

STRAWBERRY ICE CREAM SANDWICHES WITH CACAO NIB POPPY SEED WAFER

The key to perfect ice cream sandwiches are the cookies. You want the kind of cookie that you can easily bite through, even when frozen, so that all of the ice cream inside doesn't squeeze out and end up all over your face (or your lap). These lacy cookies made from slightly bitter buckwheat flour, filled with crunchy poppy seeds and cacao nibs, fit that bill and they are naturally gluten free. The sweet roasted strawberry ice cream balances the bitter flavors nicely. This recipe makes quite a few ice cream sandwiches, but the cookies and ice cream are both individually delicious, and freeze well, so don't worry if you have leftovers.

STRAWBERRY ICE CREAM

- 1 pound (450g) strawberries, hulled and halved
- 1 cup (200g) granulated sugar
- 4 large egg yolks
- 1 cup (240ml) whole milk
- 2 cups (480ml) heavy cream
- 1/4** teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons Crème Fraîche (recipe follows)
- 2 tablespoons golden syrup or light corn syrup

CACAO NIB POPPY SEED WAFERS

- 1 cup (85g) old-fashioned oats
- 6 tablespoons (50g) buckwheat flour
- 2 tablespoons poppy seeds
- 1 tablespoon cacao nibs
- 1 1/2** teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4** teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (115g) unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1 cup (200g) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract (recipe follows)

Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 375°F (190°C/Gas Mark 5).

To make the strawberry ice cream: Toss the cut strawberries and 1/3 cup sugar on a baking sheet. Roast the berries until the juices start to caramelize, 15 to 20 minutes. Let the berries cool slightly then puree them in a blender or food processor until smooth. Set aside.

Whisk the egg yolks together in a glass or stainless steel bowl; set aside. Combine the milk, cream, remaining 2/3 cup of sugar, and salt in a medium saucepan. Heat over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the mixture begins to bubble around the edges.

Ladle about 1 cup of the cream mixture into the egg yolks and whisk vigorously. Pour the egg and cream mixture back into the pan and whisk well to combine. Cook the mixture on medium low heat and cook, stirring constantly with a rubber spatula and being careful not to let it boil, until the mixture thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon, about 7 minutes.

Turn off the heat and whisk in the crème fraîche, golden syrup, and roasted strawberry puree. Strain the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve and allow the custard to cool to room temperature, then refrigerate to chill completely, at least 4 hours or overnight.

Freeze in an ice cream machine according to manufacturer's instructions, then transfer the ice cream to a freezer-safe container. Cover and freeze until firm, about 4 hours or overnight.

To make the wafers: Position two racks in the center and upper third of the oven and preheat to 325°F (165°C/Gas Mark 3). Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, stir the flour, oats, poppy seeds, cacao nibs, baking powder, and salt together until well combined. In a separate bowl, use a rubber spatula to stir butter and sugar together. Add the egg and vanilla and stir until well combined. Add the dry ingredients all at once and stir until just combined.

Drop the batter by rounded teaspoons onto the prepared baking sheets at least 2 inches apart. The wafers will spread and flatten quite a bit as they bake. Bake the wafers, rotating the pans in the oven halfway through from top to bottom and front to back, until lacy and golden brown on the edges, 9 to 11 minutes. Let the wafers cool completely on the baking sheets, then carefully remove them from the parchment paper. Repeat until all of the batter is used.

To assemble: Remove the ice cream from the freezer about 10 minutes before you want to make the sandwiches, to soften slightly. Decide how many sandwiches you want to make, and select twice as many wafers. Flip half of the wafers over so their flat sides are up. Top each wafer with a small scoop of ice cream (a cookie scoop works great for this)

and top the ice cream with another wafer, flat side down. Put the sandwiches on a parchment-lined baking sheet or plate and refreeze until they're firm, about 45 minutes. Either serve them immediately, or wrap them individually in plastic wrap and store for up to two days in the freezer.

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CRÈME FRAÎCHE

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP (225G)

Crème fraîche is a tart French-style sour cream. It is a bit more subtle in flavor than American sour cream, and I love to use it both as a garnish and as an ingredient in sweet and savory cooking. It can sometimes be difficult to find at the grocery store, but it is very simple to make at home. Add a tablespoon or two of maple syrup to the finished crème fraîche for a slightly sweet variation.

1 cup (240ml) heavy cream

2 tablespoons buttermilk

Stir the cream and buttermilk together in a glass container. Cover and let sit at room temperature for 12 to 24 hours, or until the cream has thickened to the consistency of soft sour cream and has a tart, tangy flavor. Store the crème fraîche in the refrigerator, covered, for up to seven days.

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VANILLA EXTRACT

MAKES 1 CUP (240ML)

You may have noticed that I use vanilla beans a lot in this book, which I know can be prohibitively expensive. But vanilla beans are quite economical if you buy them in bulk online. I tend to buy a pound of beans once a year, which is enough to make a big batch of vanilla extract, use whole in recipes, and even give some away to friends. If you don't think you can use an entire pound of beans (usually about fifty), it is worth it to ask a friend or two to split an order with you. Feel free to use this ratio to make more or less extract, depending on your needs.

6 vanilla beans

1 cup (240ml) vodka

1 glass jar or bottle with a tight fitting lid

Slice each vanilla bean in half lengthwise and place them in a glass jar or bottle. Trim the beans to fit the jar if necessary. Pour the vodka over the top, and make sure the beans are completely covered with alcohol. Screw the lid on tightly and give the jar a good shake. Put the jar in a dark, cool place (but not somewhere you'll forget about it) and let it infuse for at least two months before using. Shake the jar every couple of days. After two months, you can strain the extract into another bottle to remove the seeds or continue to let the extract infuse for up to one year.

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