

BUONA DOMENICA

Tiramisù

Make tiramisù the day before you plan to serve it. This gives all of its separate, delicious components—the savoiardi, the coffee, the mascarpone pastry cream—the necessary time to settle in together. Good, strong brewed espresso is key; don't use American-style coffee, which is too watery.

To serve, slice the tiramisù into squares and served on a plate, or spoon it into shallow bowls or dessert glasses.

Makes about 10 servings

INGREDIENTS

For the pastry cream:

- 1 cup (240 ml) light cream
- 1/2 vanilla bean
- 6 large egg yolks
- 1/4 cup (50 g) sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

For the mascarpone cream:

- 1 pound (2 cups/454 g) mascarpone
- 1 1/2 cups (350 ml) heavy cream
- 1/4 cup (50 g) sugar

For the coffee dip:

- 1 cup (240 ml) freshly brewed espresso
- 1/4 cup (50 g) sugar
- 1 tablespoon Cognac (optional)
- 1 tablespoon Kahlua (optional)

To assemble and serve:

- 24-36 savoiardi, store-bought or homemade

2 to 3 tablespoons shaved bittersweet chocolate
1/2 cup (50 g) unsweetened cocoa powder

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make the pastry cream. Pour the cream into a medium saucepan and scrape in the seeds from the half vanilla bean. Add the pod and bring just to a simmer over medium heat. Remove from the heat, cover, and let steep for 5 minutes. Discard the vanilla bean pod.

2. Whisk the yolks, sugar, and cornstarch together in a medium bowl until everything is well combined, and the mixture is lightened in color. Slowly dribble the hot milk into the egg yolks, a little at a time, whisking vigorously all the while to prevent the eggs from cooking. Pour the mixture back into the saucepan and cook on low, stirring constantly, until it thickens. This should take about 5 minutes. Once the mixture begins to thicken, stir vigorously; it will thicken fast. Remove it from the heat immediately and stir stir stir to prevent lumps. Pass the cream through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl, cover the surface with plastic wrap, pressing it right on the surface of the cream, and refrigerate until chilled. (If you want to speed up the chilling, you can place the bowl inside a larger bowl filled with ice and stir it until it is cool.)

3. Make the mascarpone cream. Chill a metal bowl and beaters or whisk attachment in the freezer for 10 to 15 minutes. (This will make whipping easier.) Then combine the mascarpone and heavy cream in the chilled bowl and mix on low (be careful for sloshing) until the two are incorporated, then increase the speed and beat until thickened. Pour in the 1/4 cup sugar and whip until stiff.

4. Gently fold (don't stir) the chilled pastry cream into the whipped mascarpone cream, using top-to-bottom strokes to prevent the mascarpone cream from deflating. Cover and place in the refrigerator to keep chilled.

5. Brew the espresso—you may not need a full cup, but it's better to have too much than too little. Stir in 1/4 cup sugar and the Cognac and Kahlua. Let cool to room temperature.

6. Assemble the tiramisù. Use an 8 x 12-inch baking dish for a two-layer tiramisù, or a smaller (8-inch square) vessel for three layers. For a two-layer, you'll need about 2 dozen savoiardi; for a three-layer you'll need about 3 dozen. Have all your components—the mascarpone-pastry cream, the coffee, the savoiardi, and the shaved bittersweet chocolate—ready. Quickly dip the savoiardi, one at a time, into the coffee and arrange them in the bottom of the dish so that they are touching and completely cover the bottom. Don't let the savoiardi linger in the coffee or

they will fall apart. If you like, you can sprinkle a little more coffee on top of the savoiardi after you have nestled them together, but don't overdo it; they will also be absorbing moisture from the mascarpone cream, which will further soften them.

For a two-layer tiramisù, spoon half the mascarpone pastry cream on top of the savoiardi and level it with a spatula. Sprinkle 1 to 2 tablespoons shaved bittersweet chocolate on top. Arrange a second layer of coffee-dipped savoiardi on top, and spread the remaining mascarpone cream on top, smoothing it out evenly (ideally it should reach the top of the dish). If you want to be a little fancier, you can pipe the second layer of mascarpone cream rather than spread it.

For a three-layer tiramisù, arrange a layer of coffee-dipped savoiardi on the bottom of the serving dish and top with 1/3 of the mascarpone pastry cream and about 1 tablespoon shaved chocolate. Make a second layer of coffee-dipped savoiardi, followed by a second layer of mascarpone cream and a second sprinkle of bittersweet chocolate. Add a final layer of coffee-dipped savoiardi and a final layer of mascarpone pastry cream, spreading it out evenly or piping it.

Cover the dish tightly with wrap and place it in the refrigerator overnight. Right before serving, dust the top of the tiramisù generously with cocoa powder. (Don't do this ahead of time, as the cocoa powder will absorb moisture and look splotchy). Serve cold.