

BAKED ALASKA

If you can make Baked Alaska, you can rule the world! Like most things, people assume this is a very difficult recipe, but it's not. Of course you don't have to tell them. I learned how to make this from my Grandmother Florence Lufkin. She would make this every Easter Sunday, and I absolutely loved it.

Traditions are incredibly important in a family. They bring us together and give us a common bond, and I wanted to be able to share this with my family. So at the tender age of 16, I asked Grandmother Florence to teach me how to make it, and I always think of her when I have it. I hope you enjoy it too.

INGREDIENTS:

1 package Devils Food Cake Mix
4 quarts Vanilla Ice Cream
1 quart Orange Sherbet

The most difficult part of this recipe is to find and use the proper sized bowls. I use stainless steel mixing bowls. The larger of the two you will use needs to be the same size as the cake pan you are using for the base, generally 9 inches. Next, you need a smaller mixing bowl that is 4 to 5 inches across, and approximately as deep. In reality, you could use just the one large bowl, but the idea at Easter was to make the middle look like an egg, so the small bowl would hold Orange Sherbet. That fits inside a large bowl of vanilla ice cream, which looks like a big egg when sliced.

Line the inside of the large bowl with heavy-duty tin foil. You will need to put two pieces together to make a piece approximately 2 feet square. Center the foil in the bottom of the bowl, and work your way up the sides, wrapping the leftover foil around the lip of the bowl. **MAKE SURE** that the foil is all pushed down flat because you'll have to peel it off/pick it out of the ice cream later.

Fill your sink at least halfway with very warm water. You will be handling very cold stuff with your hands, and eventually they will become uncomfortable and begin to cramp. Put them in the hot water to soothe the pain and relish its warmth.

Start scooping vanilla ice cream into the large foil lined bowl. Using a spoon or your hands, fill the bottom and start working the ice cream up the sides of the bowl. The idea is to fit the sherbet center inside the vanilla as seamlessly as possible. As you are scooping and forming the ice cream in the large bowl, you will need to place the small bowl inside it making sure the lips of the bowls are at the same elevation. When the bottom is the right thickness, you will need to leave the small bowl in the center of the vanilla ice cream to pack around the center area with the ice cream. Getting the bowl out of the vanilla ice cream may be a problem because the vanilla will have a very strong tendency to stick to the small bowl. To remove the small bowl, pour hot water into it, twist gently, and remove. Once it's removed there will be some liquid in the cavity. Swirl it around a bit, and put the bowl in the freezer immediately.

Rinse and dry the small bowl, and line it with foil, pressing it down flat and smooth. Fill with orange sherbet, and put in freezer.

Mix the cake according to instructions, but put about 2/3 of the mix in one cake pan. This will increase the cooking time by 5 to 10 minutes, so keep an eye on it and test with a toothpick. Remove from pan and cool completely on a wire rack. Put the cake; round side (top) down on a dinner plate then place in freezer for at least an hour.

Once everything is thoroughly cold, it's time to put it all together. Start with the small bowl of sherbet. Remove sherbet from bowl, place on counter, and remove foil. Place it in the cavity of the vanilla ice cream and push down hard with your hands so there will be no air pockets. If there is a significant difference in the elevation between the sherbet and ice cream, you can cut away the extra vanilla, or add extra vanilla ice cream on top of the sherbet to make it level.

Remove the foil and ice cream from the large bowl, and peel back the foil from the edges about 1 inch. Turn upside down, and center the ice cream on top of the frozen chocolate cake. Peel off the foil from the ice cream, and immediately place in the freezer. It's melting!!!

Now it's time to make the meringue, which will cover your masterpiece.

MERINGUE:

9 Egg Whites (large eggs)
¾ teaspoon Cream of Tartar
18 Tablespoons Sugar (1 cup plus 2 Tablespoons)
1 ½ teaspoons Vanilla

In an electric mixer, beat egg whites and cream of tartar together in bowl on high speed until foamy. Beat in sugar one tablespoon at a time until stiff and glossy. Do not be in a hurry! When it supports stiff peaks (tips of peaks stand straight and don't flop over and wilt). Add vanilla and mix another minute or two. This is one of the few recipes that is hard to over mix.

Spread the meringue as evenly as possible over the ice cream/cake dome. Be careful to not leave any gaps, because the meringue acts as an insulation layer so the ice cream does not totally melt.

Place the whole thing in the freezer again.

My Grandmother used to garnish this with a nest of green coconut flakes on top, with a pile of small jellybeans spread about. It looks great and tastes wonderful too, but frozen jellybeans can be tough on dental work.

Put the oven rack on its lowest position and preheat the oven to 500 degrees. Place the Alaska (it's not baked yet) in the oven and rotate it ¼ turn every 15 seconds. It should be done after about 2 minutes. It is done when the peaks are dark brown, and there is light brown on about ½ of the other parts of the meringue. You can serve it now or keep it in your freezer for 3 weeks before serving.

When it's time to serve, have a 2 quart pitcher filled with very hot water standing near by. Use your biggest knife, and soak it in hot water for about a minute. Carve away, but when it starts to become difficult, put the knife in the hot water for 15 seconds or so, and try again.

Feel free to use yellow cake and chocolate ice cream or cherry cake with a mint chocolate chip center. Play with it. Have fun. Grandmother Florence would be proud of you for trying.