

# Chocolate Bavarian Pie

## Ingredients

Makes one pie for 8-12 people  
Keeps for 3 days, chilled

### Cocoa Cookie Crumb

cooking oil spray  
100g plain flour  
70g caster sugar  
40g Dutch (unsweetened) cocoa powder  
¼ teaspoon fine sea salt  
90g unsalted butter

### Filling

370ml full-fat milk  
80g dark chocolate (60-70% cocoa), chopped  
90g caster sugar  
10g Dutch (unsweetened) cocoa powder  
4g gelatine powder  
1 teaspoon cornflour  
½ teaspoon vanilla paste  
¼ teaspoon fine sea salt  
80g egg yolk (from approx 4 eggs)  
300ml cream (35-45% milk fat)

### Topping

250g crème fraîche  
½ teaspoon vanilla paste  
Chocolate Rubble: break up 50g dark chocolate with a mortar and pestle (or food processor) into small gravelly pieces



## Method

Preheat the oven to 150°C. Lightly spray a baking tray with cooking oil and line with baking paper.

To make the Cocoa Cookie Crumb, put the flour, sugar, cocoa powder and salt in a bowl. Melt the butter and pour it into the dry ingredients, then mix with your fingers to make what feels like cocoa sand. Scatter the crumb over the tray and bake for 25-30 minutes until dry, crumbly and fragrant. Chocolate doughs and crumbs are tricky to cook, as they won't show any signs of burning. They are done when the dough turns from shiny raw to matt dry.

Around halfway through the Cocoa Cookie Crumb baking, start the filling. Bring the milk to the boil in a small saucepan until there is a small ring of bubbles around the edge. Turn off the heat.

Put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl and set aside. You will pour the hot custard into this bowl to melt the chocolate, so choose a bowl large enough.

In a small bowl, mix the sugar, cocoa, gelatine, cornflour, vanilla and salt. Then weigh in the egg yolks, whisk until smooth. Pour in half the hot milk and whisk well to combine, then whisk in the remainder. Return the mix to the pan and whisk constantly over a medium-high heat for about 2 minutes, until the custard is thick and just starts to bubble. (Although the rules about gelatine state that it should never be boiled, it can be for this brief time.)

Swiftly scrape the custard mix into the chocolate bowl and whisk well to release the steam and melt the chocolate. Set aside at room temperature to cool (40-60 minutes). Whisk occasionally and scrape down the side of the bowl from time to time. It will look mottled but that won't be noticeable when it has set. Meanwhile, whip the cream into semi-stiff peaks and keep chilled, to fold in later. Crush the Cocoa Cookie Crumb in a food processor or mortar and pestle.

Lightly spray a fluted 24cm, 4cm deep, loose-based tart tin with cooking oil. Line the base with a circle of baking paper. Rest the tin on a heavy baking tray (to slide in and out of the fridge without disrupting the loose bottom). Lightly press the crumb into the base only. Don't compact the crumb too much – it needs to be “break-apart-able” when cold.

To complete the filling, fold half of the whipped cream into the cool custard until almost fully incorporated. Fold in the remaining cream until the mix is a uniform chocolate brown colour.

Scrape onto the prepared crumb base – the filling should come to just under the top of the tin. Smooth the top lightly and spray with a bare mist of cooking oil. Lightly press a piece of plastic wrap on top of the filling, to prevent a rubbery skin forming. Chill to set overnight.

To make the topping, whip the crème fraîche and vanilla to floppy peaks. Remove the plastic wrap and smooth the crème fraîche on top to completely fill the tin. Sprinkle with the Chocolate Rubble. Remove from the tin and serve chilled, with fond memories of the 80s.



## Natalie Paull says...

**I** grew up in a household that cooked from scratch with fresh vegetables every night. Meats lovingly braised, crumbed or grilled. It was nothing fancy – just simple and hearty meat-and-three-veg suburban 80s cooking.

A sweet treat and strong cup of tea to bring the day to a close were also part of our family's everyday food ritual. On Mondays, Mum would make plain pound cakes for after dinner or school lunch boxes. On Thursdays, I accompanied Dad to choose a cake from a local bakery to have after dinner – a Neapolitan cake, date loaf or ginger fluff sponge. And there was Dad's secret stash of Tim Tams or Old Gold chocolate hidden in the pantry. The cocoa waft that hit my nostrils when the tin lid was popped was intoxicating!

Sometimes we had proper desserts – Grandma's golden syrup dumplings or a fruit pie and ice cream. These extra-glorious moments were unforgettable, but the recipe that is my home in cake form was the Sara Lee Chocolate Bavarian. It brought the thrill of a rare fancy dessert when it came to our table.

We always had one at the casual parties and barbecues Mum and Dad would often host. On those days, I waited the interminable wait as lunch moved through the savoury food – crudité and French onion dip, tooth-picked cabanossi and cheddar cubes, grilled chops and sausages and classic iceberg lettuce salad (with spring onion batons curled in ice water – so swanky!).

Finally, the dessert table was set with pavlovas and that beloved Chocolate Bavarian. If the adults weren't too tipsy, the Bavarian was defrosted according to the packet instructions. Sometimes the white Lambrusco blurred the process and it was cleft into slices, still frozen. But, no matter how the adults served it, it made me feel grown up, elegant and special.

The Bavarian remained a favourite with me through my teen years. When I started earning pocket money, I could buy my own and used spoonfuls of it as a chocolatey salve for angst-filled growing pains. It was technically medicine.

Recreating this most meaningful dessert from scratch was always on my baking to-do list. I “adulted” it a smidge so the crumb has dark cocoa and the topping has some crème fraîche to add tangy magic. The filling is the same pudding-like texture, just made with better quality chocolate (sorry Sara). A slice of this is childhood cake dreams come true.