
♦ Chocolate Cream Pie ♦

Do not combine the yolks and sugar in advance of making the filling or the sugar will begin to denature the yolks, and the finished cream will be pitted. I prefer to use Ghirardelli chocolate; semisweet chips (6oz) and unsweetened blocks (1oz). A note about tempering -- it's best done as a two-person job, with one to pour and one to whisk. Don't stop whisking until the mixture is smooth; if you let it curdle it will ruin the filling.

INGREDIENTS

Chocolate Cookie Crumb Crust

16 Oreo cookies (with filling), broken into rough pieces, about 2 1/2 cups
2 tablespoons unsalted butter melted and cooled

Chocolate Cream Filling

2 1/2 cups half-and-half
pinch table salt
1/3 cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
6 large egg yolks at room temperature (protein strands removed)
6 tablespoons unsalted butter (cold), cut into 6 pieces
6 ounces semisweet chocolate finely chopped
1 ounce unsweetened chocolate finely chopped
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Whipped Cream Topping

1 1/2 cups heavy cream (cold)
1 1/2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

1. For the Crust: Adjust oven rack to middle position and preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In food processor fitted with steel blade, process cookies with 15 one-second pulses, then let machine run until crumbs are uniformly fine, about 15 seconds. (Alternatively, place cookies in large zipper-lock plastic bag and crush with rolling pin.) Transfer crumbs to medium bowl, drizzle with butter, and use fingers to combine until butter is evenly distributed.
3. Pour crumbs into 9-inch Pyrex pie plate. Press crumbs evenly onto bottom and up sides of pie plate. Refrigerate lined pie plate 20 minutes to firm crumbs, then bake until crumbs are fragrant and set, about 10 minutes. Cool on wire rack while preparing filling.
4. For the Filling: Bring half-and-half, salt, and about 3 tablespoons sugar to simmer in medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally with wooden spoon to dissolve sugar.
5. Stir together remaining sugar and cornstarch in small bowl, then sprinkle over yolks and whisk, scraping down sides of bowl, until mixture is glossy and sugar has begun to dissolve, about 1 minute.
6. When half-and-half reaches full simmer, drizzle about 1/2 cup hot half-and-half over yolks, whisking **constantly** to temper; then whisk egg yolk mixture into simmering half-and-half (mixture should thicken in about 30 seconds). Return to simmer, whisking constantly, until 3 or 4 bubbles burst on the surface and mixture is thickened and glossy, about 15 seconds longer.
6. Off heat, whisk in butter until incorporated. Add chocolates and whisk until melted, scraping pan bottom with rubber spatula to fully incorporate.
7. Stir in vanilla, then immediately pour filling into baked and cooled crust. Press plastic wrap directly on surface of filling and refrigerate pie until filling is cold and firm, about 3 hours.
8. For the Topping: Just before serving, beat cream, sugar, and vanilla in bowl until it reaches your preferred thickness for whipped cream. Spread or pipe over chilled pie and serve.