Smoky Chocolate-Prune Pretzel Cups

16 small chilled chocolate cups; 2 cups per dessert portion | Active 35 min | Cook 15 min | Total 180 min

Ingredients

- 100 g plain baked ready-to-eat pretzels, finely crushed
- 30 g unsalted butter, melted
- 180 g dark chocolate, finely chopped
- 130 ml heavy cream made with pasteurized milk
- 60 g soft pitted prunes, finely chopped
- 10 g unsweetened cocoa powder
- 0.5 g smoked paprika
- 1 g fine salt

Set out

Oven, Silicone mini-muffin molds with sixteen 40 ml cavities, or use sixteen wells of a larger mold, Rimmed tray, Digital scales including 0.1 g spice resolution, Food processor or sealed bag and rolling pin, Small saucepan, Heatproof mixing bowl and spatula, Knife, Rack, Rigid cold transport box, Ice-packed cooler

Allergens

Wheat, Milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Set the silicone molds on the tray. Mix pretzel crumbs with all 30 g melted butter and divide among sixteen cavities, about 8 g per cavity. Press into thin bases. Bake 8-10 minutes until dry and fragrant, then cool 20 minutes.

2. During the final part of cooling, put the cream and chopped prunes in the saucepan. Heat until steaming and just beginning to simmer, stirring, then stand off the heat 3 minutes to soften the prune pieces.

3. Put the chocolate, cocoa, paprika and salt in the heatproof bowl. Pour the hot cream and prunes over them, stand 1 minute, then stir until the chocolate is completely melted and the mixture is smooth apart from the fine prune pieces.

4. Divide all the filling among the sixteen cool bases, about 24 g per cavity. Scrape the bowl so no measured chocolate is left behind. Each finished cup should sit below the 40 ml cavity rim.

5. Refrigerate the supported molds for at least 2 hours, until the cups are firm and 40°F (4°C) or colder. Unmold carefully into a single-layer lidded carrier. Keep the cups cold and serve two per person, without extra cocoa dust or a fresh topping.

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Bring it

Carry all sixteen unmolded cups cold in one rigid shallow box with small paper dividers. Keep the bases flat and do not stack the soft chocolate surfaces against another layer. Keep at 40°F (4°C) or colder in an ice-packed cooler and at the gathering. Count all time out of cold control during packing, transport and display together: no more than 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C).

Finish at the gathering

Ready to serve cold. Bring a small pair of tongs and eight dessert napkins or plates. No melting, molding or finishing ingredients are needed at the gathering.

Make it yours

Use two cups per person at a winter film night. At an all-year birthday buffet, offer one cup at a time from the cooler; the recipe still makes sixteen and no extra decoration is necessary.

Ingredient labels

Pretzels and chocolate may also contain soy, sesame or nut traces; check the actual packages. Chocolate without added milk does not remove the milk in cream and butter.

A useful detail

Allow 20 minutes to measure and prepare, 10 baking, 20 cooling, 10 filling and 120 chilling:180 total. The brief cream heating overlaps the last part of base cooling and brings total heating work to about 15 minutes. The filling contains fresh cream, so a firm chocolate texture does not make it shelf stable.

Another way

Use 60 g finely chopped soft pitted dates instead of prunes; retain the full cream amount.

Replace 0.5 g smoked paprika with 0.5 g ground cinnamon for a sweeter aroma. Do not add an unmeasured spice garnish.

Keep it well

Keep in a clean covered container at 40°F (4°C) or below for up to 3 days. Put the filled molds into refrigeration promptly and within 2 hours of making the filling, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C). Freeze for up to 1 month for quality if needed; thaw covered in the refrigerator.