

TITLE

HAZELNUT AND RASPBERRY BAKED ALASKA

My paternal grandmother loves to cook, and her favourite dessert to make is hazelnut and raspberry meringue. The flavours and textures are lovely, but personally – and many may shoot me down for this! – I am really not a fan of cream! However, I LOVE ice cream and really wanted to create a Baked Alaska recipe, so have combined my grandmother's concept with different techniques. The result is a light and refreshing end to a summer meal. My grandmother approved, so that's good enough for me!

INGREDIENTS

For the vanilla ice cream

- · 140g caster sugar
- · 1½ tsp custard powder
- · 1½ tsp cornflour
- · 500ml full-fat milk
- · 3 egg yolks
- · 1 vanilla pod, split in half lengthways
- · 250ml carton half-fat crème fraîche

For the raspberry sorbet

- 100 g caster sugar
- 200 ml water
- 2 tsp glucose syrup
- 500 g raspberries, (fresh or frozen)
- squeeze of lemon juice

For the hazelnut praline

- 50g/2oz caster sugar
- 100g hazelnuts, chopped

For the hazelnut dacquoise

- 125g/4 ½ oz blanched hazelnuts
- 150g/5 ¼ oz caster sugar
- 12.5g/½ oz cornflour
- 3 large free-range egg whites
- small pinch salt

For the hazelnut meringue

- 4 egg whites
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 175 g caster sugar
- 55 g chopped toasted hazelnuts, browned in the oven

For the hot chocolate sauce

- 175g/6oz plain chocolate, broken into pieces

TITLE

- 50g/1¾oz caster sugar

To assemble and serve

- raspberries
- 60g hazelnut milk chocolate, roughly chopped

Equipment

- 1 litre/1¾ pint pudding basin (20cm/8in in diameter)
- ice cream machine
- food processor
- large baking tray 24 ½ x 34 ½cm (9 2/3 by 13 1/2 inches), 1-cm (3/8-inch) deep

METHOD

1. For the base, line the pudding basin with two layers of cling film, leaving enough hanging over the edge to cover the sides of the basin.
2. **For the vanilla ice cream:** mix the sugar, custard powder and cornflour with 2 tbsp milk to make a thin paste. Beat in egg yolks. Pour the rest of the milk into a pan, scrape in the vanilla seeds, add the pod, then bring to the boil. Pour this slowly over the cornflour mix, stirring all the time as you do so. Clean the pan, then pour the milk mixture and vanilla pod back into it. Cook over a medium heat, stirring all the time, until it just comes to the boil and is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.
3. Remove from the heat, stir in the crème fraîche, then pour into a bowl. Cover with cling film to prevent a skin forming, then leave to cool. Put into the fridge until really cold for at least 4-5 hrs (preferably overnight).
4. Remove the cling film and vanilla pod from the custard, then transfer the custard into a jug. Turn on the ice cream machine, then slowly pour in the custard. Leave to churn for 10-30 mins (depending on your machine). When it stops, spoon into the prepared pudding basin, and press down to get a smooth surface, giving it a few gentle bangs to help remove any air holes. Cover the top with the cling film and return it to the freezer until just firm.
5. **For the hazelnut praline:** Place the sugar and nuts into a saucepan over a medium heat and caramelize gently, stirring to coat the hazelnuts.
6. Once browned, pour the mixture out onto a non-stick baking sheet, spread out and leave to cool. Once cooled and set, very finely chop/crush the praline in a food processor. Keep in an airtight container until needed.
7. **For the raspberry sorbet:** put the sugar, 100ml of the water and the glucose in a saucepan. Dissolve the sugar over medium heat without stirring. Bring to the boil and simmer briskly for 5-7 minutes until the bubbles thicken and become syrupy. Remove from the heat, pour into a bowl and leave to cool.
8. Put the raspberries in another pan. Squeeze some lemon juice over them and simmer over low heat for a minute or two until soft.
9. Put the raspberries in a blender and purée until smooth. Push the purée through a fine sieve to remove all the seeds.

TITLE

10. Add the cooled syrup and remaining water to the purée and whisk together. Pour the mixture into an ice cream maker. Process for about 20 minutes according to the manufacturer's instructions.
11. Take the ice cream out of the freezer and leave for a few minutes until surface is just starting to soften slightly. Sprinkle over the hazelnut praline and chopped chocolate in an even layer. Neatly arrange the raspberries in close rings over the top, open ends facing you upwards. Place raspberry sorbet over the top, leaving just enough space for the dacquoise layer, then cover with cling film and return to freezer until firm.
12. **For the hazelnut dacquoise:** preheat the oven to 180C/fan 160C/350F/Gas 4. Tip the blanched hazelnuts into the bowl of a food processor and pulse until coarsely ground. Spread the nuts out in a layer in a roasting tin and bake for 10-12 minutes or until golden-brown, stirring every three minutes.
13. Remove from the oven, transfer to a large bowl and leave to cool. When cool, stir in 50g/3½oz of the caster sugar and the cornflour.
14. Reduce the oven temperature to 150C/130C (fan)/Gas 2. Line a large baking tray 24 ½ x 34 ½cm (9 2/3 by 13 1/2 inches), 1-cm (3/8-inch) deep with parchment paper and, using a small dinner plate as a guide, draw a 20cm/8in diameter circle. Set aside.
15. Make the meringue by pouring the egg whites into the clean bowl of a free-standing mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Add the salt and whisk on medium speed for about two minutes, or until white and frothy. Increase the speed and add the remaining 100g/3 ½ oz caster sugar, one tablespoon at a time, to make a stiff, glossy, peaked meringue. Gently fold the ground hazelnut mixture through the meringue.
16. Spoon the meringue mixture to a large piping bag fitted with a 1.5cm/5/8in plain nozzle and pipe the meringue into a spiral starting at the centre of each circle and working outwards to fill your template.
17. Bake for one hour, rotating the baking tray halfway through cooking. Keep an eye on the meringues toward the end of cooking as they may catch and darken too much. Turn off the oven and leave to cool in the oven, with the door open, for at least 45 minutes.
18. **For the hazelnut meringue:** Whisk up the egg whites and lemon juice in a mixing bowl until soft peaks form, then slowly add half the sugar and continue whisking until stiff. Fold in the rest of the sugar and the hazelnuts, forming a hazelnut meringue mixture.
19. **To assemble:** take the ice cream/sorbet out of the freezer. With the help of the cling film, remove the ice cream from the pudding bowl and place it upside down on the cake, remove all the cling film.
20. Quickly spoon over the meringue, spreading it thickly and in peaks over the ice cream and the sides of the cake right down to the baking tray. The baked Alaska can now be frozen until needed.
21. **For the hot chocolate sauce:** melt the chocolate in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water (make sure the bottom of the bowl does not touch the water).
22. Heat the sugar in a pan with 100ml/3½oz water, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Bring to the boil.

TITLE

23. Stir the sugar syrup into the melted chocolate until smooth and shiny.
24. **To cook the baked Alaska:** preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6 and bake for 8-10 minutes, or until golden-brown all over. Serve with the hot chocolate sauce.