Apricot Cream Cheese Ribbon

One three-band apricot cream-cheese loaf, about 4¼ cups (1 liter); 8 modest dessert portions · Active 1 hr 5 min · Total 14 hr

Ingredients

• Unflavored powdered gelatin, 19 g total, divided 7 g +5 g +7 g for the three layers, of specified setting strength

• 9 tablespoons cold drinking water (135 ml), divided 45 ml per layer

• 1¾ cups ready-to-eat canned apricot halves AFTER draining (300 g), packed in juice, divided 150 g per fruit layer

• 1¼ cups canned apricot packing juice (300 ml), divided 150 ml per fruit layer

• 1 tablespoon lemon juice (15 ml), divided 7.5 ml per fruit layer

• 3 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons granulated sugar (45 g), divided 15 g per layer

• ½ cup pasteurized whole milk (120 ml), divided

• 5¼ oz plain pasteurized full-fat cream cheese (150 g), kept cold

• ½ teaspoon vanilla extract (2.5 ml)

• ¼ teaspoon neutral oil (1.25 ml), for wiping mold

Set out

Metal loaf mold of at least 1½-liter capacity, Food scale reading 0.1 g for gelatin, Three small bowls for gelatin portions, Blender for cold fruit/dairy, Small saucepan washed between stages, Mixing bowls and whisk, Sieve, Measuring jug, Paper towel, Food thermometer, Cold platter, Refrigerator

Allergens

Milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Check mold capacity, dry and oil lightly. Weigh gelatin into 7 g, 5 g and 7 g portions. For first apricot layer, blend 150 g drained apricots with 75 ml canned juice and 7.5 ml lemon. Bloom first 7 g gelatin over 45 ml cold water 5–10 minutes. Warm 75 ml canned juice with 15 g sugar to 140–150°F (60–65°C), remove from heat and dissolve bloomed gelatin in it. Stir in cold apricot purée until smooth.

2. Pour first apricot layer into mold. Refrigerate 45–60 minutes until softly firm and tacky, able to support a spoonful. Keep remaining fruit/dairy ingredients cold; do not prepare later gelatin pans yet.

3. For white ribbon, blend cream cheese with 60 ml milk until smooth. Bloom 5 g gelatin over 45 ml cold water 5–10 minutes. Add remaining 60 ml milk and 15 g sugar, warm gently to dissolve, about 120–140°F (50–60°C), and remove before boiling. Temper with 3 tablespoons cold cheese base, then once lukewarm whisk back into remaining base with vanilla. Spoon gently over first layer using back of spoon. Refrigerate 45–60 minutes until softly firm and tacky.

4. Make last apricot layer freshly by repeating first layer with remaining 150 g apricots, 150 ml canned juice, 7.5 ml lemon, 45 ml cold bloom water, 7 g gelatin and 15 g sugar. Cool until lukewarm and spoon gently over white ribbon. Leave at least ½ inch (1.25 cm) headroom; refrigerate excess separately.

5. Cover and refrigerate at 40°F (4°C) or below at least 8 hours after final layer until firm throughout. Allow 14 hours total for three preparations and two preliminary sets. For unmolding, set a cold plate beside the refrigerator. Dip only the outside of the metal mold in warm, not hot, water, about 100°F (38°C), for 5–8 seconds without letting water touch food. Dry the outside, loosen just the upper edge with a clean fingertip and invert onto the plate. If stuck, repeat a brief dip rather than shaking violently. Refrigerate again immediately if not serving now. Cut 8 modest dessert slices.

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Gelatin starting strength

Use food-grade unflavored powdered gelatin with a manufacturer benchmark of 7 g for about 2 cups (500 ml) plain liquid. Weigh the stated grams: envelope sizes and powder density vary. A flavored dessert packet, collagen peptides, sheet gelatin or agar is not an equal substitute.

Cold service

This is an original retro-inspired recipe, not a recovered 1960s formula. Gelatin is animal-derived; the vegetable ingredients do not make the dish vegetarian. A reliable refrigerator and the stated earlier ingredient deadlines are essential.

Ingredient labels

Read canned apricot, cream cheese, milk, extract and gelatin labels. Animal gelatin makes this nonvegetarian.

A useful detail

Each apricot layer has 7 g gelatin, 150 g drained fruit, 150 ml canned juice, 45 ml water, 7.5 ml lemon and 15 g sugar, roughly 345 ml. Center has 5 g gelatin, 45 ml water, 120 ml milk, 150 g cream cheese and 15 g sugar, roughly 330 ml. Estimated total 1 liter fits 1½-liter loaf with headroom.

Keep it well

Keep covered at 40°F (4°C) or below. Use within 2 days of assembly or the earliest ingredient deadline, whichever comes first. Include the overnight setting period in that limit. Keep total unrefrigerated preparation and serving below 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C). Chill slices promptly after service; discard food exceeding those limits. Do not freeze; freezing damages the gel and releases water.