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Chocolate-Espresso Pots de Crème

If you like the flavor of chocolate and espresso, you will love these luscious, velvety custards. When they are eaten warm, the texture is soft. Once these are chilled, the texture becomes firmer. Either way, they are sure to become your new favorites.

Makes eight 1/4 cup servings | Use eight 2-1/2 x 1-5/8-inch round ramekins

1-1/2 cups heavy whipping cream divided
2 teaspoons instant espresso powder
3 ounces bittersweet chocolate (62 to 72% cacao content), finely chopped
3 extra-large egg yolks, at room temperature
1 tablespoon (1/2 ounce) granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of kosher or fine-grained sea salt
2 to 3 cups boiling water
2 teaspoons confectioner's sugar
8 chocolate-coated espresso beans

POTS DE CRÈME:

Boil 1-1/4 cups of cream and the espresso powder together in a 1-quart saucepan over medium heat, stirring to dissolve the powder. Remove the saucepan from the heat and stir in the chocolate until completely smooth.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F. Place the ramekins in a 2 quart baking dish.

Whisk the egg yolks in the mixing bowl of a stand mixer using the wire whip attachment or a hand-held mixer on low speed to break them up. Add the granulated sugar, vanilla, and salt and whisk to blend smoothly. Add the chocolate mixture and blend thoroughly. Strain the mixture into a 2-cup liquid measuring cup and divide it evenly among the ramekins, filling each almost to the top.

Carefully pour the boiling water into the baking dish until it reaches partway up the sides of the ramekins. Cover the baking dish tightly with aluminum foil. Bake for 25 to 28 minutes, until the custards are set around the edges but slightly soft in the center.

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Chocolate-Espresso Pots de Crème, (continued)

Remove the baking dish from the oven. Remove the ramekins from the water bath and cool on a rack. Cover loosely with waxed paper and then tightly wrap with plastic wrap and chill at least 2 hours.

GARNISH - Whip the remaining 1/4 cup of cream in the bowl of an electric stand mixer with the wire whip attachment or in a large mixing bowl using a hand-held mixer on medium speed until frothy. Add the confectioner's sugar and continue whipping the cream until it holds soft peaks.

Fit a 10- or 12-inch pastry bag with a large open star tip and fill the bag part way with the whipped cream. Pipe the whipped cream into rosettes or stars on the pots de crème before serving. Place a chocolate-coated espresso bean on top of the whipped cream on each custard.

KEEPING – The baked pots de crème, without the whipped cream, will keep up to 2 days, tightly covered with aluminum foil, in the refrigerator.