

PISTACHIO SOUFFLÉ

Soufflés

2 tablespoons butter, melted
1/4 cup sugar
1 vanilla bean, split
1 cup milk
6 tablespoons sugar
4 tablespoons (1/4 cup) butter
4 tablespoons (1/4 cup) flour
6 eggs, separated
1/2 cup (approx) pistachio paste *
(see note below)

Crème Anglaise (Vanilla Sauce)

1 cup heavy cream
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
4 egg yolks
1/3 cup white sugar

To make the soufflés: You will need 4 ramekins, approx. 4-1/2 inches in diameter x 2-1/2 inches deep. Brush the insides of the ramekins with the melted butter. Sprinkle the sugar to coat the insides and shake out the excess. Set aside. Use a sharp knife to scrape the vanilla seeds from the bean. Place the vanilla bean and seeds in a saucepan. Add the milk and 6 tablespoons of sugar to the saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-low heat. Remove from the heat and allow the mixture to sit for 15 minutes. Remove and discard the vanilla bean; set the milk mixture aside.

In another saucepan, melt the 4 tablespoons of butter over medium-low heat. Add the flour and stir until the mixture is smooth and bubbles start to appear on the surface. Remove from the heat and add the milk mixture; stir to combine. Return to medium heat and stir until the mixture thickens. The mixture will look like a shiny, soft ball of dough. Remove from the heat and set side for 5 minutes to cool. In a small bowl, whisk together the 6 egg yolks and pistachio paste until smooth. Stir the pistachio mixture into the flour mixture until well combined.

The soufflés can be made ahead up to this point.

If you refrigerate the mixture, bring it to room temperature before continuing. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. With an electric mixer, beat the 6 egg whites until soft peaks form. Fold about 1/3 of the beaten whites into the pistachio mixture. Fold in the remaining whites in 2 more batches. Spoon the mixture into the prepared ramekins. Place the ramekins on a baking sheet. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, or until the soufflés have risen above the ramekins. Transfer the ramekins to serving plates. Sprinkle the tops with confectioners' sugar. With a small spoon, make a hole in the center of each soufflé. Pour in a little of the vanilla sauce; serve immediately.

To make the crème anglaise: In a small saucepan, heat the cream and vanilla until bubbles form at edges. While the cream is heating, whisk together the egg yolks and sugar until smooth. Slowly pour 1/2 cup of hot milk mixture into egg yolks, whisking constantly. Gradually add the egg yolk mixture back into remaining milk mixture, whisking constantly. Continue to cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture coats the back of a spoon. Transfer the sauce to a small pitcher to serve.

To make Pistachio Paste:

Begin with 1/2 cup of unsalted pistachios removed from their shells. Then you must remove the brown skins from the pistachios to expose the green nut. Place the pistachios in boiling water for 3-4 minutes. Then rub the warm pistachios between your fingers or with a towel to remove the skins. You don't know have to get every last bit of skin off, just a good portion of it. Once the skins are off, allow the nuts to dry for 20-30 minutes. Place the pistachios in a food processor. Add 2 tablespoons of sugar. Process until the nuts are finely chopped. Add 1 -2 tablespoons of water, a little at a time, until the mixture comes together into a paste. The paste will not be completely smooth and will have a brownish-green color. If you want more of a green color, add 1-2 drops of green food coloring. Don't add too much color or the paste will not look natural.