

Creepy Coconut Kiwi Panna Cotta

Panna Cotta:

⅓ c. shredded, dried coconut (unsweetened)
¼ c. raisins or other dark-colored dried fruit.
1½ t. unflavored, powdered gelatin
1T. rum (optional, substitute water if you prefer)
1 c. whole milk
1 c. coconut milk
¼ c. sugar
3 kiwis

Coulis:

1-2 c. frozen raspberries
sugar

Lens:

1½t. gelatin
½ c. boiling water
1T. lime juice
1T. sugar

Yield:

6 servings

Equipment:

½ c. mise en place bowls or half-sphere molds
melon baller
1½" circle cutter

Toast Coconut and Soak Raisins

Place coconut flakes on a baking sheet, and toast in an 350 F oven for 3-6 minutes, until lightly browned. Keep an eye on the coconut and stir it at least once mid cooking. (It cooks more quickly at the edges of the pan.) Place raisins in a jar and cover with warm water.

Infuse coconut cream

Measure gelatin into a small bowl and stir in the rum or water. Leave it to sit for a few minutes. Place the milk, coconut milk, coconut flakes and sugar in a saucepan over high heat. Stir the pan frequently as the cream is heating to prevent scorching. Watch carefully as the mixture will boil over very quickly. Once the mixture has just come to a boil, remove the pan from the heat, cover and let sit for at least 15 minutes.

Cut Kiwis

Skin kiwis and cut the end of the kiwi off. You want to cut enough off the end to have a 1½” circle for the iris of your eye. Place the end of a kiwi into your mise en place bowl or mold and carefully mark the side of the kiwi with a knife. Cut the kiwi so that it will be exactly the height of the mold. Use your circle cutter to cut the kiwi into a perfect cylinder. (If you don't have a circle cutter, you can just carefully trim the kiwi into a circle.) Last, use a melon baller to scoop out a half sphere where you want the pupil to be. Put the little half sphere back into the kiwi for the moment. Spray your molds with non-stick cooking spray. Invert the kiwi half (so the scooped-out side is facing down) and place in the center of your mold. Repeat with the other kiwis until you have filled up all your molds.

Mold

By now, your coconut milk mixture should have an incredible coconut aroma and flavor. Strain the coconut flakes out of the mixture and pour it back into your saucepan. Add the gelatin/rum mixture to the saucepan and place over medium high heat. Stir constantly until the mixture is steaming, and all of the gelatin has dissolved. Strain the mixture into a liquid measuring cup. Pour your panna cotta into the molds. Fill them as close to completely full as you can. Carefully move the molds to the refrigerator. Refrigerate for 3- 4 hours, until set.

Make Lenses

Stir together gelatin, lime juice and sugar. Pour boiling water over the mix and stir until all of the gelatin granules are dissolved. Pour gelatin into muffin-tin liners. (make a few more lenses than you plan to use, just in case you tear one accidentally.) Refrigerate the muffin cups or bread pan until the gelatin has set (check in about half an hour). Once the gelatin is quite firm, carefully peel back the muffin tin liners and remove the gelatin layer. If you are having trouble releasing them, you can dip them in hot water for a second or two. The heat will melt the gelatin at the edges, and release the rest of the mold. Use your circle cutter to cut the lenses into perfect circles, the same size as your kiwi iris.

Assemble Eyeballs

Boil a few cups of water. Pour the hot water into a bowl and dip your panna cotta molds for 3-4 seconds. Carefully press around the edge of the mold with a moistened finger to release the edges of the panna cotta. Place a plate on top of the mold and invert both the plate and the mold. Slowly lift up the mold, peeking to make sure that the panna cotta is releasing onto the plate. Pop out the half-sphere of kiwi, and clean up any bits of panna cotta on top of the kiwi. Drain your raisins and press a few raisins into your melon baller to make a half-sphere of raisins. Place the raisin pupil in the kiwi cavity. Finally, place the lens over the kiwi iris. The edge of the lens will look a little harsh. To sculpt it into a more natural looking rounded lens, dip a paring knife into very hot water, and hold the hot knife against the edge of the lens. You don't need to cut the edge away, just use the hot knife to melt it.

Make Coulis

Heat raspberries in a saucepan. Stir to break up the fruit. Sweeten to taste and strain. Pour warm coulis around the edge of the panna cottas. Go ahead, add a few spatters for flair, too.