

Sour Cream Honey Cake

Сметанник

Sour cream and honey, two of Russia's most iconic foods, are lusciously paired in this honey cake, with billows of sour cream complementing the cake's chewy texture. The recipe is courtesy of Svetlana Kozeiko, the brilliantly inventive chef of Tsarskaya Okhota (The Royal Hunt) in Murmansk. This cake is ideal for entertaining, since it has to be chilled before slicing. I usually make it the morning of a dinner party and refrigerate it all day. The longer you hold the cake, the softer it becomes, so leftovers make an indulgent breakfast. To whip the frosting into swirling clouds, you'll need to seek out high-fat sour cream.

Serves 8

4 tablespoons
unsalted butter

3 tablespoons honey

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 egg

½ cup granulated sugar

1¾ cups flour

1½ cups (12 ounces)

high-fat sour cream
(see Sources)

⅔ cup confectioners'
sugar

In a small saucepan, heat the butter and honey over low heat until the butter melts. Stir in the baking soda. The mixture will almost immediately bubble up, foam, and turn light in color. Remove the pan from the heat and leave the mixture to cool for about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, crack the egg into a bowl and whisk it with the granulated sugar for a few minutes, until light. Stir in the cooled butter mixture, then sift the flour directly into the bowl, stirring to make a very soft dough. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and leave to rest for 20 minutes. The dough will firm up and become nicely pliable.

While the dough is resting, beat the sour cream and confectioners' sugar in a stand mixer on high speed for 5 minutes, until stiff peaks form. Place in the refrigerator to chill for 1 hour.

When the dough has finished resting, preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a 12 by 17-inch baking pan with parchment paper. Divide the dough into four pieces (each will weigh just under 4 ounces). Rinse your hands quickly with cold water and pat each piece out on the parchment into 5 by 5-inch squares about ⅛ inch thick, 1 inch apart. Bake the squares for 8 to 10 minutes, until slightly puffed and golden. If the squares have spread slightly so that the edges are touching, use a sharp paring knife to separate them. Place the baking pan on a rack to cool. (If you don't plan to assemble the cake right away, store the cooled squares in an airtight container so they don't dry out.)

Place one cake square on a serving plate and spread it with one-quarter of the sour cream filling. Top with another cake square and continue to layer the cake and filling, ending with filling on top. Make decorative swirls with the filling but don't frost the sides of the cake.

Carefully transfer the cake to the refrigerator. Chill for at least 4 hours to firm up before slicing.

