

Whipped Mascarpone Cream with Marsala and Berries

SERVES 6

TIME: 15 MINUTES

Super-ripe nectarines and peaches are also wonderful served alongside the whipped mascarpone cream. If you don't care for the sherrylike flavor of Marsala wine, you may use a white dessert wine, such as Muscat or Vin Santo, instead. The whipped mascarpone may be prepared up to 24 hours in advance.

- 1 cup heavy cream, chilled
- 1/2 cup (3 1/2 ounces) plus 3 tablespoons sugar
- 8 ounces mascarpone cheese
- 1 1/2 teaspoons grated zest from 1 lemon
- 3 cups mixed berries, such as blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries (if using strawberries, hull and cut them into 1/4-inch-thick slices)
- 2 tablespoons sweet Marsala wine
- Honey for drizzling

1. Place the cream and 1/2 cup sugar in a chilled bowl and beat at low speed until small bubbles form, about 30 seconds. Increase the speed to medium and continue beating until the beaters leave a trail, about 30 seconds. Increase the speed to high and continue beating until the cream forms stiff peaks, about 30 seconds. Transfer the whipped cream to a clean bowl. Place the mascarpone in the bowl used to whip the cream (there's no need to clean the bowl) and beat it at medium speed until aerated and lightened, about 30 seconds. Add the reserved whipped cream and beat at medium speed until incorporated, about 30 seconds. Add the lemon zest and beat at medium speed for an additional 10 seconds. Transfer the whipped mascarpone cream to a

medium bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate until needed.

2. Stir together the berries, remaining 3 tablespoons sugar, and Marsala wine in a small bowl. Let the berries stand until the sugar dissolves, about 5 minutes.

3. To serve, spoon the whipped mascarpone cream into individual bowls and top with fruit. Drizzle honey to taste over each portion. Serve immediately.

CHOCOLATE FONDUE

DIPPING AN ENORMOUS RED STRAWBERRY into a pot of warm melted chocolate is guaranteed to make just about anybody happy. Making a chocolate fondue couldn't be simpler, but we found a few helpful tricks to improve the recipe.

We decided to make the fondue the same way we make chocolate ganache—by simply chopping the chocolate into fine bits, pouring steaming hot cream over it, letting the chocolate fade into the cream, and stirring the mixture before serving. We were positive that if we started with slightly more chocolate than cream, the result would be a thick, velvety chocolate sea into which we could dip our fruit.

Although the fondue was rich and thick, it looked dull and a little tightly wound, so we decided to add corn syrup. With the corn syrup, the fondue became satiny and retained a beautiful gloss. In less than 15 minutes, we had dessert in the fondue pot. Surrounded by strawberries, mandarin oranges, bananas, pineapples, marshmallows, and pound cake, we grabbed our fondue spears and dove into the chocolate pool.

Chocolate Fondue

SERVES 8 TO 10

TIME: 15 MINUTES

The chocolate fondue stays true to the flavor of the unmelted chocolate; therefore, we suggest using a chocolate you like straight from the package. Milk chocolate will produce a mild and sweet fondue, semisweet chocolate will bring a deeper and more bitter flavor to the fondue, and bittersweet chocolate will present a pronounced bitter and even slightly acidic flavor. If you'd like just a touch of bitterness in the fondue, you may combine milk and semisweet or bittersweet chocolates. We recommend about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup bread, cake, or fruit per person. The fruit may be prepared up to 4 hours and the bread and cake up to 1 hour ahead of time. You will need a real fondue pot (with heat source) to keep the chocolate mixture warm and fluid.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

(CHOOSE FROM THE FOLLOWING)

- Angel food cake or pound cake, cut into 1-inch cubes
- French bread or sourdough bread, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 medium-ripe bananas, peeled and cut into 1-inch-thick rounds
- 2 medium mandarin oranges or tangelos, peeled and segmented
- 1 ripe pineapple, quartered, peeled, cored, and cut into 1-inch chunks (see the illustrations on page 404)
- 1 pint raspberries
- 1 quart strawberries, hulled (see the illustration on page 412)

FONDUE

- 12 ounces high-quality chocolate, chopped
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups heavy cream
- Pinch salt
- 1 tablespoon corn syrup

1. Prepare the accompaniments and set them aside.

2. **FOR THE FONDUE:** Place the chocolate in a medium bowl. Bring the cream and salt to a boil in a small saucepan and pour the hot cream over the chocolate. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and allow the chocolate to soften for 3 minutes. Whisk the chocolate until smooth, then add the corn syrup and whisk to incorporate. Transfer the mixture to a fondue pot, warm the pot over the Sterno flame for 5 minutes, and serve immediately with the desired accompaniments.

➤ VARIATIONS

Five-Spice Chocolate Fondue

Follow the recipe for Chocolate Fondue, adding 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon, 5 whole cloves, 1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns, 2 pieces star anise, and 1 (1-inch) piece peeled fresh ginger, cut in half, to the cream and salt mixture. Bring the cream, salt, and spices to a boil, cover, remove from the heat, and steep the spices in the cream for 10 minutes. Pour the cream through a fine-mesh strainer; discard the spices. Return the cream to the pan and bring it back to a simmer. Pour the infused cream over the chocolate and proceed as directed.

Chocolate-Orange Fondue

Follow the recipe for Chocolate Fondue, adding 1 tablespoon grated orange zest to the cream and salt mixture. Bring the cream, salt, and zest to a boil, cover, remove from the heat, and steep the zest in the cream for 10 minutes. Pour the cream through a fine-mesh strainer; discard the zest. Return the cream to the pan and bring it back to a simmer. Pour the infused cream over the chocolate. Add 2 tablespoons orange liqueur, such as Grand Marnier or Cointreau, with the corn syrup and proceed as directed.