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A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.**

December 2021

LITTLE CHOCOLATE TREASURES:

- British Chocolate Batter Pudding**
- Chocolate – Butterscotch Custard Sauce**
- Chocolate Cream with Strawberries**
- Mexican Sweet Cream and Chocolate**
- No-Cook Chocolate Chews**
- White Chocolate – Peppermint Bark**

The decision by nutritionists and the medical profession that chocolate is not just an indulgence but that the phenolics which it contains, the same phenolics found in coffee and tea, can lower the risk of heart disease is welcomed with enthusiasm by anyone who has indulged. The guilt was removed from our pleasure. In addition, the fact that it has also been proven that chocolate can prevent plaque from forming on teeth by creating a coating on the teeth, there is less reason to ration those chocolate recipes to special occasions and holidays, and less reason to associate chocolate with the adjective decadent.



Ignacio Davila Garibi, a Mexican philologist, possets that the word chocolate derives from the Spanish name for the treasure to which the Spanish were introduced by the Aztecs. *Chokola*, a Mayan verb which means “to drink chocolate together,” or the Mayan noun *chocol* could well be the source of the Spanish *chocolaté* and the English chocolate.

We praise the superiority of Swiss, Dutch, and Belgian chocolate but all the fine chocolate found in Europe and beyond could not tempt us if chocolate had not been introduced to the Spanish explorers by the Aztecs. Chocolate’s history, however, is known to go back far before the Aztecs. Mayan artifacts reference the fruit of the cacao as early as 1,900 BC, the



period of the Olmec civilization. Incidentally, the Aztecs had to import cacao because their empire was located in the Mexican highlands at too high an altitude to enable cultivation. Actually the growing and consumption of *chocol* has enabled the understanding of the massive trade society that was the Aztec Empire.

The sweetening of the bitter product of the cacao tree, *Theobromo cacao*, would make this *chocolaté* the main ingredient in the drink enjoyed by the sixteenth-century European elite.

The powdered product, cocoa, can give you the taste of chocolate but with far fewer fat calories. For many decades Europeans continued to grind the cacao beans on a board used by Central Americans called a *metate* using an instrument much like a rolling pin. The process which can remove approximately fifty-four percent of the cocoa butter by hydraulically pressing it from the beans was



developed in 1828 by Dutch chocolate maker Coernraad J. Van Houten. The remainder of the bean was then ground into a fine powder, the unsweetened cocoa powder. Cocoa was not only a culinary convenience, it could be mixed with sugar and then converted into a sweet solid by reintroducing cocoa butter. Although Torino, Italy, claims the honor of being the first place in Europe to manufacture eating chocolate, once Joseph Storrs Fry, a British candy manufacturer, invented an efficient process in 1949 to pulverize, remove the nibs, and sweeten the powder which then could be solidified by reintroducing the cocoa butter, candy makers all over Europe began to produce chocolates for the masses.

BRITISH CHOCOLATE BATTER PUDDING

TPT - 1 hour and 22 minutes;
30 minutes = cooling period

"Butterflies," a British comedy exported to PBS in the 1970s featured a homemaker, played by Wendy Craig, whose cooking, and especially her "puds," was the weekly joke. Solid lumps of "something" were troweled out to her long-suffering dentist husband and "lay-about" teenage sons.

Her batter puddings never made their own sauce. Our version is based on the classic British batter pudding, but without eggs, using a cake or brownie batter. Just a few technique changes and it becomes a pudding with its own sauce. Served warm or at room temperature, its moist decadence became a comforting family favorite.



BATTER:

1 tablespoon butter—*melted*

3 tablespoons sugar

1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1/2 cup unbleached white flour

1 1/2 tablespoons *unsweetened* dark cocoa powder

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

Pinch salt

1/3 cup skimmed milk

1/4 cup chopped walnuts

3 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons *unsweetened* dark cocoa powder

3/4 cup *boiling* water

Whipped cream, for garnish, if desired

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Prepare a shallow **5-inch soufflé dish**, by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

In a mixing bowl, combine *melted* butter, 3 tablespoonfuls sugar, and vanilla extract. Combine well.

In another bowl, combine flour, 1 1/2 tablespoonfuls cocoa powder, baking powder, and a pinch of salt. Stir to mix thoroughly. Add the flour mixture *alternately* with the milk, to the butter–sugar mixture.

Add nuts. Stir to combine. Set aside briefly.

In the prepared baking dish, combine the remaining 3 tablespoonfuls sugar, 2 tablespoonfuls cocoa powder, and *boiling* water. Stir to combine. Drop the prepared batter mixture—*tablespoonful by tablespoonful*—onto the boiling mixture, spacing the batter mixture to cover the surface of the baking dish. Bake in preheated 325-degree F. oven for 40 minutes. Remove from oven and set aside to cool at room temperature for 30 minutes.



