

Coconut Banana Cream Pudding

8–12 servings

Pudding is like a very soft and comfortable sweater that you like wearing around the house but wouldn't necessarily wear to, say, a party. In other words, it's not much to look at, but layer that pudding with limey bananas and whipped tangy yogurt, and top it with a festive maraschino cherry, and all of a sudden it's like in the movies when the "nerdy girl" takes off her glasses, lets her hair down, and reveals that she was, indeed, "a total babe" this whole time.

The most annoying part of making this dessert is the fact that you've got to use a lot of bowls, which I admit is pretty annoying. So first and foremost, thanks for playing along; you may be spending the whole day washing bowls, but you won't be sorry at the end of it all, because you'll have a lot of delicious coconut banana cream pudding. Anyway, the great part about this whole thing is that from there, it's an extremely casual assembly. No need to measure or ration, no tools required other than a spoon, plus you can truly use anything you like to house the pudding—a fun bowl, a trifle dish, a springform pan, a bucket. Whatever you have will work, and it'll be great! Remember, this is fun, okay?

FOR THE PUDDING

8 large egg yolks

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup cornstarch

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar, divided

2 cups heavy cream

2 (14-ounce) cans full-fat coconut milk

Pinch of kosher salt

Pinch of ground turmeric (optional)

1 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup light brown sugar

4 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{2}$ stick) unsalted butter, cut into 1-inch pieces, softened

FOR THE ASSEMBLY

2 cups heavy cream

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup confectioners' sugar

Pinch of kosher salt

1 cup full-fat Greek yogurt

6 firm bananas, peeled and thinly sliced

2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

1 (11-ounce) box Nilla wafers or graham crackers

Maraschino cherries (optional)

1. Make the pudding. Whisk the egg yolks, cornstarch, and half of the granulated sugar in a medium bowl until pale and fluffy.

2. Heat the cream, coconut milk, remaining granulated sugar, salt, and the turmeric and vanilla, if using, in a medium pot over medium heat. Stir and heat until just simmering.

3. Slowly and gradually whisk about half of the cream mixture into the egg yolk mixture (this is to prevent the egg yolks from cooking). Then, stir the warmed egg yolk mixture into the pot with the cream and, whisking constantly, cook until it thickens and starts to bubble up and look like something that is so hot it could hurt you if it touched your skin (it can, so be careful!!!), 3 to 5 minutes.
4. Remove from the heat and whisk in the brown sugar and butter, whisking, whisking, whisking until the brown sugar has dissolved and the butter has melted.
5. Transfer the pudding to a baking dish (you can use a bowl if you don't have one, but basically this pudding should cool as quickly as possible so you want to use something wider than it is deep). Place plastic wrap directly on top of the pudding (to prevent that inevitable weird pudding skin) and place in the refrigerator to cool completely, at least 1 hour (depending on your fridge).
6. Assemble the dessert. Using an electric mixer or a whisk and good ol' fashioned elbow grease, whip the cream, confectioners' sugar, and salt in a medium bowl until medium-stiff peaks form. Gently whisk in the yogurt.
7. Toss the bananas and lime juice together in a medium bowl. This will make them taste very good and prevent browning.
8. Take out whatever fun vessel you'll be using for this assembly and spoon a bit of the coconut pudding on the bottom, followed by a layer of wafers, followed by a layer of pudding, followed by a layer of bananas, followed by a layer of whipped cream mixture. Continue layering in that order, beginning with the wafers, and ending with the whipped cream. Do not worry about getting the layers totally even, that is not the point; just eyeball it to make sure you won't run out of anything while building the layers (but if you did, not the end of the world).
9. Chill the assembled pudding at least 2 hours, until everything is set and kind of settled into each other. When you're ready to serve, top with whatever you feel like—say, a maraschino cherry, toasted coconut flakes, or even some shaved chocolate. Serve with a large serving spoon and a few bowls, or just set out multiple spoons and eat directly out of the vessel. We're all friends here!