**CHOCOLATE MOUSSE**

* **Active Time:** 45 minutes
* **Total Time:** 7 hours (includes chilling)

You might be tempted to save this rich and silky chocolate mousse recipe for a French-themed dinner party. But chocolate mousse is for every day in our book. If it’s your first time making it, just think of it as a simple dark chocolate custard and whipped cream mixed together and allowed to chill for several hours.

Making the custard is the trickiest part of this chocolate dessert, but if you stand by the pot until it’s done, gently whisking the entire time—especially along the edges, where the custard will start to set first—you’ll have no problems. Strain the custard to ensure it’s creamy and even throughout; add vanilla extract, and whisk in the melted bittersweet chocolate.

Next up: Beat heavy whipping cream in a large bowl until stiff peaks form, and gently fold them into the chocolate mixture with a rubber spatula. Now, all you need is another dollop of whipped cream—and maybe some raspberries or chocolate shavings on top if you’re feeling fancy.

With the leftover raw egg whites, try these three-ingredient hazelnut cookies, which are great served alongside the mousse.

**Ingredients**

8 servings

2 cups chilled heavy cream

4 large egg yolks

3 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

7 ounces fine-quality bittersweet chocolate (not unsweetened), chopped

Garnish: lightly sweetened whipped cream

**Special Equipment**

an instant-read thermometer

1. **Step 1**

Heat ¾ cup cream in a 1-quart heavy saucepan until hot. Whisk together yolks, sugar, and a pinch of salt in a metal bowl until combined well, then add hot cream in a slow stream, whisking until combined. Transfer mixture to saucepan and cook over moderately low heat, stirring constantly, until it registers 160°F on thermometer. Pour custard through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl and stir in vanilla.

**Step 2**

Melt chocolate in a double boiler or a metal bowl set over a pan of simmering water (or in a glass bowl in a microwave at 50 percent power 3 to 5 minutes), stirring frequently. Whisk custard into chocolate until smooth, then cool.

**Step 3**

Beat remaining 1¼ cups cream in a bowl with an electric mixer until it just holds stiff peaks. Whisk one fourth of cream into chocolate custard to lighten, then fold in remaining cream gently but thoroughly.

**Step 4**

Spoon mousse into eight (6-ounce) stemmed glasses or ramekins and chill, covered, at least 6 hours. Let stand at room temperature about 20 minutes before serving.

**Do ahead:** Mousse can be chilled up to 1 day.

*Variations:*

*You can replace the 1 teaspoon vanilla with 2 teaspoons instant espresso powder (dissolve it in the hot cream); or 3 tablespoons Grand Marnier or 2 tablespoons cognac (either one whisked into the strained custard).****Editor’s note:****This recipe was originally printed in the December 2002 issue of ‘Gourmet’ and first appeared on Epicurious in August 2004. Head this way for more of our**best party desserts**→*