

Make It Sweet.

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Strawberry Pretzel Surprise Dessert

This is one of those recipes that you can find variations of in probably every church cookbook, grandma's recipe file as well as now on the Internet. There is a reason for that – because it is a really good classic-style dessert. I remembered this dessert (probably from some pot-luck event in my past) and I want to make an updated version of it for the Farm to Plate event coming up in May. Farm to Plate is an annual fundraiser for the Sustainable Food Center here in Austin and it involves a great array of chefs from across the region who come together to make small bites of food using fresh, locally sourced ingredients. First, I needed to make this classic style version to make sure that it was as good as I remembered – and it was. I love the crunchy, salty crust from the pretzels and the sweet luscious cream cheese layer. The classic version is topped with a fruit filled Jell-O mixture. For my updates, I am working on an agar (vegetarian friendly) based gelatin with prosecco for the liquid, seasonal fresh fruit and herbs for the terrine layer as well as using local cream cheese and gluten-free pretzels. I hope you enjoy this old-school classic and then look forward to my updated version that I will send out with a future newsletter.

8 oz Pretzels
6 Tbsp Butter, melted
4 Tbsp Sugar
8 oz Cream Cheese, room temperature
 $\frac{3}{4}$ C Sugar
8 oz Whipped Topping
1 Tbsp Vanilla Bean Paste
6 oz Strawberry Gelatin (I used Jell-O)
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ C Boiling Water
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ C Ice Water
2 Lbs Strawberries, hulled and diced
4 oz Blueberries
8 oz Canned Crushed Pineapple, drained



Crust Layer: In a food processor, pulse the pretzels and sugar together until a very coarse chop. Add the melted butter and pulse until a coarse grind. Press firmly into a parchment lined and greased 9" x 13" x 2" tall baking pan. Bake at 350°F for 10 minutes to set the crust. Allow to cool completely to room temp before adding the cream cheese layer.

Cream Cheese Layer: For the Whipped Topping I used the non-dairy Bettercream that we sell here. I whipped that separately to stiff peaks, added the cream cheese, sugar and vanilla bean paste and mixed until fully incorporated. You can also use Cool Whip style whipped topping and just whip to combine the topping, sugar, cream cheese and vanilla. Spread into an even layer on the cooled pretzel crust being sure the filling goes all of the way to the edges.

Fruit Gelatin Layer: Combine gelatin and boiling water and stir to dissolve. Add ice water and stir. Mix in the fruit when the gelatin is no longer warm to the touch. Tip - if you have your fruit cold from the refrigerator, it will speed-up the setting time of the gelatin. Pour the gelatin mixture over the top of the cream cheese layer and even out the fruit.

Place in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours to set. Cut into pieces, serve and enjoy. Can be stored covered in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.