

Chocolate-Three Ways

WRITER/FOOD STYLIST JENNIFER CHANDLER
PHOTOGRAPHER NATALIE ROOT



YOU ARE EITHER A CHOCOLATE LOVER OR NOT. THERE IS NO GREY AREA ON THAT TOPIC. BUT WITHIN THE WORLD OF CHOCOHOLICS, A DEBATE IS ALWAYS BREWING. WHICH CHOCOLATE . . . MILK, DARK OR WHITE . . . IS THE BEST?

Well, basically, it all comes down to a matter of taste.

Most children prefer the milk variety. The sweet, creamy variety is a favorite of kids of all ages. Mostly made for eating, not baking, milk chocolate is chocolate liquor with cocoa butter, sugar, vanilla and milk added.

As we get older, we tend to get more sophisticated in our palate, preferring the richest, darkest chocolate to satisfy our cravings. Like milk chocolate, bittersweet dark chocolate is chocolate liquor with cocoa butter, sugar and vanilla added but without the milk. As the demand for chocolate intensity grows, manufacturers are now offering even richer, 70 percent cacao *extra* bittersweet chocolate baking bars.



MILK CHOCOLATE PUDDING

White chocolate, on the other hand, is really not chocolate at all. Having no chocolate liquor in the ingredient list, white chocolate is a creamy mixture of cocoa butter, milk, sugar and flavorings.

No matter what your preference, there is always a good variety of chocolate temptations from which to choose. Try one of these easy and yummy recipes or just delve into one of those fabulous boxes of assorted chocolates where you can always find the perfect candy to satisfy your chocolate craving.

MILK CHOCOLATE PUDDING

Serves 8

- 1/2 cup plus 2 tbsp. sugar
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tbsp. cornstarch
- 3 1/4 cups whole milk
- 4 large egg yolks
- 2 large eggs
- 8 oz. milk chocolate, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- Whipped cream and raspberries for garnish (optional)

In a large saucepan, place 1/2 cup sugar, the cocoa powder and the cornstarch. Gradually whisk in the milk. Over medium heat, whisk the mixture until it boils and slightly thickens. Remove from the heat.

In a large bowl, whisk the yolks and the eggs. Gradually whisk in the



LEMON LOVERS' WHITE CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

hot milk in a steady stream. Return the mixture to the saucepan, and cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until the mixture thickens. Do not boil. Remove from the heat, and whisk in the chocolate, butter and vanilla until the mixture is smooth. Let cool 10 minutes at room temperature.

Spoon pudding into individual serving dishes and refrigerate until set, at least 2 hours. Garnish with whipped cream and raspberries if desired.

LEMON LOVERS' WHITE CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

Adapted from *Chocolate from the Cake Mix Doctor* by Anne Byrn

Makes 24 cupcakes

For the cupcakes:

- 6 oz. white chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1 package (18.25 oz.) plain white cake mix
- 2/3 cup water
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 3 large eggs
- 2 large egg whites
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. grated lemon zest

For the Lemony White Chocolate Cream Cheese Frosting:

- 6 oz. white chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1 package (8 oz.) cream cheese, at room temperature
- 4 tbsp. (1/2 stick) butter, at room temperature
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. grated lemon zest
- 3 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- White chocolate shavings (optional)

For the Cupcakes:

Place a rack in the center of the oven, and preheat the oven to 350° F. Line cupcake pans with cupcake papers.

Melt the white chocolate in a small glass bowl in the microwave oven on high power for 1 minute. Remove the bowl from the oven, and stir with a small rubber spatula until it is smooth.

Place the cake mix, water, oil, whole eggs, egg whites, lemon juice

and lemon zest in a large mixing bowl. Pour in the slightly cooled white chocolate. Blend with an electric mixer on low speed for 1 minute. Stop the machine, and scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula. Increase the mixer speed to medium, and beat 2 minutes more, scraping down the sides again if needed. The batter should look well combined. Fill the cupcake papers three-fourths full with the batter.

