



Chocolate Cream Pie

SERVES 8

One of my favorite pastry cookbooks is Flour by Joanne Chang. Her recipes are easy to understand, and flawless. Her chocolate cream pie uses no starch in the filling, and the first time I made it I was skeptical that it would ever set up, but it turned out perfect. I've made a few changes to the recipe to make it a bit simpler, but it is still the best chocolate cream pie I've ever eaten. Vanilla paste is one of my "secret" ingredients, and adding to both the filling and topping puts this pie on a whole new level! Also, be sure to use good quality chocolate.

INGREDIENTS

1 - 9" pie crust

6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped

3/4 cup half and half

2 1/2 cups heavy cream

4 egg yolks

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1 teaspoon plus 1/2 teaspoon vanilla paste

1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt

3 tablespoon powdered sugar

4 inch slab milk chocolate, at warm room temperature, for shaving as decoration

PROCESS:

Bake the pie crust in a 375 degree oven for 25 minutes.

In a medium saucepan, combine the half and half with 1 cup of the cream and cook over medium-high heat (bubbles start to form around the edge of the pan, but the liquid is not boiling). Meanwhile, place the bittersweet chocolate in a heatproof bowl and melt in the microwave oven, 30 seconds at a time, stirring after each, until melted. Add the chocolate to the cream mixture and remove from heat. Whisk until thoroughly combined.

Place the egg yolks in a medium bowl, and slowly whisk in the granulated sugar. Slowly pour the hot cream mixture into the egg-sugar mixture, a little at a time, whisking constantly.

When all of the cream-chocolate mixture has been incorporated, return the saucepan to medium-low heat. Cook, stirring continuously with a wooden spoon and making sure to scrape the bottom of the pan often to prevent scorching, for 6 to 7 minutes, or until the mixture thickens and coats the spoon thickly.



When the custard is ready, immediately strain it through a fine-mesh sieve into a heat-proof bowl, and stir in the vanilla paste and salt. Pour the filling into the crust and refrigerate, uncovered for about 2 hours. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for another 4 hours, or until chilled and set.

Whip the remaining 1 1/2 cups of cream, and the powdered sugar until stiff peaks form. Pile the whipped cream onto the pie and spread with a knife. Using a vegetable peeler, shave the milk chocolate onto the top of the pie. Serve.