

NESTLE JULIUS MAGGI KITCHEN

A Taste of Italian Desserts with Henry Sison

Ah, desserts...luscious, tempting, irresistible. Imagine going through life without experiencing the exquisite pleasures of having crème brûlée, sherbets, chocolates, fruits and many more sweet treats. Nothing is more satisfying than a dessert, the perfect finale to a leisurely lunch or dinner.

Italy, known for its delicious cuisine, is not a nation of sweet-toothed people the way we Filipinos are. Nevertheless, their traditional desserts are incredibly delicious. The country has amazingly varied dessert traditions.

It is said Italian desserts originated in Sicily, the largest island in the Mediterranean, where you can find the best flavors of ice cream. Other regions and provinces in Italy have their respective dessert traditions that have become popular treats around the world. Piedmont is known for its “panna cotta.” Siena, a province in northwestern Italy, is famous for its “tiramisu.” And puddings are known all over Italy.

In a recent demonstration at the Julius Maggi Kitchen, baking expert Henry Sison presented three famous Italian desserts-- “panna cotta,” “tiramisu,” and “bodino nero.” These desserts are world-class, fashionable and sophisticated, but they are actually simple, easy and quick to make.

Tiramisu: a deliciously wicked dessert

Think of a very, very light chocolate pudding with body and fullness, that easily melts in your mouth. Then, imagine this very light mocha-flavored whipped cream concoction on espresso-kissed ladyfingers. Add a tantalizing hint of liquor. Then imagine an explosion of chocolate. That's tiramisu.

Tiramisu is a cool, light and creamy dessert that leaves an indelible impression. The aroma of strong coffee and the aftertaste of liquor make it a deliciously wicked dessert.

Tiramisu, also known as “Truscan Trifle,” was created in Siena. The grand duke of Florence, Cosimo de Medici III visited Siena and brought the dessert back with him. The concoction

was later named “zuppa del duca” (duke’s soup) in honor of his visit. “Zuppa del duca” became a favorite among Englishmen living in Florence, who took it back to England and called it “Zuppa Inglese.”

The dessert eventually gained tremendous popularity not only among the English. Tiramisu made its way to San Francisco and all throughout America. Now, it is served in restaurants around the world. Other ingredients have been added to the original Italian recipe.

The original recipe called for custard, and only recently has mascarpone cheese been substituted. Mascarpone cheese is a triple-crème cheese made from milk of cows, containing herbs and flowers.

The basic ingredients of tiramisu are eggs, mascarpone cheese, ladyfingers, cream, espresso coffee, liquor, sugar and chocolate.

While others love the aftertaste of liquor and spirits like brandy, marsala and rum on their tiramisu, Henry Sison prefers a simple and unadulterated tiramisu.

The basic ingredients of Henry’s tiramisu are 6 pieces egg yolks, 7 tbsps. granulated sugar, 1 tbsp. confectioners sugar, 3/4 cup NESTLÉ Fresh Milk, 1 pound mascarpone cheese, 24 very crisp ladyfingers, 2 cups NESTLÉ Whipping Cream, 2 cups strong NESCAFÉ Coffee, and 8 ounces bittersweet chocolate.

It’s so easy to fix this dessert. Here’s how:

- Bring water to a boil in the bottom pan of a double boiler. Meanwhile, combine egg yolks and sugar in a glass bowl and stir with a wooden spoon until the sugar is completely dissolved and egg yolks turn a lighter color. Add the milk and mix thoroughly. Transfer the egg mixture to the top pan of the double boiler and place over pan of boiling water. Stir constantly in one direction with a wooden spoon, until cream is thick enough to coat the spoon and just before the mixture is about to boil. **Don’t allow the mixture to boil.** Immediately remove the top part of the double boiler from heat. Continue stirring a minute longer, then transfer the crema to a crockery or glass bowl to cool.
- Place the mascarpone cheese or ricotta and the cooled crema in a bowl; blend very well until very smooth and light cream forms. Refrigerate until needed.
- Chop the chocolate coarsely. Place the ladyfingers in a jellyroll pan, in layers.

- Whip the NESTLÉ Whipping Cream, granulated sugar and confectioners' sugar in a chilled metal bowl with a wire whisk. Add the cooled crema-mascarpone and whisk very well.
- Moisten ladyfingers with the cold coffee and gently arrange 12 of them in a 14-inch "trifle" bowl. Spread half of the cream on top of the ladyfingers, then sprinkle on half of the chocolate. Make one more layer with the remaining ingredients, then cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least an hour before serving.

Go Gelatina!

For gelatin lovers, this dessert is for you.

