

## LEMON LAYER CAKE WITH DULCE DE LECHE FILLING

(adapted from *The New York Times*)

¾ cup/170 grams unsalted butter, softened

3 cups/385 grams all-purpose flour

2 cups/400 grams granulated sugar, divided

3 medium lemons

1½ cups/360 milliliters whole milk

2 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

¼ cup/60 milliliters neutral oil (I used grapeseed)

4 large eggs, at room temperature

1 can of La Lechera dulce de leche (you won't use the full amount)

1 recipe for Swiss meringue buttercream, starting with 400g butter (details [here](#))

Heat oven to 325 degrees. Spray three (8-inch) cake pans with baking spray and line each with parchment paper.

Make the cake: Add 350 grams of the granulated sugar to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle, then zest the lemons directly into the sugar. Use your fingers to rub the zest into the sugar until it looks moist and sandy.

Juice the zested lemons into a small bowl. Transfer ¼ cup of juice to a large measuring cup and stir in the milk. Let it sit while you prepare the rest of the cake, reserving the remaining juice for the lemon syrup.

To the bowl with the lemon sugar, add the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt, and mix on low to combine. Add the softened butter to the bowl all at once. Mix on low until the butter is evenly distributed and the mixture looks sandy. Add the oil and eggs to the measuring cup with the milk mixture and mix with a fork to combine. With the mixer on low, slowly stream in the milk mixture. When the batter is moistened, stop the mixer and scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl to ensure there aren't any dry pockets. Adjust mixer speed to medium and mix for 1 minute more. Divide the batter among the prepared pans, spread evenly and tap the pans on a countertop to release any large air bubbles.

Bake the cakes until slightly risen and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes. Set the pans on a wire rack and let the cakes cool for about 15 minutes. Then, run a thin knife along the edges of the pan and carefully turn the cakes out onto the rack to cool completely.

While the cakes cool, make the syrup: Measure ¼ cup lemon juice from the remaining reserved juice. Combine the juice and the remaining 50 grams sugar in a small saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high, stirring occasionally. Cook until the sugar has dissolved, then pour into a heat-safe container to cool.

Make the Swiss meringue buttercream. Reserve 1/3 of the amount without any dye. That will be used as a crumb layer and for the white flowers. Dye a small amount green for the leaves. Dye the rest of the batter yellow.

Assemble the cake: Place one layer of cake onto a serving plate, top side up. Brush the cake with lemon syrup. Spread dulce de leche over the top of the cake. Repeat with the second layer on top of the filling, top side down, and press gently. Add the final layer. Brush the cake with syrup, then cover the top and sides of the cake with a thin layer of frosting.

Refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes. Frost the cake with yellow buttercream, add details on the sides with a comb if so desired. Pipe roses and leaves. A little pumping of gold luster powder is optional but nice...