

Chocolate Coconut Ice Cream Pie in a Nutty Graham Cracker Crust

Ingredients

Crust:

8 graham crackers
1 cup raw nuts of your choice (pecans work great!) chopped and separated
2 tablespoons brown sugar
2 tablespoons flour
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
Big pinch of salt
½ stick (1/4 cup) unsalted butter, melted

Filling:

2 ounces 80% dark chocolate
4 ounces 60% dark chocolate
¼ cup instant espresso
3 egg whites
1 cup sugar
1/3 cup water
1 cup coconut chips and/or flakes

Topping:

1 cup whipping cream
½ cup toasted coconut flakes

First, make crust first and have it in the freezer chilling before you start the filling.

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Lightly butter a deep dish pie pan and set aside.
- Finely grind the graham cracker crumbs in a food processor or if you don't have one, a Ziploc baggie and a rolling pin will do. Either way, get the crumbs nice and fine.
- Finely chop the nuts, or if you are using a food processor combine ¾ of them in with the graham crackers. Reserve ¼ chopped nuts for the filling.
 - Note: I like the nuts to be a little less fine than the graham crackers so I usually chop them by hand, but it's all a matter of preference.
 - Also, the nuts can be of any variety and I've used almonds, pecans and even a mixture of several that were in leftover bags. I find that pecans often taste the best though. Just personal preference. It's the Louisiana and Texas in me.
- In a medium bowl, add the brown sugar, flour and cinnamon to the graham cracker and chopped nuts and mix well with a fork.
- Add the butter and mix well incorporating all the crumbs.

- Spread the crumbs evenly in the pie pan, pressing into the bottom and up the sides. Refrigerate 7 minutes.
- Place the pie pan on the center oven rack and back for 7 minutes.
- Let cool for about 15 minutes before putting in the freezer unless you are certain your pan is oven to freezer safe.

Next, make the filling.

- Make instant espresso.
 - Note: I use instant only for the ease of this recipe. You can get it in a can at almost any grocery. I make enough for a couple of cups and then drink some for my morning coffee if I'm making this pie in the morning for a dinner party that night. You can make any espresso you prefer. Just need ¼ cup.
- Measure ¼ cup espresso into bowl or measuring cup. Add chocolate pieces to it and stir until melted. If you need to add a little extra espresso or boiling water to help the chocolate melt thoroughly, add a tablespoon at a time.
 - Note: I like my chocolate dark, but if you want to mix it up with any level of milk to dark just use the same amount—6 ounces total chocolate.
- Separate the eggs—the whites in a large mixing bowl and the yolks save for tomorrow's breakfast.
- Put sugar and water in a small pot on high and stir with a metal spoon just to mix the sugar and water. Put a lid on it and let it boil for a few minutes until it's roiling. When you take the lid off this syrup should be clear and already thickish. Using a candy thermometer (don't let it touch the bottom of the pan!) wait patiently until the temperature reaches 240 degrees ("soft ball"). Take the pot off the heat and return to the eggs.
- Beat the egg whites at high speed until you they get to soft peaks ("stiff but not too dry").
- SLOWLY drizzle the syrup in the beaten egg whites. Continue to beat until they cool down considerably. This can be tedious as it can take up to 10-15 minutes for the temperature to reach close to body temperature which is where you want it to be. So stick with it! Think about the pie you'll eat when you've accomplished this task!
 - Note: This is an Italian Meringue and is the basis for a lot of frozen desserts. It should look like melted marshmallows—smooth and shiny.
- Fold in the melted chocolate. Don't stir too much, just enough to almost blend the meringue and chocolate together.
- Add the remaining ¼ cup of chopped nuts and the coconut (reserve a tablespoon or two of the coconut flakes for the topping).
- Pour this chocolate meringue into the chilled pie crust.
- Let it chill in the freezer for at least 4 hours or better overnight.

Finally, when you are ready to serve, make the topping.

- Whip the cup of whipping cream until stiff.
- Spread over the top of frozen pie.
- Sprinkle with toasted coconut flakes.

NOTE: You can make this pie any ole flavor you want. Not a chocolate or coconut fan? Shame on you, but feel free to experiment. See the photo of the original recipe from my brother and compare how I switched it up. Vanilla alone was just too sweet for me. His recipe includes whipping cream folded into the meringue. This was delicious but too much like mousse to me. I made a mistake when trying to make this recipe from memory for my kids and forgot to add the whipping cream and found out that I liked the thicker richer texture. But build your own. My brother suggests raspberry coulis. I'd add it to the meringue if I were a raspberry fan. Or, I also added Grand Marnier to the chocolate mixture a couple of times instead of the coconut for that fancy chocolate and oranges combo folks find decadent.

FINAL NOTE: IF you have any leftover pie, the whipped topping will freeze just fine. It will just be a little harder when you serve it again. Still tastes great.

My brother warns to eat it all up in less than 4 days or you'll see ice crystals form. I've never had this problem since I manage to eat it all within the deadline.