

An Unlikely Culinary Column: Summer Sweets and Treats

By Karen Kain

For some reason this summer I have been cooking an abundant amount of sweet recipes. As most of you know I try to steer away from baking. I guess my fear is that I will gain weight cooking sugary and fatty foods. I have discovered that the sweeter the treat the quicker it disappears, eliminating that over eating temptation. I have been enjoying experimenting with some nectarous recipes that I am excited to share with you. Needless to say I don't think my husband is too upset about it.

Weeks ago we picked huckleberries. I was surprised how early they were ripening and was quickly reminded just how small those precious delicacies are. I felt a bit overwhelmed with my desire to harvest gallons, but left feeling satisfied having picking a few cups. This Huckleberry-Pecan Galette is a great recipe, because it calls for a small amount of berries and is a no fail in presentation; the more messed up the better. For this recipe you can substitute blueberries in lieu of huckleberries.

Now for the Homemade Dulce de Leche. I have been buying this sweet caramel addicting goo from a young lady in Astoria, Oregon. Her name is Mary and she is also known as "Mary of Mary's Milk Monsters." She raises and milks goats, and makes just about everything you can with the milk, even repurposing the feedbags to make purses. You can find her on the pier selling her goat's milk, cheese and soaps when the cruise ships come into Astoria. A few years back she sold me some Dulce de Leche and since then, I haven't left Astoria without picking up a few jars to take home with me. It is a blessing and a curse learning how to make this addicting caramel treat. Sure, you can eat it by dipping it with apples, or putting it on almost anything, but in all honesty we typically eat it off the spoon. I have also discovered the "Cheaters Dolce" recipe, which is much easier and equally as decadent. We asked our neighbors to taste test the two Dulces and a few preferred the cheaters version, but I still love the Dulce de Leche from

goat's milk. One gallon of goat's milk makes only two cups of caramel, which is probably a good thing. Please let me know if you try this recipe. I also want to thank Pam Brisk for her fresh goat's milk and coaching in all things.



Huckleberry-Pecan Galette

Ingredients:

Dough

- ½ Cup pecans
- 1 Cup plus 2 Tbsp all-purpose flour
- 2 Tsp sugar
- ½ Tsp salt
- ¼ Tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ Cup (1 stick) chilled unsalted butter cut into pieces

Filling

- 12 Ounces huckleberries (about 2 cups)
- 1 Tbsp cornstarch
- 1 ½ Tsp fresh lemon juice
- ¼ Cup sugar, plus more for sprinkling
- 2 Tbsp milk or cream
- Flour for dusting

For the Dough - Preheat the oven to 350° F. Toast the pecans on a baking sheet until they are fragrant and starting to darken, about 15 minutes, then allow to cool. Put the pecans into a food processor and pulse until they resemble a coarse meal. Add the flour, sugar, salt and cinnamon and pulse to fully combine. Add the butter and pulse until the mixture looks like a coarse meal. Slowly drizzle with 4 tablespoons ice water and pulse into a ball. Add more water if needed. Do not over blend. Remove the dough and place onto a sheet of plastic wrap then pat into a 6-inch flat disk. Wrap in the plastic and chill for at least 1 hour. You can make the dough 2 days ahead of time.

For the Filling - Preheat the oven to 375° F. Mix the berries with the cornstarch, lemon juice and sugar. Roll the dough out onto a floured surface, and then flatten into a 12-inch round. Gently transfer to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Put the berries

in a mound on the center of the dough leaving a 2-inch border. Fold the edges over, and brush with milk and sprinkle with sugar. Bake until the crust is dark golden brown and the filling is bubbling about 45-50 minutes.

Homemade Dulce de Leche

Ingredients:

- 1 to 2-inch segment of vanilla bean (optional) *
- 1 Quart whole milk, I used goat's milk
- 1 Cup granulated sugar
- 1 (2-inch) segment of cinnamon stick (optional)
- ¼ Tsp coarse or flaky sea salt
- ¼ Tsp baking soda dissolved in 2 teaspoons water

Directions:

Split the vanilla bean lengthwise and scrape out the seeds then place them, along with the empty vanilla pod, milk, sugar, cinnamon and salt in large stockpot. Bring the mixture to a simmer. Remove the pot from the heat and slowly stir in the baking soda-water mixture — it's going to foam up if you are using goat's milk, due to the acidity. This is why we use a larger pot.

Return the mixture to the stove and keep it on a medium simmer. If it is too hot, the mixture will boil over, if too low, it will take forever. Cook, checking in on it occasionally (every 15 minutes) to give it a stir to make sure nothing is sticking to the bottom, until the mixture turns a light brown, about 1 hour.

After an hour of cooking check in on it and stir more frequently, this entire process took me about an hour and a half. Once it begins to take on a

caramel-brown color and thickens to the consistency of maple syrup. The last 30 minutes you need to keep your eye on it and stir quite often, making sure it doesn't burn until it reaches a deep copper color.

Once the Dulce is thick and deep in color remove from the heat and you can use it immediately. Once chilled the mixture will become thicker. This is simply a delicious treat whether you eat it from the spoon or serve it over desserts or fresh fruit.

* If you don't have a fresh vanilla bean, stir in 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract right before straining and cooling it.

The Cheaters Dolce

Ingredients:

- 1 can of sweetened condensed milk

Directions:

Many recipes suggest that you put the sealed can (without the label) directly into the crock-pot and cover it with water and cook on low for 10 hours. I did not feel comfortable cooking the dulce in the can so I used sterilized mason jars. Make sure to seal the lid on tight and cover with a few inches of water then let the dulce cook for 10 hours on low. You can check the consistency of the dulce after 8 hours. The water will be hot so use tongs to remove the jars. I was eager to taste the dulce so I put the crock-pot on high for an hour to rush the cooking process. The caramel will be thick and when you put it in the refrigerator it will get thicker. This will last stored in your refrigerator for up to 4 weeks.

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