

CHOCOLATE

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1. Place the almonds in a heat-proof bowl. Bring a cup or two of water to a boil in a small pot and pour over the almonds. Allow to sit for 45 seconds to 1 minute, but no more. Drain the almonds. Remove the peels by rubbing them.

2. Place the almonds and the confectioners sugar in a food processor and pulse on and off until finely ground. Add the salt and ½ stick (4 tablespoons) of the butter and process until smooth. Beat 1 of the eggs in a small bowl and add half of it to the mixture (you can discard the remaining ½ egg). Mix together the flour and cocoa powder and add 1/3 of this combination to the almond-butter mixture; mix just until incorporated. Mix in the second portion of flour until incorporated. Add the remaining third of the flour in short pulses, just barely mixing it. Do not overmix.

3. Place the dough on a large sheet of plastic wrap. Flatten it out into a 1-inch-thick disk. Wrap and refrigerate for at least 3 hours before baking.

4. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.

5. On a lightly floured work surface, roll the dough into a 12-inch circle, about ¼-inch thick. With a fork, poke holes in the dough. Smear the remaining 2 tablespoons of room-temperature butter all around the inside of a 9-inch pie plate. Carefully lay the dough into the pie plate and press it into place. Using a knife, trim the extra dough from the top edge, if any. Place the shell in the freezer for 10 minutes.

6. Cover the cold shell with a piece of parchment paper and fill it with dry beans or pie weights. Bake for 20 minutes.

7. While the tart dough is in the oven, make the filling: Puree 2 pounds of the strawberries and the granulated sugar in a blender until smooth and pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer. Microwave the chocolate on high, at 30-second intervals, stirring in between, until melted.

8. Pour the strawberry puree into the chocolate and mix with a whisk. Stir in the heavy cream, whisking constantly. Beat the remaining 2 eggs in a small bowl and add to the chocolate mixture; whisk until combined.

9. After the tart shell has baked, remove the weights and parchment and let cool for a few minutes. Leave the oven on.

10. Pour the chocolate mixture into the shell and bake the tart for 30 minutes, or until the filling is set in the center but not solid. Test for doneness by shaking the pie plate gently; the tart should still jiggle slightly. Allow the tart to cool.

11. Finish the tart by arranging the remaining fresh strawberries on top.

Per serving: 391 calories; 28 g fat; 15 g saturated fat; 113 mg cholesterol; 6 g protein; 37 g carbohydrate; 24 g sugar; 3



Hillary Levin / St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Raspberry macaroons dipped in chocolate are a modern twist on the traditional Passover dessert.



David Carson / St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Charlotte au Chocolat.

g fiber; 53 mg sodium; 32 mg calcium.

— Recipe from "Sweet Magic" by Michel Richard and Peter Kaminsky

CHARLOTTE AU CHOCOLAT

Yield: 8 servings

34 ladyfingers, see note
3 tablespoons Chambord, Kahlua or coffee
¾ cup water
8 ounces dark chocolate
12 tablespoons butter cut into small cubes
5 eggs
½ cup superfine sugar, see note
Table salt

Raspberries, optional
Pistachios, optional
Fresh mint, optional
Powdered sugar, optional

Notes: Ladyfingers are found in many grocery stores.

• To make superfine sugar, blend granulated sugar in a blender for 10 seconds.

1. Cut out a piece of parchment paper to completely fit the bottom of an 8-inch cake pan (be sure it is at least 2 ½ inches high) or a springform pan. Line the inside rim of the pan with ladyfingers; they will stand up easier if you cut off the rounded part on one end.

2. Combine Chambord, Kahlua or coffee with the water in

a wide bowl. Briefly dip more ladyfingers in the liquid and use them to more or less cover the bottom of the pan. Do not discard the liquid.

3. Melt the chocolate in a double boiler. Stir in the butter until completely blended.

4. Separate the eggs, keeping certain not to let any of the yolk get into the whites (it's best to crack each egg over a small bowl to catch the whites and pour each white into a larger bowl; that way you won't ruin more than 1 egg). Whisk 3 of the yolks in a large bowl with the sugar until the mixture whitens. Reserve the other yolks for future use. Add the chocolate mixture to the yolks and thoroughly mix.

5. Whisk or beat the whites with a pinch of salt until they form stiff peaks. Gently fold the whites into the chocolate mixture until just thoroughly combined. Pour, spoon or pipe half of the chocolate mousse into the mold. Dip more ladyfingers into the liquid and create another layer on top of the mousse. Top with the remainder of the mousse. Refrigerate at least 3 hours.

