



honey cake roll

RECIPE & PHOTO BY ANNA VOLOSHYNA

If you ask any Ukrainian to name their favorite dessert, I guarantee that honey cake will be the most popular answer. In Ukraine, we call it Medovyk, which means "honey cake." This wonderful layered cake has been in our culinary repertoire for at least 100 years and has always stayed in fashion. Since the original recipe is quite labor-intensive, Medovyk is not an everyday dessert. I remember requesting my mom to make it for my birthday and special holiday celebrations, and I would always have it for breakfast the morning after. Since it was such a special treat, my parents never refused me the great privilege of having a slice of lavish honey cake for breakfast. Funny enough, as an adult, I kept the habit. I just added a cup of black coffee to go with my favorite breakfast.

This recipe is the more approachable version of my beloved childhood treat. It has precisely the same frosting and a touch of tart prunes but just one layer of pillowy honey sponge cake rolled in a log to imitate the honey cake layers. I guarantee that the flavor profile is identical to traditional medovyk, but the feather-like texture will surprise you with its incredible lightness. One last note, use the best quality honey you can find, it really matters in this recipe.

Serves 6

FOR THE CAKE

- 4 eggs, room temperature
- 100 g sugar (1/2 cup)
- 50 g honey (1/4 cup)
- 100 g all-purpose flour (3/4 cup)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

FOR THE FILLING

- 3 cups sour cream
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 80 g sugar (1/3 cup)
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 10-12 prunes
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon, for decoration

Preheat oven to 350°.

Cover the prunes with freshly boiled water and let them soak until soft a plump, about 30 minutes. Then drain them, squeeze out all the liquid and set aside.

Line a 15"-x-10" baking sheet with parchment paper and grease with cooking spray.

In a large bowl, beat egg whites with sugar and salt until soft peaks. Add the yolks and beat until incorporated. Add the honey, cinnamon, and baking soda drizzled with lemon juice. Mix well to combine. Then sift in the flour and carefully mix with a spatula with a mixer on low settings.

Pour the batter on greased parchment paper and carefully spread it with a spatula to form an even layer. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes until the cake is golden brown and cooked through.

Remove the cake from the oven and move it onto a large kitchen towel. Cover the cake with another piece of parchment paper sprayed with cooking spray and tightly roll. Secure the roll with a kitchen towel and let it cool to room temperature.

Meanwhile, whip the heavy cream with sugar and vanilla extract until soft peaks. Whisk in the sour cream. Refrigerate until needed.

When ready to assemble the cake, carefully unroll it and remove the top layer of parchment. Spread a thick layer of chilled sour cream frosting, leaving about 1 cup of frosting for decoration. Place a row of prunes 1 inch away from the lower edge of the cake. Gently roll the cake and peel off the bottom layer of parchment. Decorate the top of the roll with the remaining frosting and dust with cinnamon. Refrigerate the cake for at least 4 hours before serving.

Anna Voloshyna was born and raised in Ukraine, living there for twenty years before moving to the United States. She is a photographer and chef specializing in Ukrainian cuisine, and the author of *Budmo! Recipes from a Ukrainian Kitchen* (Rizzoli, 2022).