


Almond Berry Layer Cake



From the kitchen of:

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You'll need:

For the cake

Unsalted butter, for greasing pans
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour, plus more for pans
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups whole blanched almonds
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
3 large eggs
2 large egg whites
1 cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pure vanilla or almond extract

For the filling

1 pound mascarpone cheese
8 ounces crème fraîche
Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup confectioners' sugar, plus more to taste
1 tablespoon kirsch or amaretto, optional

For assembly

2 pounds (about 6 cups) mixed berries
Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

How it's done:

Cake: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Brush 3 (8-inch) round baking pans with butter and line the bottoms with parchment paper cut to fit. Brush with butter again and dust with flour, tapping out excess.

Place 1 tbsp flour, the almonds, baking powder and salt in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until finely ground.

Fill a pot (large enough to set the bowl of an electric mixer in it without the bowl touching the bottom) with 1 inch water and bring to a simmer over low heat.

Place the eggs, egg whites and sugar in the bowl and gently whisk to incorporate. Place the bowl over the pot of steaming water and whisk constantly until the sugar has dissolved, about 3 minutes.

Return bowl to the mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Beat on medium-high speed until pale yellow, thick and fluffy, about 7 minutes. Add vanilla and gently stir to combine.

Using a rubber spatula, gently fold almond mixture into batter. Divide batter evenly among pans and bake until golden, 20 to 25 minutes. The centers will rise and fall during baking. Transfer pans to a wire rack and let cool for 5 minutes. Run a butter knife around the edges of the cakes and turn them out onto a flat plate or cardboard round. Peel off parchment and invert onto another plate or round. Cakes should be right-side up. Cool completely and wrap in plastic wrap if not using immediately.

Filling: In a chilled metal bowl, whip the mascarpone and creme fraiche, either by hand or with an electric mixer, until it holds its shape and is not at all runny. Add the lemon zest, confectioners' sugar and liqueur, if using, and beat to combine well. Add up to 2 tbsp more sugar, to taste, if you choose.

Assembly: Place one of the cakes on a serving plate. Top with $\frac{1}{3}$ of the mascarpone filling and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the berries. Repeat with the remaining 2 layers, leaving the prettiest berries for the top. If not serving right away, chill until ready to serve. Dust with confectioners' sugar and serve.