6. To serve, invert the mold onto a large plate — the mousse should be set enough that it will not slip. Remove the parchment paper and then invert this plate back onto a serving platter. Decorate with raspberries, pistachios, leaves of mint or powdered sugar, if you wish.

Per serving: 484 calories; 37 g fat; 21 g saturated fat; 239 mg cholesterol; 33 g protein; 36 g carbohydrate; 24 g sugar; 2 g fiber; 96 mg sodium; 52 mg calcium

Raspberries, pistachios, mint and powdered sugar are not included in analysis.

— Translated from a recipe by Olivier Berte.

CHOCOLATE ECLAIRS

Yield: 20 servings

1 stick (4 ounces) unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces
1 cup water
¼ teaspoon salt
1¼ cups all-purpose flour, divided
6 large eggs, plus another if needed, divided
1½ cups whole milk
2 large egg yolks
6 tablespoons granulated sugar
2 tablespoons cold unsalted butter
1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
4 ounces good quality dark chocolate or combination milk and dark, finely chopped
½ cup heavy whipping cream

Note: Eclairs are best when served the same day they are filled. They can be stored in a refrigerator, covered with plastic wrap, for up to 3 days; however the pastry will absorb moisture from the filling and eventually become soggy. The chocolate glaze can be prepared and refrigerated up to 1 week in advance (reheat over a double boiler); the pastry cream can be stored up to 5 days in the refrigerator in an airtight container with a piece of plastic wrap pressed directly on the surface.

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees and position 2 racks in the top and lower thirds of the oven. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper and use a pencil to draw 10 (4-by-1-inch) rectangles on each with a space between each rectangle. Turn the pieces of parchment over.

2. Place a medium saucepan over low heat and add the butter pieces, water and salt. Stir occasionally with a wooden spoon so the butter melts evenly. When the butter has melted, increase the heat and bring to a boil. Immediately remove the pan from the heat and add 1 cup of the flour all at once. Beat vigorously with

the wooden spoon until the dough comes together in a mass around the spoon. Place the pan back over medium heat and continue to cook, beating, for another minute or so to dry out the dough — the pan will have a thin film of dough on the bottom.

3. Transfer the dough to the bowl of a stand mixer. Beat on medium speed for 1 minute to slightly cool the dough and develop the gluten. In a separate medium bowl, beat 4 of the eggs together until you can't distinguish the yellow from the white. With the mixer on medium, add the eggs a couple of tablespoons at a time, allowing each addition to blend completely into the dough before continuing.

4. When all of the eggs are incorporated, the mixture should be shiny and elastic and stick to the side of the bowl. It should also pass the "string test": Place a bit of dough between your thumb and forefinger and pull them apart. The dough should form a stretchy string about 1½ to 2 inches long. If the dough has not reached this stage, beat another egg and add as much as needed, a little at a time, until the dough is finished.

5. Spoon this dough into a pastry bag (or a gallon-sized plastic bag with a small hole cut out in one corner) fitted with a ½-inch plain round tip. Pipe the dough into ½-inch high rectangles to fill each template drawn on the parchment paper. If you don't have a pastry tip, spoon the dough directly onto the templates about ½-inch high.

6. In a small bowl, lightly beat 1 egg to blend thoroughly. Brush a light coating of egg over the tops of the piped dough, being careful that the egg does not drip down the side (it will glue the éclair to the paper). You will not use all the egg. Bake both sheets of the eclairs for 20 minutes; then reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees, switch the sheets between racks and rotate the pans from front to back, and bake for 20 minutes longer. Reduce the temperature again to 300 degrees and bake 10 to 15 minutes longer to dry out the interior. The eclairs should be a deep, golden brown, with no bubbling moisture visible around the sides. Transfer the eclairs to a rack to cool completely.

7. Fill a large bowl with ice and water and set it aside. Pour the milk into a medium saucepan and heat to just below boiling; remove from the heat. In a medium bowl, whisk together the remaining 1 egg, the 2 egg yolks and the sugar until well-blended and smooth. Add the remaining ¼ cup flour and whisk vigorously until the mixture is very smooth. Very gradually, pour about ½ cup of the hot milk into the yolk mixture, whisking constantly to temper the yolks. Slowly pour the yolk mixture back into the hot milk, whisking constantly.

8. Heat this mixture, whisking constantly to prevent the flour from lumping, until it reaches a boil. Continue to cook and whisk for another minute, until the pastry cream is very thick. Remove from the heat and whisk in the 2 tablespoons of cold butter and the vanilla extract.

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