CAKE

14 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature

2⅔ cups sugar

1½ tablespoons lemon zest

⅓ cup + 2 tablespoons shortening

4 whole eggs

1 egg yolk (reserve egg white for buttercream)

¾ teaspoon vanilla extract

3 cups all-purpose flour, sifted

1¾ teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon kosher salt

½ cup + 2 tablespoons buttermilk

1½ teaspoons lemon extract

Place butter, sugar and lemon zest in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with paddle attachment. Alternatively, use a medium-sized bowl and hand mixer. Cream on a medium speed 1–2 minutes, or until the butter and sugar are evenly combined and smooth. Scrape the bowl. Add the shortening to the cream mixture on medium until combined. Scrape the bowl well. On medium speed, add the eggs and yolk, 1 at a time, allowing each to fully incorporate before adding the next. Then, add vanilla. Scrape the bowl well and mix about for 5–10 seconds, until everything is evenly combined. In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt. Whisk to combine.

In a separate bowl, combine buttermilk and lemon extract. Add half the flour mixture to the batter and mix on low to combine. With the machine running add the buttermilk slowly. Mix on medium until fully combined. Preheat oven to 325°F (convection) or 350°F (still oven). Divide batter between 3 (8-inch) baking pans that have been sprayed with Pam and lined with parchment paper, roughly 2¼ cups per pan. Bake for 25–35 minutes, or until golden brown and fully set in the center. Use a toothpick to check the center. If it comes out clean, the cakes are ready. Cool at room temperature then wrap and refrigerate until ready to stack the cake, at least 2 hours. Prepare at least 2 hours before starting the meringue.

BUTTERCREAM

1½ sticks unsalted butter, room temperature

2¼ cups powdered sugar, sifted

¼ cup heavy cream

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Place butter in the bowl of an electric mixer and cream on medium until smooth and creamy. This should take about 1 minute on medium speed. Scrape the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula.

Add the powdered sugar to the bowl and mix on medium speed for another 2–3 minutes, or until light and fluffy. Scrape the bowl well with a rubber spatula. Slowly incorporate the cream and vanilla extract. Mix to combine, scraping once or twice to make sure there are no thick chunks of butter stuck to the sides.

Use right away, or place in a covered container at room temperature for up to 4 days. This can refrigerate for up to 2 weeks, or freeze up to 2 months. If using after placing in the fridge or freezer, be sure to bring to room temperature first.

HONEY-VANILLA MERINGUE

½ cup water

⅔ cup + 2 tablespoons granulated sugar

3 tablespoons honey

⅓ cup light corn syrup

Pinch salt

¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

4 egg whites

¼ teaspoon cream of tartar

Combine water, sugar, honey, light corn syrup, salt and vanilla extract in a pot. Cook over medium heat to 240°F.
In the bowl of a stand mixer with a whip attachment, combine egg whites and cream of tartar. When the syrup reaches 234– 235°F, turn the mixer on to medium speed. Whip until it starts to form a meringue. With the mixer running on medium-high, pour the syrup slowly down the side of the bowl. Once added, continue to whip until it forms very stiff peaks, but still slightly warm. Use immediately to frost the cake. Remaining fluff can be stored at room temperature up to 2 days or refrigerated up to 1 week.

ASSEMBLY

If the cake layers have a dome to them, trim them flat. Plate the first layer on a cake plate or board that is 10 inches or larger.

Pipe a "well" of vanilla buttercream around the edge of the cake layer. Fill with lemon curd. Stack the next layer on top and repeat. The last layer should be turned upside down and placed on top. Cover the entire cake with a thin coat of buttercream and chill at least 2 hours or up to overnight.

Use the slightly warm meringue to decorate the outside of the cake. Use a blow torch to torch the meringue until it is perfectly golden brown. Serve within 2 days.

LEMON MERINGUE CAKE

By Tiffany MacIsaac, Owner & Chef, Buttercream Bakeshop

MAKES 8–10 SERVINGS

This Lemon Meringue Cake is perfect for spring because it's lighter, filled with flavor—but it's not as rich as buttercream! It's tart and sweet, which makes it really refreshing in the warmer months. You'll love it, and while there are several steps, it is all doable for the home baker. (Recipe continues on the preceding page.)

LEMON CURD

½ cup lemon juice
1½ cups sugar
27 egg yolks (yes, seriously)
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
1 pound unsalted butter, softened

Combine lemon juice and sugar in a pot. Bring to a simmer.

Place egg yolks in a bowl. Slowly pour the hot lemon mixture into the bowl, while gently whisking until combined. Return the mixture to the pot.

Cool over medium heat, stirring constantly with a rubber spatula. Be sure to scrape the bottom of the pot so there is no scorching. Do this until it reaches a simmer. Allow mixture to cook for 3–5 minutes at a low simmer.

Remove from heat and add the vanilla extract. Stir to combine. Once combined, add butter, and allow it to melt into the curd. Whisk smooth or use an immersion blender to smooth. Strain to remove any pieces of cooked egg. Refrigerate at least overnight, up to 1 week.

Prepare at least 24 hours in advance of assembly.

Photos by Mara Oren