

Pistachio Ice Cream – Comfort du Jour

If you enjoy ice cream (especially if you like unexpected flavor combinations), I urge you to make a small investment in an ice cream machine. It makes fast work of freezing up the flavors you choose, and by incorporating air into the mixture during freezing, you get the best texture.

To infuse this ice cream with the unique flavor of pistachio, I toasted the pistachios briefly, pulsed them in the food processor, and then infused their flavor into a sweetened milk-cream mixture. I double-strained the mixture to remove the gritty bits of pistachio before tempering the egg yolks and added roasted pieces of pistachio for extra flavor and texture. A little touch of amaretto churned in during the final minute gave the ice cream a perfectly scoopable consistency for serving, straight from the freezer.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cups whole milk
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 3/4 cup organic cane sugar
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 cup raw, unsalted pistachio meats, divided
- 1/2 tsp. real vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. pure almond extract
- 1 Tbsp. amaretto liqueur (optional at the end of churning, for improved texture)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Toast the pistachio meats on a parchment-lined baking sheet for about 7 minutes, or until fragrant and toasty. Remove from oven and cool. Divide pistachios evenly, transferring half of them to a food processor bowl. Pulse a few times until the nuts are reduced to small bits, but not to the point of powder. Use a sharp knife to gently chop the remaining pistachios. Set them aside for mixing into the ice cream during freezing.
2. Combine milk and cream in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add half the amount of sugar and whisk gently until sugar is dissolved. Add the pulverized pistachios to the milk mixture and simmer until the mixture is hot but not quite boiling. Remove from heat and let this stand for about 10 minutes. This will steep the pistachio flavor into the cream mixture.
3. When steeping is finished (you will know because the cream mixture will have taken on a slightly chartreuse green color), pour the mixture through a mesh strainer lined with cheesecloth to remove the nut solids. Clean out the saucepan and dry it. Return the strained cream mixture to the pan and heat over medium until it returns to the not-quite-boiling stage.
4. While the cream mixture is heating, use a hand or stand mixer to whip the egg yolks until silky. Add the sugar, a little bit at a time, mixing well and stopping a couple of times to scrape down the sides of the bowl. Whip until the mixture is soft, light and lemon colored.
5. Measure out about 2 cups of the milk-cream mixture. Slowly pour it into the egg mixture, whisking or beating with electric mixer the entire time. This step will temper the eggs, gradually cooking them without scrambling or breaking them.
6. Pour the egg mixture back into the remaining milk-cream mixture and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the custard begins to slightly thicken and coats the back of your spoon.

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7. Remove from heat immediately. Stir in vanilla and almond extracts. Lay a film of plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the custard to prevent condensation from forming. Cover the entire bowl with a lid or additional plastic wrap. Refrigerate several hours or overnight until fully chilled.
8. When you're ready to freeze the ice cream, give the cream mixture a good stirring to minimize any settling that has occurred in the fridge. Freeze according to manufacturer's instructions. My Cuisinart takes about 20 minutes. Sift the reserved pistachio nuts in a mesh strainer to remove any powdery crumbs from chopping them. Add them to the ice cream machine only for the last few minutes. Add amaretto (optional but recommended) for the final minute of mixing. You will not taste the alcohol, but its addition ensures easy scooping of the ice cream straight from the freezer. If you avoid alcohol, or if you will be serving this ice cream to children, skip the amaretto and simply remove the ice cream from the freezer about 15 minutes ahead of serving.