

Vegan Dreamsicle Parfait

At the farmers market this weekend I was suddenly seized by the need to buy a 6-pound bag of organic Valencia oranges. I don't know why but for some reason this fruit, which I usually walk right by, was calling to me like a siren. So I bought the oranges, brought them home, put them in a bowl, ate one, and then wondered what I was going to do with a bowl full of oranges. What I eventually came up with is my dairy-free take on an orange creamsicle. (Today's lesson: cooking for yourself is often inspired by impulse purchases.)

When I was a kid, desserts didn't grow on trees and by that, I mean my mom was a bit miserly when it came to frozen treats. Ice cream, sure, but anything fancier than that – like fudgsicles or creamsicles – were deemed too frivolous for the likes of us. Don't ask me to explain parenting in the 70s because I can't.

But now I'm a grown up and I can eat anything I want. This recipe makes six very pretty parfaits – perfect for a dinner party!

Serves 6

Prep time: 30 minutes, plus overnight soaking, and an hour to let the pudding set.

INGREDIENTS

Chia pudding

6 cups vanilla flavored, unsweetened nut or help milk
1.5 cups of chia seeds
6 tablespoons pure maple syrup
3 teaspoons vanilla extract
A hearty dash of kosher salt

Fruity filling

2 cups soaked cashews (soak first, then measure)
6 super juicy Valencia oranges, peeled and seeds removed
1 cup frozen strawberries
1 frozen banana, cut into fourths
¼ cup vanilla flavored, unsweetened nut or help milk
2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, combine the nut or hemp milk, chia seeds, syrup, vanilla, and salt. Whisk vigorously. Place the bowl in the refrigerator overnight so that the chia seeds can set.

Place the cashews in a medium bowl, cover with filtered water and let soak overnight. (I usually place a clean dish cloth over the bowl and leave it out on the counter to soak.)

The next day the chia pudding will be done and ready to go (so easy).

To make the fruity filling: place 2 cups of the cashews in a Vitamix blender, add the oranges and the milk and whir it up. Then add the strawberries, banana, syrup and vanilla and whir it again.

In a pretty glass (stemware works nicely for this), layer in a few spoonfuls of the chia pudding on the bottom, then add a layer of the fruity filling (pour it right from the Vitamix), and then a final layer of the chia pudding. Top with a little strawberry or orange slice to make it extra nice.

Pro tips:

- Peel the oranges whole, simply by slicing off the peels with a sharp knife. Then, over a bowl, tear the orange apart with your hands to remove the seeds. Do it over a bowl to catch all the juice because that's going in the Vitamix.
- Frozen bananas are fantastic to have on hand. Whenever I buy a bunch, I peel four or five, break them in half and pop them into Ziploc baggies. They're great for smoothies.