

Homemade “Cherry Garcia” Ice Cream with Cherry Swirl Syrup and Chocolate Malt Waffles – Comfort du Jour

When you’re in love, you do crazy things. Not that making your sweetheart’s favorite foods is *crazy*, mind you, but I do think it’s possible to push the envelope quite far, as I have done at times in my quest to tantalize my husband’s taste buds and his deep, deep love of all things chocolate and cherry. This dessert might qualify as “too far.”

The ice cream itself is decadent, and I do recommend the cherry syrup. If you are a sourdough baker, I also recommend the chocolate malt waffles, but this dessert certainly does not depend on them. Enjoy!

ICE CREAM INGREDIENTS

14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk (full-fat or reduced are OK)
1 cup whole milk
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
1 tsp. real vanilla extract
2 Tbsp. Luxardo cherry syrup* (see notes)
A few drops red food coloring (optional)
1 oz. vodka (optional), added at last minute of freezing for improved texture
1/2 cup semi-sweet chocolate chunks (or chips), to be layered with ice cream at the end
Cherry swirl syrup (recipe below), to be layered with ice cream at the end and drizzled on at serving

*NOTES

I added the Luxardo syrup on a whim, because we always have these luscious cocktail cherries in the fridge. The syrup on these is *very* thick (almost like hot fudge sauce); if you have different cocktail cherries, I would only recommend using the syrup if it is similarly thick. Light syrup or liquid will not play as nicely with the ice cream mixture.

ICE CREAM INSTRUCTIONS

Whisk together condensed milk and whole milk. Add syrup from Luxardo cherries, if you have it, and red color, if you wish. Stir in heavy cream and vanilla. Cover the bowl and refrigerate several hours before freezing in ice cream maker.

Follow your ice cream maker’s instructions for freezing. When it reaches soft-serve consistency, add the still-frozen cherry bits and churn until evenly incorporated. In the final minute of mixing, add the vodka (if you’re using it) and churn until it is fully blended. Any neutral vodka is fine, or if you wish, a flavored one that pairs with the ice cream flavors, such as vanilla or whipped cream.

Transfer 1/3 of the churned ice cream to an insulated container. Sprinkle on 1/2 of the chocolate chunks and about two tablespoons of the cherry swirl syrup. Repeat with another 1/3 of the ice cream, the remaining chocolate chunks and another two tablespoons of the cherry syrup. The final layer should be the last 1/3 of the ice cream. Swirl it lightly with a spatula or knife, if you wish. Cover the container and freeze overnight before serving.

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CHERRY SWIRL SYRUP

1/2 bag frozen dark sweet cherries, divided* (see notes)
1/4 cup organic cane sugar
1/2 cup pure cherry juice*
1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
3 Tbsp. light corn syrup
3 Tbsp. cherry-infused balsamic vinegar*
2 Tbsp. amaretto liqueur (optional, but yummy)

*NOTES

I use the frozen dark sweet cherries from Trader Joe’s, and it is a 16 oz. bag. You will use a total of 1/2 bag frozen cherries, but that amount will be divided between a syrup and frozen cherry bits that will be mixed into the ice cream at the end. So, 4 oz. for the syrup and 4 oz. to be chopped and mixed into the ice cream at the end.

Check the cherry juice label to be sure it is 100% cherry juice, and not cherry mixed with apple or white grape juice. Most supermarkets carry a pure cherry juice, but I really like the one found at Trader Joe’s, in the tall, slender bottle (not the tart cherry juice).

The cherry-infused balsamic vinegar is my secret weapon in this recipe. The sweet-meets-tart flavor of this product adds a big, rich flavor to the cherry syrup—which of course runs through the ice cream, so every spoonful benefits from it. Find this yumminess in a specialty oil and vinegar shop or online.

CHERRY SWIRL SYRUP INSTRUCTIONS

Put half of the frozen cherries in the bowl of a food processor and pulse a few times to roughly chop them. Transfer the chunks to a freezer-safe bowl and put them immediately back into the freezer. If the cherries thaw, they will get icy when you re-freeze them, so it’s smart to move quickly, and keep them frozen until you’re ready to layer them into the churned ice cream.

Place a heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat. Add the remaining amount of frozen cherries, the sugar and the cherry juice. Squeeze in about a tablespoon of fresh lemon juice to prevent discoloration. Cook until sugar is dissolved and mixture is slightly thickened. Stir in corn syrup to prevent crystallization when the mixture is cooled.

Stir in the cherry-infused balsamic vinegar and amaretto (if using). Cool the mixture somewhat, then scoop out the whole cherries into a separate bowl. Strain the syrup through a mesh sieve into a measuring glass, then transfer about 1/2 cup of it into a small squeeze bottle if you have one. Any remaining syrup can be added back to the reserved whole cherries, and it will make a wonderful topping for your ice cream.

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SOURDOUGH CHOCOLATE MALT WAFFLES

My recipe is drawn from King Arthur’s website, and the only thing I did differently was to halve the original recipe and add a smidgeon of espresso powder to amplify the chocolate flavor.

Adapted from [Chocolate Malt Waffles | King Arthur Baking](#)

The amounts I used are listed below (by weight), for convenience. I have a bad habit of trying to halve ingredients as I go, and I usually make a crucial mistake. This time, I scribbled down the amounts in advance!

It begins with an overnight starter:

113g ripe sourdough starter
142g room temperature water
85g white whole wheat flour

Stir above ingredients together and ferment at room temperature 7 hours or overnight

21g dark cocoa powder
35g malted milk powder (KA sells one, but I used Carnation brand from the supermarket)
1/2 tsp. baking powder
3/8 tsp. salt* (I used kosher salt and measured out 1/2 teaspoon, but shook off excess)
1/4 tsp. espresso powder* (my addition, to intensify the chocolate flavor)
75g organic cane sugar

Whisk together dry ingredients in a separate bowl

3 Tbsp. melted butter
1 egg
1 tsp. real vanilla extract

Combine in a large batter bowl. Blend in dry ingredients, then fold in the overnight starter.

1/3 cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips (fold in just before making the waffles)

King Arthur’s recipe suggests using a Belgian waffle maker for these waffles. Be sure you use enough batter at a time to make a complete waffle. My first one was skimpy, and the batter ran through the iron unevenly. Don’t follow my example! 😊

Also, note that these waffles will emerge from the iron very soft and delicate, but as they cool, they will transform into crispy bites. If you plan to separate the waffle sections, consider doing it immediately after removal from the iron, while you can still cut them without breaking the delicate crispy exterior.