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Mastering Rêve Bistro's Nougat Glace

By Susie Iventosch



Reve's Nougat Glace Photo Susie Iventosch

I am so pleased that Laura and Paul Magu, owners of Rêve Bistro in Lafayette, have offered to share this refreshing Nougat Glace, a dessert which they recently added to their spring menu. It is delicious.

While nougat candy finds its origins around the 12th century in the Middle East, French nougat was a relative latecomer in the 17th century and hails from the city of Montélimar in the Rhone-Alpes region. There are strict requirements for the nougat to be considered Montélimar nougat: it must be made of 28 percent peeled almonds, 16 percent lavender honey, two percent pistachio nuts, and the rest is sugar and whipped egg whites. The candies may be crunchy and hard, or soft and chewy.

This frozen nougat concoction from Rêve is not like anything I've ever made or even tasted before. It is a lighter, whipped and frozen version of the typical nougat candy that we normally see. This is very creamy, light and fluffy.

"It's a classic French dish which comes from Provence," said Laura Magu. "It is really tasty, light and refreshing."

Laura says this dish is not really typical of any American dessert and she and Paul are really excited to introduce it to the Lamorinda

community. I asked her about the use of raw egg whites, since some people are skittish about that, and she said that powdered egg whites or meringue powder could be used to replace the fresh egg whites. I also read that using the pasteurized egg whites is a good way to go.

To see how they would work, I made the recipe twice - once using fresh egg whites from the shells and the second time I used the pasteurized egg whites from the carton. They were both excellent, and the primary difference was that the fresh egg white nougat glacé was creamier, while the one with whites from the carton was a bit icier. I really enjoyed both, but have to say, the creaminess of the one with fresh egg whites was divine. If any of you try this with powdered egg whites, please let me know how it works out.

Rêve serves this dessert in a pool of strawberry or raspberry sauce and crème Anglaise, which is a very thin vanilla custard. You can find many recipes for crème Anglaise on the internet, and it's basically made of milk or half and half, egg yolks, sugar and vanilla.

The Magus have really enjoyed their experience of owning a bistro in Lafayette and serving typical French cuisine to their loyal customers. Laura pointed out, "It's so rewarding when our customers try a dish of ours and say 'it's just like I remember it in Paris' or 'it's the best I've had since I was in France!'"

I am certain, you will be delighted with this beautiful dessert from Rêve.

Nougat Glace

INGREDIENTS

1/3 pound sliced almonds (approximately 1 3/4 cups loosely packed)

1 pound superfine sugar, divided (2 and 1/3 cups)

6 egg whites (or equivalent if using packaged or powdered)

2 cups heavy whipping cream

Dried fruit or candied citrus peel (optional)

Raspberries or strawberries for purée sauce.

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees and line a terrine dish (about 12 x 3 inches) with wax paper.

Warm the almonds in the oven for 3-4 minutes or until golden brown.

Heat one third of the sugar (2/3 cup plus 2 Tbsp.) in a heavy pan, until it starts to caramelize.* Stir in the warm almonds and pour onto an oiled cookie sheet.

Leave to cool and set. When cool, crush into small pieces using a rolling pin. (This is delicious and I reserved a little bit of this nut crunch for garnish.)

Meanwhile, whip the egg whites and the rest of the sugar together to make a stiff meringue.

In a separate bowl, whip the cream to stiff peaks and then fold together with the meringue and crushed almonds mixture. (Add fruit at this time, if you choose to add it ... I did not.)

Fill the terrine dish to the top and place in the freezer until hard - at least 24 hours.

To serve, remove from the freezer and from the dish. Slice and serve on top of a pool of strawberry or raspberry sauce.

Active time: about 45 minutes to one hour. Total time 24 hours.

*Susie's note on caramelizing the sugar: This takes about four minutes. Stir the sugar constantly. Just as soon as the sugar is melted and the lumps are gone, it's time to remove it from the heat. It will be a beautiful caramel color. I burned my first batch by letting it stay on the burner too long.

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