Serve warm, spooning sauce from the bottom of the dish over each serving. Garnish with confectioners' sugar or whipped cream, if desired. Refrigerate leftovers but heat before serving.

Yields 4 servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled, if desired. Use a 1 1/2-quart soufflé dish when doubling.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 5.5 g.; FAT = 10.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 37.5 g.;
CALORIES = 266; CALORIES FROM FAT = 34%

CHOCOLATE – BUTTERSCOTCH CUSTARD SAUCE

TPT - 56 minutes;
40 minutes = chilling period

I believe everything we consume should contribute something to our health. Empty calories are just that . . . empty calories. I also believe that desserts should contribute to that profile. While in my local supermarket, I picked up a jar of butterscotch/caramel sauce and read the ingredients only to find that it could contribute nothing to our meal other than an indulgence in goo and calories that we would have to loose somehow. This chocolate-butterscotch sauce gives you the goo but it also contains eggs and the dairy protein of light cream. Maybe this is not a nutritional slam-dunk but it does redeem itself.

**1/2 cup light cream or half and half
2 tablespoons unsweetened dark cocoa powder**

1/2 cup dark brown sugar

6 tablespoons fat-free pasteurized eggs

**1 tablespoon butter
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

In a saucepan set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, combine cream and cocoa powder. Using a wire whisk, combine thoroughly.

Add brown sugar and stir with the whisk until the sugar is dissolved.

Add pasteurized eggs and cook, stirring *constantly*, until mixture is smooth and thickening.

Add butter and vanilla extract. Continue stirring until the butter is dissolved and the sauce is shiny and smooth. Turn into a serving bowl or sauceboat. Refrigerate for at least 40 minutes before serving.

Serve chilled over canned cherries, ice cream, or pound cake. Refrigerate leftovers.



Yields 1 1/2 cupfuls

1/6 SERVING (about 2 tablespoonfuls) –
PROTEIN = 2.6 g.; FAT = 4.1 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 20.8 g.;
CALORIES = 130; CALORIES FROM FAT = 28%

CHOCOLATE CREAM WITH STRAWBERRIES

TPT - 12 minutes

Strawberries dipped in sweetened whipped cream; strawberries encased in coating chocolate; strawberries dripping with chocolate fondue . . . Well, here is a new, simple, quick, fun dessert in the same vein.

**1/2 cup fat-free sweetened condensed milk
2 tablespoons chocolate syrup**

1/4 cup heavy whipping cream

**20 large, perfect strawberries with leaves attached
—washed and patted dry**

In a glass measuring cup, combine sweetened condensed milk and chocolate syrup. Using a wire whisk, combine thoroughly.

Using an electric mixer fitted with *chilled* beaters or by hand, using a *chilled* wire whisk, beat heavy cream in a *chilled* bowl until stiff. Pour milk-syrup mixture down side of bowl into stiffly whipped cream. *Whisk-fold* stiffly whipped cream gently, but *thoroughly*, into milk-syrup mixture.

Divide chocolate cream mixture among **four 3-ounce soufflé dishes** or other small dessert dishes. Set on a dessert plate. Surround each serving with five strawberries and provide a cocktail fork and a spoon for each diner.

To eat, secure the cocktail fork under the strawberry leaves and dip strawberries into chocolate cream. Spoon out any residual chocolate cream.

Yields 4 individual servings

Note: This recipe may be halved, doubled, or tripled, when required.

**1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 4.4 g.; FAT = 5.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 33.2 g.;
CALORIES = 211; CALORIES FROM FAT = 24%**



MEXICAN SWEET CREAM AND CHOCOLATE *Dulce Crema con Chocolate*

TPT - 3 minutes

Sometimes a Mexican dinner begs for a sweeter finish than just fruit. A milk sweet, known as “dulce de leche,” is found all over South and Central America. It is most often sweetened goats’ milk which we have found takes some real getting used to. This dessert was evolved to be a more sophisticated version of the goats’ milk sweet but with the gentle richness of cows’ milk and with the added touch of cinnamon and chocolate, common in Mexican cooking.

**1 cup cold light cream or half and half
1/2 cup chilled, fat-free sweetened condensed milk
2 tablespoons chocolate syrup—commercially-available or homemade, as preferred
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

4 whole cinnamon sticks, for garnish

In the container of the electric blender, combine *cold* cream, *chilled* sweetened condensed milk, chocolate syrup, and vanilla extract. Blend until foamy.

