



TRIFLES and ZUPPA INGLESE

Trifles were originally flavoured creams eaten by the Elizabethans. They changed gradually: the cream was thickened, biscuits and other ingredients were added and decorations were used. In 1755, Hannah Glasse had a recipe for a 'Grand Trifle', described as 'fit to go on a King's table'. It contained biscuits and ratafias soaked in alcohol, a layer of custard, then syllabub on top. Trifle means 'a thing of little importance' and this is where the dish got its name.

Zuppa inglese means 'English soup' in Italian, presumably because the dish resembles the English trifle. Originally it was baked but modern versions are not cooked.

ENGLISH TRIFLE

Preparation time: 25 minutes + chilling

Total cooking time: 10 minutes

Serves 6



- 4 slices Madeira cake or trifle sponges
- 1/4 cup (60 ml/2 fl oz) sweet sherry or Madeira
- 250 g (8 oz) raspberries
- 4 eggs
- 2 tablespoons caster sugar
- 2 tablespoons plain flour
- 2 cups (500 ml/16 fl oz) milk
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup (125 ml/4 fl oz) cream
- 1/4 cup (25 g³/₄ oz) flaked almonds, to decorate raspberries, to decorate

1 Put the cake in a decorative bowl and sprinkle with the sherry. Scatter the raspberries over the top and crush them gently into the sponge with the back of a spoon, leaving some of them whole.

2 Mix the eggs, sugar and plain flour together in a bowl. Heat the milk in a pan, pour it over the egg mixture, stir well and pour back into a clean pan. Cook over medium heat until the custard boils and thickens and coats the back of a spoon. Stir in the vanilla, cover the surface with plastic wrap and leave to cool.

3 Pour the cooled custard over the raspberries and leave to set in the fridge, it will firm up but not become solid. Whip the cream and spoon it over the custard. Decorate with almonds and raspberries and refrigerate until needed.

TIPSY TRIFLE

Preparation time: 25 minutes + chilling

Total cooking time: Nil

Serves 6



- 20 cm (8 inch) sponge cake
- 1/2 cup (160 g/5 1/2 oz) apricot jam
- 1/2 cup (125 ml/4 fl oz) brandy
- 85 g (3 oz) packet apricot jelly crystals
- 2 sliced bananas, sprinkled with a little lemon juice
- 2 cups (500 ml/16 fl oz) prepared custard
- 1 cup (250 ml/8 fl oz) cream, whipped
- 60 g (2 oz) toasted almonds, chopped
- pulp of 2 passionfruit

1 Cut the sponge into small cubes and put in a large serving bowl, or layer the trifle in individual parfait glasses. Combine the jam, brandy and 1/2 cup (60 ml/2 fl oz) water and sprinkle over the sponge.

2 Add the jelly crystals to 2 cups (500 ml/16 fl oz) boiling water and stir until dissolved. Pour into a 27 x 18 cm (11 x 7 inch) rectangular tin. Refrigerate until set, then cut into cubes with a rubber spatula.

3 Put the jelly cubes over the sponge and top with the bananas and custard. Decorate with whipped cream, almonds and passionfruit. Refrigerate until required.

ZUPPA INGLESE

Preparation time: 35 minutes + chilling

Total cooking time: 10 minutes

Serves 6



- 2 cups (500 ml/16 fl oz) milk
- 1 vanilla bean, split lengthways
- 4 egg yolks
- 1/2 cup (125 g/4 oz) caster sugar
- 2 tablespoons plain flour
- 300 g (10 oz) Madeira cake, cut into 1 cm (1/2 inch) slices
- 1/3 cup (80 ml/2 3/4 fl oz) rum
- 30 g (1 oz) chocolate, grated or shaved
- 50 g (1 3/4 oz) flaked almonds, toasted

1 Grease a 1.5 litre serving dish with flavourless oil or melted butter. Place the milk and vanilla bean in a pan and slowly heat until bubbles appear around the edge of the pan. Whisk the egg yolks, sugar and flour together in a bowl, until thick and pale.

2 Discard the vanilla bean, whisk the warm milk slowly into the egg mixture and blend well. Return the custard mixture to a clean pan and stir over medium heat until the custard boils and thickens.

3 Line the base of the prepared dish with one-third of the cake slices and brush well with the rum combined with 1 tablespoon of water. Spread one-third of the custard over the cake, top with cake slices and brush with rum mixture. Repeat this process, finishing with a layer of custard. Cover and refrigerate for at least 3 hours. Sprinkle with grated or shaved chocolate and toasted flaked almonds just before serving.