

# THE LATIN KITCHEN

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## iFresas Frescas!

*Summer's bounty is on display with sweet dessert and drink ideas from Marcela Valladolid's new cookbook, **Casa Marcela: Recipes and Food Stories of My Life in the Californias.** BY AMANDA CARGILL*

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# Strawberry Tres Leches Cake

(Pictured on page 99)

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp. baking powder
- 6 large eggs, separated
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1½ cups whole milk
- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 12-oz. can evaporated milk
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 2 cups sliced strawberries

Edible flowers, for decorating (optional)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat two 9-inch round cake pans with nonstick cooking spray.

In bowl, sift together flour and baking powder. Set dry ingredients aside.

In bowl of stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment, whisk egg whites on medium speed until stiff peaks form, 5 to 6 minutes. With mixer running slowly, add 1 cup sugar and mix until combined. Add egg yolks, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla and mix well to incorporate. Add ½ cup whole milk, alternating with flour mixture in three additions, starting with milk and ending with flour, blending well after each addition.

Divide batter evenly between prepared cake pans and bake until golden and cake tester inserted into middle comes out clean, 18 to 20 minutes. Remove from oven, transfer to wire rack, and let cool in pan 20 minutes. Run knife around edge and invert cake layers onto wire rack. Let cool completely.

Meanwhile, combine remaining 1 cup whole milk, condensed milk, and evaporated milk in blender and process until smooth. Refrigerate

until ready to use.

Combine heavy cream and remaining ½ cup sugar in medium bowl. Using an electric mixer, beat cream until soft peaks form. Set aside.

Once cake is completely cooled, using serrated knife, trim top of each cake to completely flatten it. (Save trimmings for another use.) Using a fork, poke top of both cake halves all over. Place first cake layer on platter and slowly pour half of milk mixture on top, making sure it gets completely absorbed. Spread 1 cup whipped cream on top, then top with sliced strawberries. Top with second cake layer and pour remaining milk mixture on top, making sure it gets absorbed. Spread remaining whipped cream over top and around sides, pushing spatula in forward motion to remove any excess whipped cream. (Make sure you don't cover the cake completely because you want to see some cake behind the cream.) Refrigerate overnight before serving.

Decorate cake with edible flowers, if desired.

Makes 10 to 12 Servings

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# Strawberry and Thai Basil Mojito

- 1 cup sliced strawberries, plus 4 left whole, for garnish
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup white rum
- 4 tbsp. freshly squeezed lime juice (from about 2 limes)
- 4 tbsp. firmly packed fresh Thai basil
- 3 cups sparkling water

In chilled glass, muddle ¼ cup strawberries and 2 tablespoons sugar. Add 1½ ounces rum, 1 tablespoon lime juice, and 1 tablespoon basil and stir. Fill glass with ice and top with ¾ cup sparkling water. Garnish with whole strawberry. Repeat with remaining glasses and serve immediately.

Makes 4 Servings



## MEET THE CHEF

Marcela Valladolid grew up in Tijuana. She is the co-host of the Emmy-nominated Food Network show *The Kitchen*. In addition to being the author of *Casa Marcela*, she is also the author of *Mexican Made Easy* and *Fresh Mexico*, and was the long-time host of her own Food Network show, *Mexican Made Easy*, which aired for five seasons.