

TIRAMISÙ WITH AMARETTO

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Tiramisù (which translates as 'pick me up') is a modern version of a dessert first created in Tuscany, where it was known in the 19th century as 'zuppa inglese' (English soup), because of the popularity of the dessert among the English living in the region. The original dessert had a custard base, but this was later replaced with mascarpone. There are often variations in the liqueur used. Some cooks like to use a coffee liqueur (Tia Maria), while others prefer Irish cream (Baileys), strega (an Italian herbal liqueur containing saffron) or Marsala wine. Personally, I think that nothing beats the almond-flavoured liqueur amaretto.

Serves 8

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| 350ml cold strong black coffee, preferably espresso | 6 tablespoons caster sugar |
| 150ml amaretto (almond liqueur) | 500g mascarpone cheese |
| 200ml double cream | 36 Savoiardi sponge fingers (ladyfingers) |
| 5 medium eggs, separated | Cocoa powder for dusting |

1] Put the coffee in a medium bowl and stir in 4 tablespoons of the amaretto. Set aside.

2] Pour the cream into a medium bowl and whip until thick enough to just hold its shape and form soft peaks. Set aside.

3] Place the egg yolks and sugar in a large bowl and whisk using a balloon whisk for about 5 minutes until thick and pale. Add the mascarpone and beat thoroughly. Gently fold in the whipped cream and remaining amaretto.

4] Put the egg whites in a separate bowl and whisk with an electric hand whisk on full speed until they form stiff peaks. Using a metal spoon, gently fold one third of the egg whites into the mascarpone mixture until well blended. Fold in the remaining egg whites in 2 stages. Set aside.

5] Dip one of the biscuits in the coffee for 2 seconds (no longer) and place it in the bottom of a 20 x 30 x 7cm ceramic dish, with the sugar-side facing upwards. Repeat until the bottom of the dish is covered with half the biscuits.

6] Spread half the mascarpone mixture over the biscuits, then cover with another layer of the remaining biscuits dipped in coffee as previously. Spread the remaining mascarpone mixture on top and smooth the surface using a palette knife. Cover with cling film and refrigerate for 3 hours. Just before serving, remove the cling film and dust with cocoa powder.