Bake the cupcakes until they are golden brown and spring back when lightly pressed with your finger, about 25 minutes. Remove the pans from the oven, and place them on wire racks to cool completely, about 30 minutes.

For the Lemony White Chocolate Cream Cheese Frosting:

Place the white chocolate in a small glass bowl in the microwave oven on high power for 1 minute. Remove the bowl from the oven, and stir with a wooden spoon or a rubber spatula until it is smooth. Set the chocolate aside to cool.

Place the cream cheese and butter in a large mixing bowl. Beat with an electric mixer on low speed until well combined, 30 seconds. Stop the machine. Add the lemon juice, lemon zest and melted white chocolate, and blend on low speed until just combined, 30 seconds. Add the confectioners' sugar, and blend on low speed until the sugar is incorporated, 30 seconds. Increase the mixer speed to medium, and beat until the frosting is fluffy, 1 minute or more.

Use to frost the top of your cupcakes. Garnish with white chocolate shavings if desired.



CHOCOLATE TRUFFLE TART

Serves 8

- 1/2 cup plus 1 tbsp. butter
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 3/4 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/3 cup sifted unsweetened cocoa powder, plus additional for dusting
- 1 cup flour
- 12 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 1 cup heavy cream
- Caramel sauce and pecan praline for garnish

In a stand mixer with the paddle attachment, cream 1/2 cup of the butter,

the sugar, vanilla and salt until smooth. Add the cocoa powder, and mix well. Add the flour, and mix until incorporated. Transfer the dough to a lightly floured surface, and shape it into a ball. Cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Roll out the dough to about 1/8-inch thick on a lightly floured surface. Line a 9-inch tart pan with the dough, discarding any excess. Bake at 375° F for 15 minutes, or until the dough is set. Cool completely and remove from the pan.

Place the chocolate and the remaining 1 tbsp. butter in a medium-size bowl. Bring the cream to a boil, and pour over the chocolate. Let the mixture stand for 3 minutes, and then whisk until smooth. Pour the filling into the tart shell, and refrigerate for 2 hours.

Dust the tart with cocoa powder. Garnish with caramel sauce and pecan pralines if desired.

TRIPLE-STRIPED CHOCOLATE SEMIFREDDO

From *Four-Star Desserts* by Emily Luchetti

Serves 8

- 5 large egg yolks
- 6 tbsp. granulated sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 1/2 oz. bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 cups heavy whipping cream
- 7 1/2 oz. white chocolate, finely chopped
- 3 oz. milk chocolate, finely chopped

Whisk together the egg yolks, 3 tbsp. sugar and salt in a medium-sized stainless-steel bowl. Set aside.

Fill a medium saucepan one third full of water. Bring the water to a low boil.

In a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan, scald the milk over medium-high heat. Whisk the milk slowly into the egg yolk and sugar mixture. Set the bowl into the saucepan of boiling water. Cook the milk mixture, stirring constantly, making sure to scrape the bottom of the bowl, until it has thickened slightly, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the vanilla. Strain the mousse base into a clean bowl through a medium sieve. Refrigerate until cold.

Line an 8-inch square or 9-inch loaf pan with plastic wrap.

Melt the bittersweet chocolate in a double boiler over hot water. Whisk until smooth. Slowly whisk one half cup of the cold mousse base into the chocolate. Cool.

In a small bowl, whip one half cup heavy cream and 1 tbsp. sugar until soft peaks form. Fold the cream into the chocolate mixture.

Pour the dark chocolate mousse into the prepared pan and freeze.

Prepare the white and milk chocolate mousses separately in the same manner as the dark chocolate mousse, substituting the white or milk chocolate as required. Refrigerate the white and milk chocolate mousses.

When the dark chocolate mousse is firm to the touch (about 30 minutes), spread the white chocolate mousse on top. When the white chocolate mousse is firm to the touch, about 45 minutes after putting it in the freezer, spread the milk chocolate mousse over the white chocolate mousse.

Freeze the semifreddo until hard, at least 4 hours. Unmold the semifreddo, and remove the plastic wrap. Cut into pieces and serve. ●

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