

Chocolate Mint Soufflé

I have always thought of soufflés as intimidating for a home cook. And I am not wild about last-minute potchkeying, as my mother would say. But Sherry changed my mind. If you have the ingredients prepped in advance, all you must do is excuse yourself for a few minutes to beat the egg whites, fold them into the egg-chocolate mixture, and bake, and—voilà—you have a stunning dessert. And if you overcook the soufflé, relax: it will become the flourless molten chocolate cake that we all dearly love.

Serves 6

½ cup (118 ml) milk

1 vanilla bean, split and scraped (set the pods aside and put them in your sugar bowl to make vanilla sugar)

Handful of fresh mint leaves, finely chopped, plus a few sprigs for garnish

10 tablespoons (125 grams) granulated sugar

5 tablespoons good-quality unsweetened cocoa powder

6 ounces (170 grams) 70% chocolate

5 large eggs, separated, at room temperature

Confectioners' sugar, for sprinkling

1. Warm the milk to a simmer, then remove it from the heat, scrape the vanilla bean into it, and add the chopped mint. Turn off the heat, and infuse the mixture overnight, refrigerated.

2. The next day, generously butter a 10-ounce soufflé mold, and chill it in the refrigerator until you are ready to fill it and bake.

3. Remove the vanilla bean, and strain out the mint, pressing firmly to release the milk into a medium bowl. Add the granulated sugar and cocoa powder, and whisk until the cocoa is incorporated. Melt the chocolate briefly in a microwave or in a double boiler, and fold it into the milk mixture, whisking well to blend. Then add the egg yolks, again whisking well. You can do this several hours ahead of time.

4. A half hour before serving, preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

5. Beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form. Carefully fold the chocolate mixture into the whites, until incorporated; then quickly pour the mixture into the cold soufflé mold, smooth the top with a spatula, and put it directly into the oven. Bake for 15 minutes—not a minute more. Serve, sprinkled with the confectioners' sugar and with sprigs of fresh mint for garnish.

