



Sugar, I Love You

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A PASTRY CHEF'S ODE TO SUGAR IN ALL ITS GLORY



Roasted Hazelnut Soufflé with Chocolate Sauce

I want to reassure you that a soufflé is not scary. Think of it simply as a thickened base, here a crème patisserie, with a simple French meringue folded through it. Not that difficult, see?

The rise on this is a thing of beauty and it is like eating a fluffy Ferrero Rocher, a true crowd-pleaser. Serve at a dinner party to impress, if the dining table isn't too far a walk from the kitchen... You can make the hazelnut base in advance and keep it in the fridge for up to 3 days. Just make sure you loosen it properly before folding the meringue through it.

Makes 4 medium ramekins

For the hazelnut crème patisserie

40g blanched hazelnuts
180ml whole milk
40g caster sugar
10g/2 tsp cornflour
pinch of fine salt
15g/1 tbsp plain flour
40g egg yolks (2 large egg yolks)

For the soufflé mixture

50g softened unsalted butter,
plus extra for the ramekins
20g cocoa powder or grated
chocolate
180g egg whites
60g caster sugar

For the chocolate sauce

90g dark chocolate, chopped
40g water, plus extra if needed
1 tbsp demerara sugar
pinch of sea salt flakes

Preheat the oven to 150°C fan/170°C/gas mark 3½.

Start by preparing a hazelnut butter. Roast the hazelnuts on a baking tray for 10–15 minutes until golden. Allow to cool. Blitz the roasted hazelnuts in a powerful blender to form a smooth butter.

Heat the milk with the sugar and the hazelnut butter in a saucepan over a gentle heat and mix well.

Whisk the cornflour, salt and plain flour together separately.

Place the yolks in another large bowl and whisk to break them up. Slowly add the cornflour mixture and whisk really well; it will feel quite dry so, if needed, add a splash of the warmed milk. We want to avoid lumps here.

Once all of the cornflour mixture is combined with the yolks, gently pour the warm milk over the yolks, whisking until smooth.

Return to the saucepan and whisk over a medium heat until thickened and bubbling (a few minutes). Remove from the heat and carefully place in a blender. Blitz well. (A hand blender also works here.)

Pour the hazelnut crème patisserie into a heatproof container and place a sheet of clingfilm or baking paper directly on top. Allow to cool, then refrigerate to chill thoroughly for an hour.

Roasted Hazelnut Soufflé with Chocolate Sauce

To serve

30g grated dark chocolate
20g roasted hazelnuts, crushed

Liberaly butter 4 medium ramekins with softened butter, making sure you coat the whole thing well, brushing in upward motions. Chill in the fridge for 10 minutes. Remove from the fridge and butter again. Add the cocoa powder or grated chocolate and swirl the ramekin to coat, tap out the excess, then return to the fridge.

Preheat the oven to 170°C fan/190°C/gas mark 5.

Make a French meringue by whisking the egg whites with the caster sugar in a clean bowl to soft peaks.

Scoop the chilled hazelnut crème patisserie into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, then beat down gently to soften it. We do this so the meringue folds in easier with less lumps or pockets of meringue.

Fold in the meringue in three batches; take care to do this gently, as the mixture should remain voluminous and delicate.

Fill the ramekins with the soufflé mixture, tapping them down gently on a work surface. Smooth over the top with a palette knife and run your thumb around the inside edge. Place the ramekins on a baking tray and bake for 12 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the chocolate sauce by putting the chocolate, water and sugar in a saucepan and heating gently, stirring frequently. As soon as a smooth sauce forms, remove from the heat and stir in the salt. This sauce can be served cool or warm, if it needs loosening feel free to add another splash of water while reheating, as it's very forgiving.

Remove the soufflés from the oven and dust the tops with grated chocolate and a handful of crushed hazelnuts.

When serving, allow guests to make a hole in the middle of the soufflé to pour in the chocolate sauce.