

## A SPICY ICE CREAM

Jane Levi

*The beneficial interface between PPC and the new international organisation known as INTERSPI (for which see PPC 47, 48 and 49 plus of course recent national exposure on Channel 4 television) is here continued by the publication of this recipe for a remarkable ice cream contributed by Jane Levi (Chief of Non-Human Resources at INTERSPI) to an INTERSPI supper held in London to honour Dr Esteban Pombo Villar, fresh from conducting super-sophisticated analyses of spices in his laboratories at Basel. The company was invited to say which spice they thought they could detect in the ice cream. We were all baffled, although, when the solution was announced, there was the usual chorus of 'Oh yes, of course! How could I not have realised what it was?'*

### White Chocolate and White Pepper Ice Cream

#### INGREDIENTS

- 7 oz white chocolate (I use Valrhona Ivoire)
- 4 large egg yolks
- 5 oz vanilla sugar or caster sugar
- 1 1/2 pints double cream
- 1 vanilla pod
- 1 tablespoon whole white pepper corns

#### METHOD

Melt the chocolate slowly in a large bowl over a bain marie. Beat the sugar and egg yolks together with an electric beater until they form a very pale, thick mixture. Scald the cream with the vanilla pod. Pour half of the scalded cream into the sugar and egg yolk mixture, and beat thoroughly. Pour the rest into the bowl with the melted chocolate and beat to blend. Combine both liquids in the original pan, and add the pepper, which you have pouched to a coarse powder in a pestle and mortar.

Heat the custard very slowly, stirring all the time, until it starts to thicken (this will take about 10 minutes). Do not allow it to boil. When it coats the back of a wooden spoon in a suitably custardy manner,\* remove from the heat and cool the base of the pan in a bowl of cold water to arrest the cooking. Allow to cool, stirring occasionally. When it is cold, refrigerate for at least 5 hours or overnight.

When you are ready to freeze the ice cream, remove the vanilla pod, scraping out the tiny seeds into the custard. If you are afraid that your

custard is lumpy, strain it, being careful to return any chunks of pepper to the bowl. You may adjust the seasoning to taste at this stage, bearing in mind that the flavour will be less intense when the custard is frozen.

Churn the custard according to the instructions for your ice cream machine (approximately 15-20 minutes). Alternatively, freeze in a flat, shallow box for three periods of 1-1 1/2 hours, beating between each period of freezing, finally transferring the mixture to a deeper storage box.

Serve with interesting, contrastingly spiced biscuits, such as the Orange Cardamom Biscuits for which a recipe is added below. Do not keep the ice cream for more than 1 month.

\* I find that a thinner custard makes a lighter ice cream which I prefer, although others may wish to make it thicker according to their taste.

### Orange Cardamom Biscuits

#### INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz unsalted butter
- 6 oz caster sugar
- 1 medium-large egg
- 12 oz flour
- pinch salt
- 1 heaped tablespoon grated or julienned orange rind
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly pounded cardamom seeds (husks removed)

#### METHOD

Cream the butter and sugar together. Beat in the egg and the orange peel.

In a separate bowl, sift together the flour, salt and spice. Work the dry ingredients into the wet to make a dough.

Divide the dough in half, and roll with your hands into two sausages of about 2" in diameter. Wrap them individually in a layer each of cling film and foil, and refrigerate for a minimum of two hours.

When you are ready to bake them, slice into 1/4" thick biscuits. Space out on a baking tray (1/2" is fine as they don't expand much), and bake for 10 minutes at Gas 4/180°C until a very pale yellowy gold.

**COVER ILLUSTRATIONS.** These are taken from the charming book *Thai Hawker Food*, reviewed on page 60. The artist, whose work is reproduced in full colour in the original book, is Sun Win. There are lots and lots of his illustrations in the book.

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