

Chocolate-Almond Semifreddo

¾ cup raw almonds	1¾ cup heavy cream
1¼ cups sugar	3 tablespoons dark rum
6 tablespoons unsalted butter	¾ cup room-temperature egg whites
10.5 ounces bittersweet chocolate	Pinch of salt
½ teaspoon almond extract	

Line two 8½ x 4½ x 2½-inch loaf pans with enough plastic wrap that there are flaps hanging over the sides.

Place the almonds on a baking sheet, and roast in a 350° oven for about 8 minutes, stirring occasionally until very lightly toasted. Remove from the oven and let them cool.

Place the cooled almonds in the bowl of a food processor along with 2 tablespoons of sugar removed from the 1¼ cups of sugar. Pulse the mixture several times, then process until you get very finely powdered almonds. Add 2 tablespoons of the unsalted butter at room temperature to the almonds, and continue to process until a paste is formed.

Chop the chocolate, and place it in a small saucepan along with the remaining 4 tablespoons of butter, over another kettle of simmering water. Stir the mixture until the chocolate is fully melted and smooth. Set aside to cool. When cool, scrape it into a large mixing bowl. Then stir in the almond extract and the nut mixture until well combined.

In the bowl of a stand mixer, place the room-temperature egg whites, the remaining sugar, and the pinch of salt. Beat the mixture by hand with a whisk for a minute or so until well combined. Place the mixture over, not in, a larger kettle of simmering water. Continue beating with the whisk until the mixture reaches 140°.

Move the bowl to your stand mixture with a wire whip beater. Beat the mixture on high speed until it forms a thick meringue. Continue to beat until it is cooled, 10-20 minutes.

While the meringue is still beating, whip the heavy cream in a chilled bowl with the rum until soft peaks are formed.

Stir in ¼ of the heavy cream into the chocolate-nut mixture, then carefully fold in the remaining cream. When the meringue is cooled, fold in ¼ of it into the mixture, then fold in the remaining meringue until all white spots are gone. Scrape the mixture into the prepared pans, folding over the flaps of plastic. Then cover with another sheet of plastic to be certain the semifreddo is completely enclosed. Freeze the semifreddo over night.

I like to remove the pans from the freezer about 15 minutes before serving. Remove the top layer of plastic, invert the pan onto a tray or platter, and carefully peel off the remaining plastic. You can decorate the loaf with almonds or shaved chocolate. To serve, slice the semifreddo about ½-inch thick.