

Cheesecake Panna Cotta with Fresh Fruit

From Nicole Plue, pastry chef at Julia's Kitchen in Napa. Plue made her miniature panna cotta in the small plastic cups that takeout food shops often use for salad dressing. If you don't want to purchase porcelain ramekins, a friendly deli might supply the 3-ounce plastic cups.

INGREDIENTS:

The Panna Cotta:

- 4 ounces natural cream cheese, at room temperature
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup creme fraiche
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon powdered unflavored gelatin
- 1 tablespoon water
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup half-and-half
- $\frac{1}{2}$ vanilla bean
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

The Streusel:

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup graham cracker crumbs
- 2 teaspoons powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted

The Pineapple Blueberry Ginger Salad:

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups fresh pineapple, in $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch dice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh blueberries
- 1 tablespoon finely diced crystallized ginger
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon grated lime zest
- 2-3 tablespoons granulated sugar

The Strawberry & Black Pepper Salad:

- 2 cups fresh strawberries, hulled and quartered
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly grated orange zest
- Granulated sugar and black pepper to taste

The Cherry & Basil Salad:

- 2 cups fresh cherries, pitted and halved
- Chopped fresh basil, granulated sugar and balsamic vinegar to taste

INSTRUCTIONS: For the panna cotta:

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, mix cream cheese on medium speed until smooth. Add creme fraiche and sugar and mix until combined. Remove bowl from mixer and set aside.

In a small bowl, sprinkle gelatin over water. Let sit 1 minute.

Put the half-and-half in a small saucepan. Split the vanilla bean lengthwise and scrape the seeds into the half-and-half, then add the pod too. Bring just to a boil over moderate heat. Remove from heat, add gelatin and stir to dissolve. Remove the vanilla bean pod.

Carefully add the hot half-and-half mixture to the cream cheese and mix until combined. Strain mixture through a fine-mesh strainer and add lemon juice.

Spray eight 3-ounce plastic cups or ramekins with pan spray. Divide the panna cotta

mixture among the cups and refrigerate until set, at least 4 hours.

For the streusel: Preheat oven to 325°. Combine all ingredients in a small bowl. Spread out on baking sheet and bake until slightly darkened and crisp, about 15 minutes. Cool.

For the pineapple-blueberry salad: In a bowl, combine pineapple, blueberries, ginger and zest. Add sugar to taste. Stir well and refrigerate at least 30 minutes before serving.

For the strawberry & black pepper salad: In a bowl, combine strawberries and zest. Add sugar and pepper to taste. Stir well and refrigerate at least 30 minutes.

For the cherry & basil salad: In a bowl, combine cherries with chopped basil, sugar and vinegar to taste. Stir well and refrigerate at least 30 minutes.

To serve, unmold each panna cotta onto a dessert plate. Sprinkle with streusel and surround with some of each fruit salad.

Serves 8

PER SERVING: 260 calories, 4 g protein, 31 g carbohydrate, 14 g fat (9 g saturated), 40 mg cholesterol, 91 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.