

HOME DECOR & MORE



Valentine's Day dinner with a Homemade Dessert

Valentine's Day is synonymous with many things, including chocolate.

Many sweethearts exchange chocolate on Valentine's Day, making chocolate confections as essential to a successful holiday as flowers and romance.

Men and women who want to make this Valentine's Day extra special can forgo store-bought chocolates in favor of homemade confections.

The following recipe for "Swiss Mountain Ice Cream" from Maxine Clark's "Chocolate: Deliciously Indulgent Recipes for Chocolate Lovers" (Ryland, Peters & Small) is a great way to end a romantic holiday dinner.



Swiss Mountain Ice Cream

Swiss Mountain Ice Cream Makes about 2 quarts

- White Chocolate Sauce (see below)**
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 cup sweetened condensed milk
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa
- 14 ounces premium milk chocolate (over 32% cocoa solids), chopped
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla essence
- 1 1/2 cups whipping or heavy cream, chilled
- 6 1/2 ounces white nougat, roughly chopped

- 1 ice cream maker (optional)
- 1 freezer-proof tray or container
- 1 mountain-shaped mold (optional)

Put the milk, condensed milk, sugar, and cocoa in a pan, bring to a boil, then simmer gently for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Stir in the chocolate and let melt, stirring occasionally. Let cool completely, then add the vanilla essence and refrigerate for about 1 hour.

Stir the cream into the mixture, then churn-freeze in an ice cream maker in two batches. This will take 20 to 30 minutes. It will increase in volume as it thickens and freezes. Stop churning when thick and smooth, add the nougat, and churn to mix, then transfer to a chilled freezer-proof tray, cover, and freeze. If you don't have an ice cream maker, put the mixture in a freezer-proof tray or container and freeze until it is frozen around the edges. Mash well with a fork and return to the freezer. Continue mashing with a fork and freezing the mixture until thick and smooth, about 2 hours. Stir in the nougat. At this stage, you can pack it into a mold and return to the freezer.

If the ice cream is in a mold, remove from the freezer and dip briefly in hot water to melt the outside. Invert onto a chilled plate, lifting off the mold. If the ice cream is in a container, transfer to the refrigerator to soften for 20 minutes before serving in scoops. Drizzle with White Chocolate Sauce and serve.

White Chocolate Sauce Makes about 2 1/2 cups

- 1 cup light or heavy cream
- 6 tablespoons milk
- 8 ounces white chocolate (over 25% cocoa butter), chopped

Put the cream and milk in a small pan and bring to just below boiling point. Remove from the heat and let cool for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the white chocolate and stir until completely melted. Serve warm.

If reheating, do so over gentle heat. Do not allow to boil or the sauce can thicken and seize.



Deadline for the March issue is February 20.

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How Chocolate Became Tied to Valentine's Day

Heart-shaped boxes filled with decadent treats are coveted gifts on Valentine's Day. Chocolate lovers typically have a favorite type of chocolate, whether it's creamy filled truffles or chocolate pieces with fruit or nut fillings.

The tradition of gifting chocolate is anything but new. Chocolate and other sweet treats have been offered for centuries as prized gifts. Even ancient Aztecs and Mayans celebrated chocolate and saw it as a hot commodity. Drinks made of cacao beans would be given as presents to people of high status. Chocolate also would be offered to the gods as a token of appreciation. Cacao beans were even used as a form of currency at one point.

During the 17th century, chocolate consumption grew considerably across Europe. Chocolate houses cropped up in London, and the French elite often indulged in chocolate. Chocolate's popularity continued to grow, but the dessert was not linked to Valentine's Day until nearly 200 years later. In the mid-1800s, an enterprising individual named Richard Cadbury was looking for a way to make chocolate even more popular than it already was. He sought out a method to make drinking chocolate more palatable and created "eating chocolates." These chocolates were packaged in decorative boxes. Eventually, Cadbury saw the benefit of putting images of cupids and roses on the boxes. Cadbury even designed chocolate boxes in the shape of hearts that could be saved as mementos. These chocolates soon became intertwined with Valentine's Day celebrations.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Milton Hershey dabbled in commercializing chocolate as well. Hershey began as a caramel maker, but experimented with covering the caramels in chocolate in 1894. Hershey would go on to develop one of the most successful brands of chocolate in the United States, which included the famous Hershey bar. In 1907, Hershey launched production of teardrop shaped "kisses." (The chocolates were given their unusual name because of the "smooching" noise made by



Chocolate has been considered a special gift for centuries. It became linked to Valentine's Day in the 1800s.

the chocolate when being manufactured.) The kisses became wildly popular and made for affordable chocolate gifts on Valentine's Day.

Many other chocolate manufacturers soon began packaging their chocolates in special boxes for Valentine's Day. Russell Stover and Whitmans are two such manufacturers who have long specialized in heart-shaped boxes or other decorative Valentine's gifts.

Traditionally, men have gifted women with boxes of chocolate for Valentine's Day. However, that role is reversed in other areas of the world. For example, in Japan, women give gifts — namely chocolates — to the men in their lives to express love, courtesy or social obligation. This tradition first began in 1936 when confectioner Morozoff Ltd. ran the first ever Valentine's Day ad in Japan through a local English newspaper. By

the 1950s, other Japanese confectioners were following suit.

Chocolate has long been tied to Valentine's Day gifting. Whether one believes that chocolate symbolizes heightened status, acts as an aphrodisiac or is just a special treat, chocolates will likely always be associated with the day of love.



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