

Alan's Deep Fried Frozen Creams

Most ice creams are exactly as they sound, frozen creams, and one of the smoothest, creamiest ways of producing them is by using a custard base. If making custard doesn't appeal and you feel like cheating the custard bit, this method actually works very well with the tinned and ready made varieties.

This recipe makes 1 litre / 1.75 pints of ice cream, equivalent to 10 portions, allowing a 50ml / 2 floz scoop being used.

Ingredients

The ice cream:

7 large egg yolks
200g (7oz) caster sugar
250ml (8fl oz) clotted cream
500ml (17 fl oz) single cream
1 vanilla pod, split and seeds scraped out
Deep fat fryer filled with vegetable oil

The deep fried ice cream balls:

Frozen ice cream following above recipe for 10 balls
3 squares of filo pastry per ice cream ball, each approximately 12cm x 12cm
Egg wash - made by mixing 2 small egg yolks (or 1 large) with 3 fl oz milk and 1 tsp icing sugar
100g / 4 oz chopped, toasted hazelnuts

Instructions to make the ice cream:

Cream together the egg yolks and sugar in a bowl over a pan of simmering water. Heat the creams in a separate pan. Stir in the vanilla pod and seeds. Carefully whisk the cream mixture into the egg yolks. Immediately pour the final mixture back into the cream pan and stir over a gentle heat until the custard thickens. Strain the custard into a bowl standing in iced water. Stir occasionally until cool.

Pour the cooled custard into a 1.5 litre tupperware container - this allows enough space for the ice cream to expand. Place the container into the freezer, ensuring it is on a level surface. Stir the ice cream every 20 minutes for a smoother and creamier finish. You'll need to do this approximately four times before the ice cream is completely set and until you can't do it anymore!.

Alan's tips

It's a good idea to sieve the custard as it takes out the lumps, any shell and the vanilla pod

Remember to leave space in your container for the ice cream to expand when it freezes without going over the top - I usually fill it about three-quarters full.

Don't be afraid of overflavouring your ice cream, as the flavour is weakened by the frozen temperatures.

For a healthy low-fat ice cream, try using natural yoghurt instead of cream, it works very well.

To make the deep fried ice cream balls

Scoop the frozen ice cream into balls, place onto a non-stick baking tray and put back into the freezer until ready to wrap in pastry.

Pre-heat the deep fat fryer to 180 degrees C. Cut out squares of filo pastry. Take a square, lightly brush with egg wash and scatter with toasted nuts. Repeat the process twice more, then layer up all three squares. Take an ice cream ball and wrap in the layered filo. Place immediately into the hot oil and fry until golden brown. Remove and drain onto a plate with kitchen paper. Repeat quickly, but carefully with each ice cream ball.

Serve with strawberry coulis.

The Science

Testing eggs

A good way to tell if an egg is fresh or not is to put it into a glass of water. If it's fresh it will lie horizontally. Egg shells are porous so the longer you leave them, the more air gets inside as water in the egg gradually evaporates away. As the air pockets get bigger, the eggs will start to tip up in water eventually standing upright. Throw those ones out! If left long enough - the air pocket gets so big, the egg will float. Don't just throw those ones out - do it *very* carefully.

Important Ice Cream Ingredients!

When making the custard, separate the egg yolks from the whites, and only use the yolks. The whites set at a lower temperature than the yolks, so when you heat them, they will start to form 'scrambled egg' before the yolks have had a chance to cook. And the yolks are a great source of fat too - which helps to give ice cream that rich, melt-in-the-mouth texture. You don't have to make custard to make ice cream, you can just use double cream. Custard adds more depth of flavour - as well as more fat. Just as the fat from egg yolks helps to give ice cream its wonderful mouth-feel, the cream you add also contributes. The clotted cream in this recipe particularly helps, as it is very high in fat. Here

it's used with single cream. You could just use double cream instead of mixing those two, but clotted cream has a lovely rich almost vanilla-ey flavour. So if you're not adding another strong flavour, it also helps to add depth to your ice cream. It's worth following ice cream recipes quite carefully, and using the right amounts of the different ingredients given (although as said above, you can replace custard with the same amount of double cream). The sugar and other additions like alcohol all affect the temperature that things freeze at. For example, if you add too much sugar, the ice cream won't set. Too little and it sets too hard. The smell of vanilla is just gorgeous, and it's still the nation's favorite ice cream, being chosen nine times out of ten. There's a molecule in vanilla that's almost identical to the male sex hormone, which is perhaps partly why we like it so much.

