

SEMIFREDDOⁱ ALLA FRUTTA SECCA

Semifreddo with Nuts and Dried Fruit

serves 8



This is a recipe originally taken from one of Marcella Hazan's cookbooks. Marcella is a leading Italian food expert; however, I modified the ingredients to comport with a marvelous semifreddo I enjoyed at Ditirambo in Rome during an October 2007 trip. Jay Strickler

1/3 cup shelled, unpeeled hazelnuts

1/3 cup blanched almond slivers, toasted

1/3 cup dried cherries or cranberries

1/3 cup dried apricots chopped

1/2 cup chopped semisweet chocolate (1/4 – 1/2 inch pieces plus broken residue from chopping). I have successfully substituted chopped Heath Bars

4 extra large eggs

1/4 pound granulated sugar

1 tablespoon grappa (I prefer to use Triple Sec or Grand Marnier)

1 cup heavy cream

Powdered sugar

Pinch of tartar

An 8-cup loaf pan. I use a Tupperware type container that has the same dimensions of a loaf pan. (or a bread pan)

Wax paper

1. Turn on the oven to 300°.

2. Spread the hazelnuts on a baking sheet and roast them for 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer them to a medium-size wire strainer and rub them against the sides of the strainer to remove as much of the peel as will slip off. Another approach is to place them on 1/2 of a dishtowel, fold the towel over and roll them in the folded towel on a counter top. You cannot get all of the peel off of all of the pieces. Use them anyway. Chop the peeled hazelnuts into very coarse pieces, like about 1/4 size.

3. Spread the blanched almonds slivers on a baking sheet and bake them in the 300° oven until they are lightly toasted.

4. Separate the eggs, putting the whites in a bowl where you will later beat them, and the yolks in a separate bowl. Care must be taken not to get any yolk in the whites or they will not beat to a meringue.

5. Add the sugar to the yolks and beat it in.

6. Add the fruit, chocolate pieces and nuts to the egg yolk mixture and mix it all together.

7. Whip the cream and sweeten it slightly with powdered sugar.

8. Add a pinch of tartar to the egg whites; beat them until they form stiff peaks. Sweeten it lightly with powdered sugar, and then fold the whipped cream, the meringue and the fruit-nut mixture together. I find that the easiest way to do the mixing is by using one hand.

9. Line the loaf pan with wax paper, then pour or spoon the mixture in it. Cover and freeze it overnight.

10. To serve the semifreddo, cut in half, then quarters, then eighths. It tends to soften quickly, so have the garnish ready.

To serve and garnish: Mix two to three tablespoons of marmalade with just enough of one of the liqueurs above to thin it out a bit. In a food processor mix that mixture with a small box of fresh raspberries. Spoon a dollop of that mixture on each serving of semifreddo and top that with one mint leaf.

Serves 8 by cutting it in half lengthwise, then into quarters and then into eighths.

ⁱ Pronunciation of semifreddo. In Italian, when there are two consonants, both are pronounced. Hence, the pronunciation is: (semi-frayd'-doh) with an accent as shown on the frayd syllable.