

Tapioca Pudding Parfait

I went to Book Club the other night and the hostess served little pie crusts which she filled with a pudding of your choice. I was surprised at the pudding because she had obviously made it from scratch. When I asked about it she became confused, as if apologizing for not using a pudding mix. It reminded me that we used to make pudding often.

When I was in High School and cooking for the family we always had to serve dessert. At that time we didn't have a profusion of boxed puddings like today, so when we made pudding it was from scratch. Tapioca pudding was always one of my favorites, but one day I was poking through the cupboards and found a can of sour cherries and lo and behold this dessert emerged. When I moved to San Francisco this was my roommates' favorite. When Dave and I married it quickly became a family favorite. So here it is for you to try.

By the way, I've heard people say that they didn't like Tapioca Pudding and I'll admit that if you've ever been served the gluey, rubbery kind I can understand why they think they don't like it. But I've never found anyone who didn't enjoy this light, frothy pudding. So just call it a Parfait when you serve it and sit back and accept the compliments which will be heaped on you.

What you need:

Cherry filling:

1 can Water Packed Sour Cherries
1 cup sugar
4 tablespoons corn starch
3 drops red food coloring
¼ teaspoon almond extract

Pudding:

3 tablespoons tapioca (comes in a box in the baking section near cornstarch)
5 tablespoons sugar
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 3/4 cups milk
3 eggs, separated
1 teaspoon vanilla

How to assemble:

Cherry Filling:

Drain the cherries, reserving liquid

In a sauce pan combine corn starch, sugar and 3/4 cup of liquid from cherries (if liquid does not make 3/4 cup add enough water to make that amount)
Bring to a gentle boil and cook until mixture thickens to a pleasing consistency.
Cook for one minute
Remove from heat and add cherries, food coloring and almond extract
Stir well and let cool

pudding:

Beat egg whites until foamy
Gradually add 3 tablespoons of sugar and continue to beat until soft peaks form
Set egg whites aside
In a large sauce pan mix milk, 3 tablespoons of sugar, tapioca, salt and egg yolks and let stand one minute
Cook tapioca mix on a medium heat, stirring constantly until it comes to a full boil.
Continue cooking for about 8 minutes making sure it doesn't scorch.
Remove from heat and gradually fold into the egg white mixture, stirring quickly until just blended
Stir in the vanilla

Serving:

Select parfait or pretty wine glasses
Spoon some cherry filling into bottom of glass
Spoon pudding on top of cherry filling
Add more cherry filling and pudding in layers until glass is full.
Chill until serving (at least 1 ½ hours)

Notes:

In a hurry, no reason you can't buy a can of Cherry Pie filling instead of making your own. I like the tartness in the cherries when I make my own but I have used the canned in a pinch.

While I'm partial to Cherries this desert can work equally well using a variety of fruits. Try your favorite.