

Chocolate Pots de Crème

SERVES Serves 8

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

For a pots de crème recipe that would deliver a decadent dessert with a satiny texture and an intense chocolate flavor, we moved the dish out of the oven and took an unconventional approach: cooking the custard on the stovetop in a saucepan, then pouring it into ramekins. For the chocolate flavor we wanted, we favored bittersweet chocolate over milk and semisweet chocolate, which we judged to be too mild. At 10 ounces, the chocolate content in our pots de crème was at least 50 percent higher than in any other dessert recipe we've encountered.



INGREDIENTS

Pots de Crème

- 10 ounces bittersweet chocolate (see note above), chopped fine
- 5 large egg yolks
- 5 tablespoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon table salt
- 1 ½ cups heavy cream
- ¾ cup half-and-half
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon instant espresso powder mixed with 1 tablespoon water

Whipped Cream

- ½ cup heavy cream (cold)
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Garnish (optional)

- Cocoa powder for dusting

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

***** We prefer pots de crème made with 60 percent cocoa bittersweet chocolate (our favorite brands are Ghirardelli and Callebaut), but 70 percent bittersweet chocolate can also be used. If using a 70 percent bittersweet chocolate (we like Lindt, El Rey, and Valrhona), reduce the amount of chocolate to 8 ounces. A tablespoon of strong brewed coffee may be substituted for the instant espresso and water. Covered tightly with plastic wrap, the pots de crème will keep for up to 3 days in the refrigerator, but the whipped cream must be made just before serving.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 FOR THE POTS DE CRÈME: Place chocolate in medium heatproof bowl; set fine-mesh strainer over bowl and set aside.

2 Whisk yolks, sugar, and salt in medium bowl until combined; whisk in heavy cream and half-and-half. Transfer mixture to medium saucepan. Cook mixture over medium-low heat, stirring constantly and scraping bottom of pot with wooden spoon, until thickened and silky and custard registers 175 to 180 degrees on instant-read thermometer, 8 to 12 minutes (see photos, below). Do not let custard overcook or simmer.

Chocolate shavings for sprinkling

3 Immediately pour custard through strainer over chocolate. Let mixture stand to melt chocolate, about 5 minutes. Whisk gently until smooth, then whisk in vanilla and espresso. Divide mixture evenly among eight 5-ounce ramekins. Gently tap ramekins against counter to remove air bubbles.

4 Cool pots de crème to room temperature, then cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until chilled, at least 4 hours or up to 72 hours. Before serving, let pots de crème stand at room temperature 20 to 30 minutes.

5 **FOR THE WHIPPED CREAM:** Using hand mixer or standing mixer fitted with whisk attachment, beat cream, sugar, and vanilla on low speed until bubbles form, about 30 seconds. Increase speed to medium; continue beating until beaters leave trail, about 30 seconds longer. Increase speed to high; continue beating until nearly doubled in volume and whipped cream forms soft peaks, 30 to 45 seconds longer.

6 Dollop each pot de crème with about 2 tablespoons whipped cream; garnish with cocoa or chocolate shavings, if using. Serve.