

FOOD & DINING

Do dessert at home this Valentine's Day



Dining out is a Valentine's Day tradition. Couples new and old typically make Valentine's Day into date night at nice restaurants, making this holiday that much more special.

Couples who want to add a special twist to Valentine's Day date night can enjoy a nice meal out before returning home for some homemade dessert. Whether couples prepare it together or surprise their significant others, the following recipe for "Coffee Crisp" from Bob Blumer's "Surreal Gourmet Bites" (Chronicle Books) can make for the perfect ending to a Valentine's Day date night.

Coffee Crisp
Yields 12 bites

- 6 egg yolks
- 8 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons instant espresso or coffee powder
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 300 F.

In a medium bowl, whisk egg yolks and 6 tablespoons of the sugar for 1 minute, or until smooth and pale yellow in color. Reserve.

In a second medium bowl, add espresso granules and 1/4 cup of the cream. Whisk until smooth, then add remaining cream and vanilla, and whisk until well blended.

Very gently, fold espresso cream mixture into egg yolks.

Use a ladle to pour custard mixture into espresso cups, filling them three-fourths of the way to the top.

Place cups in a baking dish or roasting pan and transfer to oven. Fill a pitcher with warm tap water. Before closing oven door, pour water into pan (but not into the cups themselves!) until it reaches halfway up the sides of the cups.

Bake for 40 minutes, or until the custards jiggle just slightly when you shake the pan. Remove pan from oven and leave out on counter, allowing the residual heat of the water to finish the cooking process.

When custards have fully solidified, refrigerate for 2 hours

Just before serving, sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon of sugar evenly overtop each custard. Use a small blowtorch to caramelize the sugar. Alternatively, place cups 1 inch below oven broiler under a watchful eye for approximately 2 minutes, or until sugar caramelizes.

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