

Gourmet Desserts for Dummies

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Those of us who can't cook have been deprived of gourmet desserts for too long. We sure can't depend on a café or restaurant for gourmet desserts because the gastronomical scene in our country is limited to either plain-cakes or paying 400tk for a translucent slice of cheesecake. Now you can finally say goodbye to the days of licking the TV screen when Masterchef is on – just add these four simple recipes to your kitchen repertoire.



Chai Panna Cotta

Chai Panna Cotta is an exotic Southeast-Asian take on the boring vanilla panna cotta. Panna cotta's lush, wobbly structure and creamy, smooth texture can be a little intimidating but fear not, this dessert can be perfected easily with a little patience.

First, brew two cups of milk tea with a pinch of cinnamon. Gradually pour in 1 cup of cream and sugar to taste and bring to boil. Dissolve 2 tablespoons of gelatin in a small amount of boiling water by whisking vigorously, then add this mixture to the chai and stir together. Pour onto separate serving bowls and refrigerate until set into a jelly. If the panna cotta wobbles when spanked with a spoon then it has the right consistency. Optional: Sprinkle pistachios and orange rinds on top.

Vanilla Poached Pears

Vanilla Poached Pears are the perfect seasonal dessert for winter; their subtle, earthy sweetness is almost poetic. This dish is also possibly the easiest French dessert – it takes no more than 10 minutes to cook. Combine 1 cup of water with ½ a cup of sugar and 1 teaspoon of lemon juice and 1 tablespoon of vanilla extract, pour into saucepan over medium heat and stir until sugar has dissolved. Peel the pear and slice off a small portion of the bottom half so it can stand upright when served. Submerge the pear in the syrup under low heat and leave to simmer. Let the pear poach, occasionally turning the sides so that the whole pear is saturated in syrup.

Cook for 7 minutes or until the pear is tender, then let the pear rest in the syrup until cool and serve. Optional: Combine a pinch of cinnamon and a few cardamoms for a Spiced Vanilla Poached Pear.

New Orleans Pralines

While normal Pralines are usually made from expensive nuts like pecans and walnuts, New Orleans Pralines are made with peanuts, and are the soulful adaptation of the dessert. Creamy and candied, this dessert is perfect for those with a sweet tooth.

In a saucepan, combine 1 cup of brown or white sugar with ½ a cup of thick milk and ½ a cup of butter and stir over medium heat for 3 minutes. Gradually mix in 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract and 1 and ½ cups of peanuts. Stir rapidly until mixture is rich and creamy. Immediately drop separate clumps of mixture by table-spoons onto the oiled or

buttered surface of a tray. Let the pralines cool until they have hardened into a gourmet dessert. Optional: Combine ½ a cup of melted chocolate into the mixture before it sets to have Chocolate Peanut Pralines.

Watermelon Granita

Granita Siciliana is an Italian dessert made from sugar, water and flavors varying from citrus fruits to bubblegum. Watermelon Granita is a version of the Sicilian classic that is enjoyable to make and twice as fun to eat.

Start by puréeing 5 cups of sliced, seedless watermelons with ½ a cup of sugar in a blender until smooth. Pour this mixture onto a shallow metal pan or dish and refrigerate until frozen, about 3 hours minimum. Then take a fork and vigorously scrape through the surface of the frozen granita like you are a farmer with a plough, repeat this procedure until you have icy flakes of frozen heaven.

Optional: Serve with coconut milk drizzled on top.

Where to Get Ingredients

All ingredients are available at



Meena Bazar or Agora. Quality gelatin including Agar Agar or Foster Clark's Gelatin is recommended.

