

Versatile Vanilla Pastry Cream

This quickly made, rich tasting pastry cream is a good base for many desserts, such as pies and tarts, however it can also be used as a thick, rich-tasting sauce for a wide variety of other desserts, such as parfaits and trifles and to transform Drop Biscuits into Shortcakes.

Tip: Add some water or plant milk to blender before washing it out. Run on high and save the sweet cashew “water” to use in smoothies.

Yield: about 1 1/2 cups / 12 ounces / 360ml

Ingredients

5 ounces /143 grams raw cashews, rinsed, soak 4 hours to overnight, or hot soak

1 cup/237 ml canned full-fat unsweetened coconut milk, mixed thoroughly (do not use light)

6 tablespoons/79grams organic cane sugar

1 tablespoon (1/2 ounce /15ml) neutral-tasting extra-virgin olive oil or any neutral oil

1/8 teaspoon fine sea salt

3/8 tsp/91grams agar powder

1/8 tsp / 0.325grams guar gum

Seeds from one 2-inch vanilla bean or 1 tablespoon (1/2 ounce/15ml) pure vanilla extract

Procedure

1. Rinse and drain the cashews in a strainer. It is important that the cashews are drained well before starting recipe.
2. Blend together the cashews, coconut milk, sugar, oil, guar gum and salt, in high speed blender, starting on low. Increase the speed to high and blend for 2 minutes, or until the mixture is smooth, thick, and hot. You will see steam coming from top of blender.
3. Next, add the agar powder. Blend, starting on low, and quickly increase the speed to high. Blend for about 2 minutes, or until the mixture boils--it will actually sputter. If you hear the motor laboring at any point, or if the cream stops moving, use the tamper to move and push the cream until it starts moving again. Add the vanilla bean seeds and extract and pulse to combine.
4. Immediately pour the cream into a container. It will be very thick, and easiest to remove from the blender while it's hot.
5. Cool to room temperature, cover, and refrigerate for at least 4 hours. The pastry cream will continue to thicken as it chills. Stir before using.
6. Refrigerate in a covered container for up to 3 days. Freeze for up to 2 months- frozen it tastes like ice cream. Stir before using.

Variations:

- Omit the guar and agar to make a pouring cream.
- Use coconut sugar to make a delicious, almost butterscotch cream.
- Freeze for instant “ice cream”.
- Add finely grated zest of an organic lemon for a fresh addition.
- Add 1/4 teaspoon, or more, almond extract for more of an amaretto flavor.
- Swirl some ganache into the cream — just barely mix in the chocolate, for a nice contrast.
- Mix with thawed frozen blueberries. Use the juice from defrosted berries too.