

BY JOE GRAY
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CHOCOLATE CUPCAKE PARFAITS

Makes: 6 parfaits

Note: We found the parfaits taste better if assembled one day ahead.

Prep:

Whip 1 cup whipping cream, with 1 to 2 tablespoons sugar, to soft peaks.

Cut tops off 6 cupcakes, slicing them crosswise just below where the top meets the body.

Choose 6 glasses that are wide enough to accommodate the cupcake tops. Instead of traditional parfait glasses, use a straight-sided 10- to 12-ounce drinking glass.

Layer:

Plop about 1/4 cup chocolate pudding in the bottom of each glass.

Nestle the cupcake bottoms into the pudding, pushing in gently so the pudding comes partway up the sides of the cupcakes.

Dollop each with a generous portion of whipped cream, pushing it down around the sides of the cupcake and covering its top.

Dollop on a half-inch layer of pudding.

Gently top with the cupcake tops.

Finish with a dollop each of pudding and whipping cream. Shavings of dark chocolate would be nice as well.

If assembling the parfaits a day ahead, finish the top with the pudding, but don't add the final dollop of whipped cream. (Cover and chill the whipped cream.) Cover the parfaits and chill. When ready to serve, re-fluff the whipped cream a bit with a whisk. Dollop the whipped cream onto the parfaits and serve.

DEEP CHOCOLATE PUDDING

Prep: 15 minutes

Cook: 18 minutes

Chill: 30 minutes

Servings: 4

Note: Adapted from Foodandwine.com.

Ingredients:

1 cup each: heavy cream, whole milk

1 egg, lightly beaten

1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons each: unsweetened cocoa powder, cornstarch

1/8 teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon unsalted butter

3 ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped

Directions:

1. Whisk the cream, milk and egg in a medium saucepan. In a bowl, whisk together the sugar, cocoa, cornstarch and salt; add mixture to the saucepan. Heat to a boil, whisking constantly, over moderately high heat. Strain the pudding into a bowl. Stir in the butter and chocolate until melted.

2. Pour pudding into a glass bowl to cool. Press plastic wrap directly on the surface of the pudding; refrigerate until chilled, about 30 minutes.

Nutrition information:

Per serving: 521 calories, 41 g fat, 25 g saturated fat, 153 mg cholesterol, 39 g carbohydrates, 8 g protein, 141 mg sodium, 3 g fiber.

CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

Prep: 20 minutes

Cook: 18 minutes

Makes: 18 to 20 cupcakes

Note: Author Nick Malgieri outlines how to turn any of his cake recipes in "Bake!" into cupcakes. This recipe applies those guidelines to his chocolate butter cake. Malgieri advises coating the top of the pans with cooking spray or butter so that the cupcake tops don't stick if they spread (and, remember, we want them to spread for the parfaits to get broad tops). The directions are for a stand

medium-low; beat in 1/4 cup milk.

5. Repeat step 4, including the change of speed, two more times.

6. Stop and scrape; beat in the remaining flour mixture. Scrape again. Increase the speed to medium; beat 3 minutes.

7. Divide the batter among the lined pans, filling the cups to the top. Bake, 15-20 minutes. Cool before proceeding with parfait. (Enjoy remaining cupcakes as you like.)

Nutrition information:
Per serving: 206 calories, 10 g fat, 6 g saturated fat, 47 mg cholesterol, 27 g carbohydrates, 3 g protein, 128 mg sodium, 1 g fiber.



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