Divide among four *demitasse* cups or chocolate pots (*chocolateras*). Insert a cinnamon stick stirrer in each cup.*

Serve at once, with an assortment of fresh fruit.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: *Cinnamon sticks need not be discarded after dessert is finished. Retrieve, rinse well, dry thoroughly, and save in a sealed plastic bag for future use.

If the stronger cinnamon flavor of Mexican coffee is desired, a pinch of cinnamon may be added to the other ingredients before blending.

This recipe may be halved or doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 5.4 g.; FAT = 6.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 32.8 g.;
CALORIES = 249; CALORIES FROM FAT = 22%

NO – COOK CHOCOLATE CHEWS

TPT – 8 hours and 17 minutes;
8 hours = drying period

. . . a low-fat but rich tasting chocolate candy that is fun to make? Believe me, these are low-fat and they are truly wonderful; I've made them every Christmas since the 1960s! This is a recipe to assign to budding cooks at holiday time. Any problems are easily rectified and, if your young cooks are anything like our young cook, they will go on to all manner of truffles, brittles, and so forth.

1 tablespoon butter—softened to room temperature

1/4 cup light corn syrup

**1 ounce (1 square) unsweetened chocolate—melted
over hot water**

1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar

6 tablespoons non-fat dry milk powder

In the work bowl of the food processor fitted with steel knife, combine *softened* butter, corn syrup, *melted unsweetened* chocolate, and vanilla extract. Process until smooth.

In a mixing bowl, combine confectioners' sugar and dry milk powder. Gradually work mixture into chocolate mixture. *Machine-knead* until thoroughly blended.

Roll kneaded mixture into 3/4-inch rolls on a *cold*, smooth surface such as a pastry marble or granite- or quartz-surfaced countertop or table. Cut into 1-inch pieces. Spread on waxed paper and allow to dry for about 8 hours.

Store in an airtight tin with waxed paper between layers.

Yields about forty-two 1-inch pieces

Notes: Of course, this recipe may be prepared by hand if a food processor is unavailable. Be careful to knead thoroughly until mixture is very smooth.

This recipe can be doubled easily.

1/42 SERVING (i. e., per piece) –
PROTEIN = 0.8 g.; FAT = 0.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 7.3 g.;
CALORIES = 37; CALORIES FROM FAT = 15%



WHITE CHOCOLATE – PEPPERMINT BARK

TPT - 8 hours and 27 minutes;
8 hours = hardening period

Invited to a neighborhood open house the week after Christmas, I chose to take a food gift to the hostess. Several neighbors moved across the room to be closer to this confection and it was consumed before we had all said our goodbyes. I had made it many times before to include in cookie/confection tins that I had given as gifts but never did I know how well it had probably been received.

If you want that soft, rich mouth-feel, choose good quality white chocolate. Remember legitimate white chocolate, according to 2004 regulations, must contain 20% cocoa butter, 14% total milk solids, 3.5% milk fat, and no more than 55% sugar or other sweeteners. If you want a hard bark, choose white coating “chocolate” disks, such as those sold by Merkens. The coating chocolate confection will harden more quickly.



3 cups (about 22 ounces) white chocolate

1 1/2 cups crushed peppermint candy canes

Line a baking pan with raised sides or a jelly-roll pan with waxed paper. Place in a warm oven (170 degrees F.) to heat the pan.

Break the bars of chocolate into small pieces and place in the top half of a double boiler set over simmering water. Set over MEDIUM heat and heat until chocolate is melted. Stir to smooth out any chunks which remain. Remove pan to stove top. Pour the chocolate onto the waxed paper-lined pan, spreading it smoothly to a depth of about 1/4 inch.

Scatter crushed peppermint over the chocolate. Carefully press it gently into the hot chocolate. Set aside until bark hardens—about 8 hours.

Place the chocolate bark on a breadboard. Break or cut the chocolate bark block into bite-sized pieces.*

Transfer pieces of bark to a tin. Place pieces of waxed paper between the layers. Store in cool place.

Yields about 60 pieces

Notes: *Tiny pieces left behind can be saved and used as a dessert garnish during the holidays.

Although this recipe can be halved, all sixty pieces of candy will undoubtedly disappear over the holidays . . . trust me.

1/60 SERVING – PROTEIN = 0.6 g.; FAT = 4.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 10.2 g.;
CALORIES = 83; CALORIES FROM FAT = 49%



*As we downsize, food presentation can sometimes be an afterthought.
I find ramekins, big ones and small ones, can be of use.
Convenience aside, there is a certain elegance in a ramekin presentation,
a certain “special-for-you feeling.”
In January I’ll share some of my ideas. Happy New Year,*

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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