

Gossamer Boston Cream Pie

The Custard Filling

2 teaspoons gelatin
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 cup milk
4 large egg yolks
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar
1¼ cup heavy cream
2 teaspoons vanilla

The Chocolate Glaze

5 ounces semisweet chocolate
½ cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons white corn syrup

The Cake

5 large room-temperature eggs, separated
1 cup sugar
1 cup flour
2 teaspoons vanilla
⅛ teaspoon cream of tartar

Optional Sugar Syrup

1 cup sugar
½ cup water
1 tablespoon rum or other liquer

For the Custard

Make the custard first because it needs to chill before it can be used as a filling.

Chill a bowl and beater. Soften the gelatin in 1 tablespoon of cold water. Bring the milk to the simmer in a 1-quart saucepan.

Beat the egg yolks with the cornstarch until smooth. Very gradually add the sugar while beating. Continue to beat until a ribbon forms when the batter is dropped from the beater.

Gradually add the simmering milk to the egg yolks, beating constantly. Pour the mixture back into the saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly with a whisk until the mixture reaches 165° on a thermometer or until the mixture coats the back of a wooden spoon. Be very careful not to let the mixture boil or it will curdle. Off the heat, stir the softened gelatin into the hot mixture until thoroughly dissolved. Return the mixture to the bowl.

Place the bowl of custard in a larger bowl filled with ice, stirring constantly until the cream reaches room temperature. Remove from the ice. Stir in the vanilla. In the chilled bowl, beat the heavy cream until medium peaks are formed. Place the custard mixture in the bowl of ice again, stirring constantly with a rubber spatula until it just begins to thicken. Do not let it set. Remove from the ice and stir in 1/3 of the whipped cream with the rubber spatula. Fold in the remaining whipped cream. Refrigerate for about 3 hours or until the cream is of spreading consistency—neither runny nor completely set.

For the cake

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter and flour an 9-inch cake pan. In a large bowl, beat the egg yolks until thickened. Gradually beat in 3/4 cup of the sugar, then the vanilla, and continue to beat until the mixture forms a ribbon. Beat the egg whites until foamy and

sprinkle on the cream of tartar. Continue to beat until soft peaks are formed. Gradually beat in the remaining 1/4 cup of sugar until stiff peaks are formed

Stir in 1/3 of the beaten egg whites into the yolk mixture with a rubber spatula. Sprinkle 1/3 of the flour through a sieve into the batter and fold in carefully. Fold in the remaining 2/3 egg whites and flour, alternately by thirds. Pour the batter into the prepared cake pan and bake in the middle level of the oven for about 35-40 minutes. When a cake tester comes out clean, remove the cake to a wire rack, and let cool for ten minutes. Invert onto the rack and let cool completely. When ready to assemble, cut into two equal layers.

Optional Sugar Syrup

Combine the sugar and water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally, until the syrup is clear. Let cool and add the optional liqueur.

For the Chocolate Glaze

Chop the chocolate finely and place in a bowl. Heat the heavy cream with the corn syrup just to the boil, stirring to keep it from boiling over. Reduce the heat and simmer for at least 2 minutes continuing to stir. Gradually pour the hot cream over the chocolate, stirring constantly with a whisk. Cool until it just begins to thicken.

Assembly

If using the sugar syrup, brush it over the cut side of both layers of the cake. Spread the custard filling over the bottom layer of the cake. Carefully place the top layer over it. Pour the glaze over the cake and spread to cover the top. If it runs down the sides, that's fine. Chill the cake over at least 2 hours. Remove from the refrigerator at least 15 minutes before serving.