"Panna cotta," or cooked cream in English, is a luscious Italian specialty, which is gaining fame worldwide. The egg-based dessert was inspired from the classic Italian crème brûlée. It originally started in Piedmont, a region on the northern border of Italy, where they also invented the apple strudel some 400 years ago.

The skill to making this delectable dessert is getting it to set without becoming too soggy, so just the right amount of gelatin should be used. The basic ingredients of "panna cotta" are unflavored gelatin, fresh milk, whipping cream and sugar.

To bring the dessert to the consistency it should achieve, just like the super thick cream of Piedmont's dairy products, Heny Sison uses NESTLE Fresh Milk and NESTLE Whipping Cream in her "Panna Cotta con Caramello."

The ingredients of Heny Sison's "panna cotta con caramello" are 2 tbsps. unflavored gelatin, 4 cups NESTLE Fresh Milk, 2 cups NESTLE Whipping Cream, 1/2 cup sugar. 3/4 cup sugar, 1/2 cup butter and 1 cup NESTLE Whipping Cream for the caramel.

Chefs in trendy restaurants dress up their "panna cotta" with complicated sauces and other garnishes. You can make your own delicious version by adding chocolate or caramel. You can even turn the Italian favorite into a tropical treat by adding fresh fruits like cherries or strawberries. It's your choice!

Here's how to make "panna cotta con caramello."

- In a thick saucepan, sprinkle gelatin over 2 cups of milk and let it stand to soak for 5 minutes, to soften.
- Stir well over low heat until the gelatin dissolves completely about 5 minutes.
- Stir in the remaining milk, cream and sugar. Cool to simmer, or until you see bubbles around the sides of the pan.
- Remove from heat. Let it cool a little, pour into 12-1/2 cup custard cup. Refrigerate; cover with a sheet of wax paper until firm. Serve cold. Drizzle with caramel sauce.

For the caramel sauce:

- Pour sugar into a thick saucepan and cook on a medium fire. When the sugar begins to melt, stir gently with a spoon. Watch closely as the sugar melts. Stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add butter, then the cream. Stir gently until the caramel is dissolved.

Pudding surprises

Puddings are a mainstay of Italian meals. This soft, spongy dessert is considered an old-fashioned Italian specialty. But did you know that this rather simple indulgence has become a trendy treat in cosmopolitan restaurants around the world? It isn't surprising, because the delicacy and subtlety of this dessert shows off a pastry chef's skills.

No one can resist a classic bread pudding—warm, sweet and inviting. Just like Henry Sison's version of the famous "Bodino Nero," or Italian Chocolate Bread Pudding.

The ingredients of this classic dessert are fine bread crumbs (for coating the pan), 3 1/2 ounces semi-sweet chocolate, 1 cup NESTLE Full Cream Milk, 2 pieces eggs, 1/4 cup sugar, 4 cups day old French or Italian bread, or tasty bread with crust removed and cut into cubes, confectioners sugar, NESTLE Whipping Cream softly whipped for topping and chocolate curls for garnish.

Here's the procedure on how to make "bodino nero."

- Preheat oven to 350°F.
- Butter an 8-inch springform pan or a 6-cup ring or other mold, coat with breadcrumbs, shaking out excess. Wrap the exterior bottom and sides of the springform pan in foil, forming a tight seal where the sides join. Set this aside.

- Combine the chocolate and milk in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir occasionally until the chocolate is partially melted. Remove from heat and stir until completely smooth.
- In a bowl, whisk the egg and sugar until combined. Whisk in the chocolate mixture; fold in the bread cubes. If the bread is quite dry, let the mixture stand for 5 to 10 minutes, so the bread absorbs some of the liquid.
- Transfer the mixture into the prepared pan. Cover the top with a buttered sheet of foil, buttered side down. Set the pan in a roasting pan and place in the oven. Pour in enough hot tap water to reach about half way up the sides of the pan.
- Bake until the pudding is nearly set, but still slightly wobbly, about 35 minutes (the timing can vary based on the size and depth of the pan; do not overbake).
- Carefully remove the pan from the water bath and cool to lukewarm on wire rack. Run the tip of a knife around the edges of the pudding; remove the sides, if you are using a ring mold, invert the pudding and lift off the mold. Sprinkle with confectioners' sugar and serve warm with softly whipped cream and top with chocolate curls.

It is quite easy to go Italian, anytime, any day. Surprise your family and friends with your own version of "tiramisu," "panna cotta con caramello," and "bodino nero."

Henry Sison's demonstration of Italian desserts is just one of the many cooking events held regularly at the Julius Maggi Kitchen. For more information on upcoming sessions, call Nestlé Consumer Services at 898-0061.