

TEST KITCHEN TECHNIQUE Whisking Chocolate into Silk

For a light, silky texture—without the raw eggs in the original recipe—we turned to a double boiler and an electric mixer.



1. Beating the eggs and sugar together in a double boiler incorporates air and gives the filling a light, ethereal texture.

2. When the egg mixture reaches 160 degrees, it will be very thick. Remove it from the heat and continue beating until it is fluffy and cool.

3. After incorporating the melted chocolate, beat in softened butter to give the pie rich flavor and silky-smooth texture.

FRENCH SILK CHOCOLATE PIE

Serves 8 to 10

You will need a fully baked pie shell for this recipe. Use your favorite pie dough or go to CooksCountry.com for our No-Fear Pie Crust recipe. Serve with lightly sweetened whipped cream.

1 cup heavy cream, chilled
3 large eggs
¾ cup sugar
2 tablespoons water
8 ounces bittersweet chocolate, melted and cooled
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces and softened
1 (9-inch) pie shell, baked and cooled (see note)

1. WHIP CREAM With electric mixer on medium-high speed, whip cream

to stiff peaks, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer whipped cream to small bowl and refrigerate.

2. BEAT EGGS Combine eggs, sugar, and water in large heatproof bowl set over medium saucepan filled with ½ inch barely simmering water (don't let bowl touch water). With electric mixer on medium speed, beat until egg mixture is thickened and registers 160 degrees, 7 to 10 minutes. Remove bowl from heat and continue to beat egg mixture until fluffy and cooled to room temperature, about 8 minutes.

3. BEAT, FOLD, COOL Add chocolate and vanilla to cool egg mixture and beat until incorporated. Beat in butter, a few pieces at a time, until well combined. Using spatula, fold in whipped cream until no streaks of white remain. Scrape filling into pie shell and refrigerate until set, at least 3 hours and up to 24 hours. Serve.

The American Table



Birth of a Bake-Off

In 1949, General Mills launched what was to become the grand dame of the modern American recipe contest. Billed as the "Grand National Recipe and Baking Contest" (known today as the Pillsbury Bake-Off), it was held at the posh Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. The grand-prize winner (for No-Knead Water Rising Twists) brought home \$50,000; Eleanor Roosevelt was one of the luminaries on hand to present the awards. Since then, many prize-winning Pillsbury recipes have become part of our culinary heritage, among them Open Sesame Pie in 1954 (which caused a run on sesame seeds nationwide), Peanut Blossom Cookies (with the Hershey's Kiss in the middle), and Tunnel of Fudge Cake (which prodded Bundt pan factories into around-the-clock production to meet consumer demand).



Youngest contestant in the Bake-Off, 1961

DRESSING UP Rice Krispies Treats

We set out to dress up this kids' favorite for Valentine's Day. While we were at it, we put the back-of-the-box recipe under the test kitchen microscope. BY JEREMY SAUER

AS IRRESISTIBLY NOSTALGIC as Rice Krispies treats are, we'd hardly hand them to a sweetheart in hopes of a kiss. To doll up this kid's classic for Valentine's Day, we first reviewed the back-of-the-cereal-box recipe and discovered that—with some minor adjustments—it held up to the test of time just fine. We found that using 5 cups of Rice Krispies cereal (as opposed to the 6 cups called for in the traditional recipe) to one 10-ounce bag of marshmallows produced creamier, richer treats, while a little vanilla extract and salt (both missing from the original recipe) added lots of flavor. Our tasters wanted thicker, more substantial squares, so we patted the mixture into an 8-inch square pan instead of the usual 13- by 9-inch pan.

We decided that the seasonal flavors of chocolate and cherries fit the bill, so I stirred 1 cup of chopped dried cherries in with the cereal (maraschino cherries were wet and messy, and fresh cherries made the treats soggy). Many recipes smother the cooled treats with a layer of melted chocolate, but we wanted flavor in, not just on, the treats. Dark chocolate gave the cereal an unattractive muddy look (though it worked nicely with Cocoa Krispies as a variation), so we melted white chocolate chips with the butter and marshmallows and saved the semisweet chocolate for a decorative drizzle on top.

CRISPY CHOCOLATE CHERRY TREATS

Makes 16 squares

Melt the chocolate by microwaving the chips in a small bowl until smooth, 30 to 60 seconds.

3 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 (10-ounce) bag marshmallows
½ cup white chocolate chips
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
5 cups Rice Krispies cereal
1 cup dried cherries, chopped
½ cup semisweet chocolate chips, melted (see note)

1. PREPARE PAN Line 8-inch square baking pan with foil, allowing excess foil to hang over pan edges. Grease foil. Melt butter in large pot over low heat. Add marshmallows, white chocolate chips, and salt and cook, stirring constantly, until melted and smooth, about 8 minutes; stir in vanilla.



Dried cherries and semisweet chocolate give these addictive treats a festive tou

2. ASSEMBLE TREATS Off stir in Rice Krispies and cherries incorporated. Scrape mixture prepared pan and press into bottom and corners with greased spatula; cool completely, about 1 hour.

3. DRIZZLE CHOCOLATE Dr melted semisweet chips over treats. Allow chocolate to cool, about minutes. Using foil overhang, lift t from pan. Cut into squares. Serve.

DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CARAMEL TURTLE TREATS

Prepare Crispy Chocolate Treats, substituting ½ cup semisweet chocolate chips for white chocolate chips in step 1. Omit the cherries and stir in 15 soft caramel candies, centered, and 1 cup chopped toasted pecans with Rice Krispies.

FLUFFER-NUTTER TREATS

Prepare Crispy Chocolate Treats, substituting ½ cup peanut butter chips for white chocolate chips, 1 cup dry-roasted peanuts for cherries, and ½ cup peanut butter chips for semisweet chocolate chip