High Speed Cooling

Cooling the custard mixture quickly helps to reduce the chances of bacteria growing in the mixture. This used to be more important than it is now, when freezers weren't as effective. But cooling the mixture before putting it into the freezer is a good idea anyway. You can even freeze the mixture this way, if you crush the ice first and mix salt in with the ice and water. This lowers the freezing point, down to below -10°C if the ice is crushed well enough, and the ice cream mix takes just up to an hour to freeze - faster than doing it in the freezer.

Stirring

You need to stir the ice cream every 20 minutes or so (more often if you're freezing it using salted iced water). Tiny crystals of pure ice are forming and if you don't stir and break them up, they will grow into large spiky crystals that don't feel comfortable in your mouth. Stirring also adds lots of air, which is crucial for keeping ice cream light and fluffy. It's so easy to forget about the ice cream in the freezer and forget to stir, which is why I use the salted ice water - you can't miss it in the kitchen, and I have had too many unstirred ice cream disasters to risk the freezer again. If you don't stir, the ice cream is ruined - it'll just be a dense block of hard icy stuff. Trust me - I know this too well!

Deep Frying Ice Cream

It may sound bizarre but it actually works. The ice cream doesn't melt because the filo pastry puffs up, creating layers of air which act as a really good insulator, protecting the ice cream from the heat of the oil. Just make sure that the fat fryer is really hot when you put the balls in, about 190 degrees C, otherwise the warm oil soaks into the filo before it gets a chance to expand into layers. Then the ice cream may melt, and you also end up with a really oily mass.

Accompaniment

Strawberry Coulis

250g (9oz) strawberries, hulled
50g (2oz) icing sugar
60ml (4tblsp) water
1tsp grated orange zest
30ml (2tblsp) red wine

Method

Puree the strawberries and pass through a fine sieve into a bowl. Put the sugar, water and zest into a pan. Bring to a simmer, then reduce for 2 mins. Add the red wine and bring back to a simmer for a further minute. Gently stir the wine mixture into the strawberry puree.

Kathy makes Mrs Marshall's Cucumber Ice Cream

This recipe is one I found in Mrs Marshall's 'Book of Ices 1885'. I went through the 117 recipes, and chose the one I thought sounded least appealing. Everyone says her recipes are fantastic, so I wanted to test her out. I made this - and loved it.

Mrs Marshall really was an astonishing woman. She set up, taught in and ran a school of cookery, inspiring thousands of people to cook exciting dishes for themselves. She patented an ice cream maker and freezer and started and wrote her own weekly paper. As well as being an amazing businesswoman, in a time when it was really hard for women to set anything up, let alone businesses, she was bright, lively and fun, and loved dancing. She is the first person recorded as putting ice cream into cones, and also was the first to suggest using liquid gases to freeze ice cream, after she had seen them being demonstrated at the Royal Institution. What a star woman!

Ingredients:

1 large cucumber
140ml (1/2 pint) water
1 large wine-glass ginger brandy - Crabbie's green ginger brandy (or ginger wine if brandy can't be found)
juice of 2 lemons
140 ml (_ pint) of fresh custard
140 ml (_ pint) of double cream
(or 280ml (1 pint) sweetened cream, or 280ml (1 pint) custard)
100g (4 oz) castor sugar
140ml (_ pint) water

Instructions:

Peel the cucumber, remove seeds and cut into pieces. Put into a saucepan. Add the sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of water. Cook until tender. Pound cucumber in pestle and mortar. Add a wine-glass of the ginger brandy or wine. Add the juice of 2 lemons. Strain. Add the sweetened cream or custard (or cream and custard mixture). Freeze and stir regularly about every 20 minutes until the ice cream is so stiff it is difficult to stir. Serve in cornets.

The Science**The Alcohol**

Alcohol helps to stop fruit and vegetables from freezing really hard when you use them in ice cream. Soaking fruit like strawberries in something like Cointreau, or putting cucumber in brandy, lowers the freezing point of the fruit, so makes it less hard after putting it into the freezer.