



FARMER IN THE FIELD

Smile, It's Strawberry Season

by Bonnie Swank

Dick and I just got back from a NAFDMA advanced learning retreat where we visited the Underwood Family Farms in Moorpark and Somis, California. It's always fun to get together with our peers and share ideas and experiences. We visited the **Hollywood Farmers Market** and sampled many things. The topic of strawberries came up and some of our friends from back East swore their berries were better than the ones we grow in California saying "once you've had one of our strawberries you'll never eat one from anywhere else." Was it loyalty or are their berries better than ours? From what I could gather, the variety they were referring to was

more like the ones you might grow in your backyard, a smaller fruit. Sweeter? I'll probably never know. But I will tell you the strawberries we grow here in California are pretty darn good, and companies like Driscoll's think so too.

We traveled through farmland on our way to Ventura that was so similar to those in Watsonville and Pajaro Valley it was amazing. And what was growing in many of the fields? There were strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, acres and acres of berries. So it is no wonder the Driscoll family chose the Pajaro Valley to start growing berries over a hundred years ago, expanding to Santa Maria in the late 1940s. We truly do live in one of the richest

farming areas in the world. Take a drive and see for yourself.

So why should you eat strawberries? Well, they taste good, the health benefits are many, they are a very versatile fruit, the season is long and they just make you feel good. With their vibrant red color and juicy sweet flavor how could they not make you smile?

What's NAFDMA? Networking Association for Farm Direct Marketing and Agritourism.



~ Bonnie and her husband Dick Swank are owners of Swank Farms in Hollister. To learn more visit SwankFarms.com or contact them at: 851-657-4704.

RICOTTA ORANGE POUND CAKE WITH STRAWBERRIES



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Fennel bulb and fronds
- 1 1/2 cups cake flour
- 2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) butter, room temperature, plus more to grease the baking pan
- 1 1/2 cups whole milk ricotta cheese
- 1 1/2 cups sugar, plus 1 tablespoon
- 3 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 orange, zested
- 2 tablespoons Amaretto
- Powdered sugar, for dusting
- 1 pint strawberries, hulled and quartered or 3 oranges, cut into supremes

DIRECTIONS

Heat grill, slice baguette horizontally down the middle and toast cut side down on grill.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a 9 by 5 by 3-inch loaf pan with butter. In a medium bowl combine the flour, baking powder, and salt. Stir to combine.

Using an electric mixer, cream together the butter, ricotta, and sugar until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. With the machine running, add the eggs 1 at a time. Add the vanilla, orange zest, and Amaretto until combined. Add the dry ingredients, a small amount at a time, until just incorporated. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan and bake until a toothpick comes out clean and the cake is beginning to pull away from the sides of the pan, about 45 to 50 minutes. Let the cake cool in the pan for 10 minutes then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Using a mesh sieve, dust the cooled cake with powdered sugar.

Meanwhile, place the strawberries (or orange supremes) in a small bowl with the remaining 1 tablespoon sugar. Let sit until the juices have pooled around the strawberries.

To serve, slice the cake and serve with a spoonful of strawberries and their juices over the top of the cake.

