilla extract
pinch of salt

The ideal temperature for a finished buttercream is about 72°F - so if it seems like it's not coming together, check the temperature of the buttercream:

- If it is colder than 68°F, the buttercream will be thick and chunky. You can continue mixing at room temperature until the butter in the mixture gradually softens, or you can wrap a towel dampened with warm water around the bowl to warm the butter slightly. Do this conservatively – you don't want to melt the butter, just to soften it and bring the whole thing to about 72°F. Mix until it is smooth and fluffy.
- If it is higher than 74°F, the buttercream will be soupy and loose. Put the bowl in the fridge and stir it with a whisk every few minutes until it starts to thicken up a bit, then continue mixing with the electric mixer until it thickens into a buttercream (aim for a final temperature of 72°F).

Lemon Whipped Cream

In a medium bowl, whip **120 g heavy whipping cream** with **2 tbsp icing sugar** until soft peaks form. Add the **zest of 1/2 a lemon** and whip until stiff peaks form.

Cake Assembly

You will need:

baked and cooled Lemon-Pistachio Sponge Cake layers
remaining Lemon Curd
Lemon Whipped Cream
Vanilla Swiss Meringue Buttercream
reserved toasted, coarsely chopped pistachios

Place one of the cake layers on a serving platter protected with strips of waxed paper. Spread with 1/4 of the lemon curd and 1/2 of the lemon whipped cream. Top with a second cake layer and repeat with another 1/4 of the lemon curd and the remaining lemon whipped cream (set aside the remaining lemon curd for the top decoration). Top with the third cake layer and press gently to make sure everything is even.

Crumb coat the top and sides of the cake with a thin layer of Swiss meringue buttercream, and chill until firm.

Frost the sides of the cake with a thicker layer of buttercream and smooth it out with a spatula, reserving the remaining buttercream for the decoration on top.

For the top decoration, prepare 2 disposable piping bags by cutting off the tip at a 90 degree angle, then cutting off one of the resulting corners at a 45 degree angle.

Mix the remaining lemon curd with 1/3 of the remaining buttercream. Place the lemon buttercream in one piping bag, and the plain buttercream in another.

With a skewer, draw a straight line down the centre of the top of the cake. With the plain buttercream, pipe a row of St Honoré-style blobs at a 45 degree angle to the line. Turn the cake 180 degrees, switch to the lemon buttercream, and pipe another line of blobs at a 90-degree angle to the first set of plain buttercream blobs. Continue alternating buttercreams and piping direction/angles to cover the top of the cake in chevron stripes. [Here's a great how-to video.](#)

Sprinkle with the reserved **2 tbsp chopped pistachios**. Chill to set, then bring the cake to room temperature before slicing and serving.