

Dessert

No-Bake Boston Cream Pie Strata

Faith Durand "Not Your Mother's Casseroles" - Special to Tribune Media Services
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Servings: 6

20 ounces (4 sleeves) graham crackers

CUSTARD

3 tablespoons cornstarch

2 large eggs

3 egg yolks

5 tablespoons unsalted butter

3/4 cup sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

4 cups half-and-half

2 teaspoons vanilla

CHOCOLATE FROSTING

1/4 cup (1/4 stick) unsalted butter

1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1/4 cup milk

2 cups confectioner's sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Line the bottom of a 9x13-inch baking dish with graham crackers, using about a quarter of them and breaking some in half if necessary. Set aside.

To make the custard. Place the cornstarch in a small bowl. In a second small bowl, whisk together the eggs and egg yolks. Set both bowls aside.

In a deep, heavy saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat and stir in the sugar. Add the salt and half-and-half, and stir. Warm over medium heat until bubbles form around the edges of the liquid. Do not let it boil. When the half-and-half mixture is hot, turn off the heat.

Pour a ladleful of the hot half-and-half mixture into the small bowl holding the cornstarch. Whisk vigorously to combine. The mixture should come together smoothly, with no lumps; if there are any lumps, add a little more liquid and whisk them out. Pour this cornstarch mixture into the beaten eggs. Whisk vigorously to combine.

Pour the egg mixture into the pot. Turn the heat on to medium. Whisk continuously and vigorously, working all of the angles of the pot and scraping the bottom. Continue whisking for about 5 minutes or until the custard becomes very thick and starts to boil, with large bubbles that slowly rise to the surface. Turn off the heat and stir in the vanilla.

Spread one-third of the pudding evenly over the graham crackers. Top with a layer of graham crackers. Spread half of the remaining pudding over that layer. Add a third layer of graham crackers and top with the remaining pudding. Cover the top of the pudding with a final layer of graham crackers. Set aside.

To make the frosting. Melt the butter with the cocoa powder in a small saucepan. Bring to a light simmer over medium-low heat and let it bubble for 1 minute. Whisk in the milk and cook for 3 more minutes, letting the mixture bubble up around the edges. Remove from the heat and beat in the confectioner's sugar with a whisk or hand beater. When the mixture is smooth, beat in the vanilla. While the frosting is still quite hot and liquid, pour it over the top layer of graham crackers and smooth with a hot knife or spatula dipped in hot water.

Cover the layered dessert with a lid or aluminum foil and refrigerate. (if using foil, be careful not to let it touch the top of the dessert, as it will stick to the frosting and spoil the look.) Refrigerate for a minimum of 4 hours and up to 2 days before slicing and serving. Serve chilled.

Per Serving (excluding unknown items): 560 Calories; 21g Fat (32.8% calories from fat); 6g Protein; 90g Carbohydrate; 2g Dietary Fiber; 215mg Cholesterol; 354mg Sodium. Exchanges: 1 1/2 Grain(Starch); 1/2 Lean Meat; 0 Non-Fat Milk; 4 Fat; 4 1/2 Other Carbohydrates.