

genoise

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Genoise

The foundational European sponge: whole eggs and sugar warmed and whipped to a foam, flour folded in, melted butter folded in last. No chemical leavening at all. It is named for Genoa, codified in France, and it is the base of most layered gateaux — [opera cake](#), [black forest cake](#) and the classic fraiser all start here.

A genoise is dry by design. It is built to be soaked.

What makes it work

- **Warm the eggs and sugar to 43 °C over a bain-marie.** Warm egg proteins unfold and whip to three times the volume of cold ones, and the sugar dissolves completely. This step is not optional; it is the difference between a genoise and a flat disc.
- **Whip to the ribbon.** Ten minutes at high speed, until the batter falls from the whisk in a thick ribbon that sits on the surface for three seconds before sinking. Under-whipped is the usual failure.
- **Fold in three additions, from the bottom.** Every fold costs volume. Sift the flour over, cut down through the middle, sweep round the bowl and up.
- **Temper the butter.** Melted butter dropped into a foam collapses it locally. Stir a large spoonful of the batter into the butter first, then fold that back in — and add it last, after the flour.
- **Bake immediately.** The foam starts draining the moment you stop whipping.

Ingredients

One 20 cm round. Serves 10.

- 4 [eggs](#), at room temperature
- 120 g caster sugar
- 120 g cake flour, sifted twice — see [flour](#)
- 40 g unsalted butter, melted and just warm
- 2 g fine salt
- 1 tsp vanilla — see [Pure vanilla extract](#)

Soaking syrup: 100 g sugar dissolved in 100 ml water, plus 2 tbsp kirsch, rum or coffee

Method

Butter and line a 20 cm tin. Heat the oven to **180 °C / 350 °F**.

Whisk the eggs, sugar and salt in a heatproof bowl over — not touching — simmering water until the mixture reaches 43 °C and the sugar has dissolved between your fingers.

Take it off the heat and whip at high speed for 8–10 minutes, until tripled and at the ribbon stage. Whip in the vanilla.

Sift a third of the flour over the foam and fold it in with a spatula. Repeat twice. Stir a large spoonful of batter into the melted butter, then fold that mixture back in.

Pour into the tin and bake **22–25 minutes**, until the top springs back and the edges pull from the sides. Cool ten minutes, turn out, cool completely.

Split into layers with a serrated knife and brush every cut face with syrup before filling.

Notes

- **Always soak it.** An unsoaked genoise tastes dry, because it is. The syrup is a component, not a rescue.
- Chiffon and [other foam cakes](#) hold moisture on their own; a genoise trades that for a fine, even crumb that carves cleanly.
- **Freezes well** unsoaked, wrapped, for three months.

- Sponge fingers and Swiss rolls are the same batter, spread thin — see [swiss roll](#).

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