

about by swapping $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the milk with heavy cream. Even better, with these adjustments, I was able to drop the cornstarch from 3 tablespoons to 2.

And yet something was still missing—some depth and roundness to the chocolate flavor. I thought back to my testing of nondairy liquids. While 8 ounces of coffee had competed with the chocolate, a smaller amount might perfectly enhance its roast-y undertones. I added just $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of espresso powder, and my pudding was finally complete.

With the help of two kinds of chocolate in a goodly—but not lethal—amount, I daresay I had engineered a new classic.

CREAMY CHOCOLATE PUDDING

SERVES 6

We recommend using one of our favorite dark chocolates—Callebaut Intense Dark Chocolate, L-60-40NV, or Ghirardelli Bittersweet Chocolate Baking Bar. If you like, garnish the pudding with whipped cream and chocolate shavings. For our free recipes for Creamy Mexican Chocolate Pudding and Creamy Mocha Pudding, go to www.CooksIllustrated.com/oct11.

- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon espresso powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ($3\frac{1}{2}$ ounces) sugar
- 3 tablespoons Dutch-processed cocoa
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- 3 large egg yolks
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups whole milk
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces
- 4 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped fine

1. Stir together vanilla and espresso powder in bowl; set aside. Whisk sugar, cocoa, cornstarch, and salt together in large saucepan. Whisk in yolks and

cream until fully incorporated, making sure to scrape corners of saucepan. Whisk in milk until incorporated.

2. Place saucepan over medium heat; cook, whisking constantly, until mixture is thickened and bubbling over entire surface, 5 to 8 minutes. Cook 30 seconds longer, remove from heat, add butter and chocolate, and whisk until melted and fully incorporated. Whisk in vanilla mixture.

3. Pour pudding through fine-mesh strainer into bowl. Press lightly greased parchment paper against surface of pudding, and place in refrigerator to cool, at least 4 hours. Whisk pudding briefly and serve.

TASTING

Aerosol Whipped Cream

Whipped cream in a can is convenient, but do the flavor and texture measure up to homemade? After deciding to avoid imitation whipped toppings, we sampled two national brands—Cabot and Reddi-wip—comparing them to home-whipped heavy cream. The results were clear: additives and stabilizers compromise quality. One aerosol brand was too “foamy” and tasters noticed odd off-flavors in both. —Taizeth Sierra

IN A PINCH

REDDI-WIP, Original

Price: \$2.50 for 7 oz

Comments: Although tasters noted “fake” flavors, this brand’s “creamy,” “velvety” texture made it somewhat acceptable.



DON'T BOTHER

CABOT Sweetened Light Whipped Cream

Price: \$2.50 for 7 oz

Comments: With its weird aftertastes and “spongy” consistency, this whipped cream is not an option.

