

Riccardo Magni

SWEET DREAMS

Professional Pastry
with an Italian Accent



BIBLIOTHECA CULINARIA



Professional



DAIRY PRODUCTS

The rich French pastry tradition, with its historical reliance on butter and cream, continues to inspire most professional training. This is true to such an extent that when we use ingredients like ricotta, mascarpone, yogurt (or extra virgin olive oil), these fats are viewed as “alternatives” even though they may be widely employed in the desserts of other cultures. Taste and performance, a term that may aggregate such notions as structure, mouthfeel, shelf-life and dietary needs, will always be the criteria by which we measure the suitability of an ingredient, but often at least two of these (taste and mouthfeel) are strongly influenced by preconceived notions. Do remember that blind tasting frequently offers pleasant surprises.

The flavors and textures provided by the predominately saturated fats of butter and cream are extraordinary but, their ubiquity should not lull us into believing they are our only options for quality desserts. This chapter (as well as that for recipes including extra virgin olive oil) is offered as a point of departure for exploring how these “other” fats can influence everything from génoise to creams to gelato. I have, for example, dared to fill bignè with a ricotta-based cream; I’ve topped éclairs with a blend of whipped cream and mascarpone and I’ve cranked up the tanginess of a white chocolate filling by adding yogurt. Creative license or heresy? The desire to personalize a recipe is instinctive; the dispassionate analysis of one’s own creativity, far less so. It’s essential to be able to pinpoint what the change adds to the final outcome. Change in and of itself is not necessarily a virtue.

Sunbeam Bigné

The Italian sunshine is captured in this dessert where the distinct flavor of ricotta matches the acidity of lemon, present in both a cream filling and a gel. An important ingredient in sweet and savory Italian cuisine, ricotta is not technically a cheese, but a byproduct of the cheese-making process. When sourced from artisanal producers this dairy product lends an authentically Italian flavor to a French classic like a bigné.

COMPONENTS

_ yellow brittle
_ bigné
_ lemon cream and foam
_ lemon gel
_ chocolate decoration

YIELD

18 single servings

Yellow Brittle

160 g butter
200 g granulated sugar
200 g pastry flour
lemon yellow water-soluble
powdered food coloring

In a vertical mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, mix the ingredients in the listed order terminating with the food coloring diluted in a little water. Spread a very thin layer of the batter between two sheets of acetate. Refrigerate and then cut out at least 18 discs of two differing diameters (1.5 and 3 cm) to be placed on the bigné before baking.

Bigné

250 g whole milk
250 g water
15 g salt
10 g granulated sugar
220 g butter, in pieces
280 g pastry flour
500 g eggs

In a large saucepan bring the milk, water, salt, sugar, and butter (in pieces) to

a boil. Add the flour all at once and mix well. Continue cooking, making sure to exceed 85 °C (185 °F) so that the starches will gel correctly. The batter should pull away from the walls of the pan. Cool the mixture to 60 °C (140 °F), transfer to a vertical mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, add the eggs and emulsify.

Line baking sheets with micro perforated silicone mats and, with the aid of a pastry bag fitted with a smooth tip, form two series of bigné with diameters of 1.5 and 3 cm (3/4 and 1 1/4 in). Apply the prepared discs of brittle and bake in a preheated static oven at 200 °C (392 °F) for 18 minutes with the valve open.

Lemon Cream and Foam

50 g lemon juice
25 g invert sugar
150 g butter
50 g egg yolks
100 g granulated sugar
grated zest of 1 organic lemon
125 g cow's milk ricotta
195 g whipping cream

Bring the lemon juice to a boil with the invert sugar and the butter. Add the egg yolks, granulated sugar, and lemon zest. Heat to 85 °C (185 °F) and emulsify with an immersion blender. Blast chill to 4 °C (39 °F).

Reserve 150 g of the lemon cream for filling the smaller bigné. Carefully fold the ricotta and the whipped cream into the remaining 220 g of the lemon cream. Use this mixture to fill the

larger bigné after having introduced a drop of the lemon gel. Reserve at 4 °C (39 °F).

Lemon Gel

225 g granulated sugar
6 g NH pectin
250 g lemon juice
125 g water
25 g glucose syrup DE 60

Disperse the pectin in the sugar. In a saucepan, combine the sugar, lemon juice, water, and glucose syrup. Bring to 104 °C (219 °F) then cool to 4 °C (39 °F).

Chocolate Decoration

350 g white chocolate Edelweiss 36%
Melt the chocolate in a microwave oven at 44 °C (111 °F) and temper it at 29 °C (84 °F). Spread it in a very thin layer on sheets of acetate. As soon as the chocolate begins to crystallize, cut out 2.5 cm (1 in) squares, turn them over and store them in a climate-controlled area (16 °C / 61 °F / 55% relative humidity).

PREPARATION

AND PRESENTATION

Fix the smaller bigné to the larger ones with a few drops of lemon cream. Use the same to adhere the white chocolate decorations. Complete with a drop of lemon gel and silver leaf.





WINES AND SPIRITS

A pastry chef's work is often like that of a typesetter. Basic components, like the letters of the alphabet, are manipulated and eventually assembled in an order their creator deems harmonious. Personal style is expressed through subtle adjustments, flourishes and/or emphases. The use of wines and spirits is akin to underlining; their presence directs attention in a very specific and defined way and, like that black line running under a phrase, they can cause ingredients to stand out. Alcohol is a polar and very volatile molecule, able to interact with both fat and water-soluble ingredients liberating aromas that constitute 80% of the tasting experience. A pan di Spagna soaked in a liquor-tinged syrup is quickly perceived, even when it takes the form of an insert and is enclosed by other components of a dessert.

The strong flavors associated with alcoholic ingredients demand careful dosage so as not to upset the delicate equilibrium of a dessert and it should be remembered that their influence extends to texture as well as flavor. As liquids they increase the overall moisture content contributing to a softer crumb. They rejuvenate dried fruits, not only improving their texture, but also preventing them from leaching moisture from batters during baking. Alcohol also lowers the freezing point of water, an important point to remember when preparing frozen desserts.

In the recipes that follow I've relied on Italian wines and alcohol based aromas to add depth and definition to different types of preparations. Given the large number of products available and the necessarily restricted scope of this chapter, I have used them in different ways to highlight their versatility. You will find a raised dough infused with a citrus aroma, a semi-freddo made with a fortified wine, a cream laced with a sparkling wine, fruit compotes enhanced with dessert wines, and a cake batter studded with dried fruit soaked in acquavite. The alcohol, present in different components, directs sensory attention by underlining flavors and aromas.

Tangerine-Passion Fruit Babà (Sous-Vide)

An extraordinary, ethereal structure is the salient quality of these Babà. Redolent of citrus with just a touch of exotic aroma, they offer a particularly memorable tasting experience.

A single bite will transport you to Southern Italy. I've employed an unusual cooking technique (sous-vide in hermetically-sealable jars) because it not only extends the conservation of this traditional dessert but also allows for a more flexible approach to sales and consumption.

COMPONENTS

_ babà base
_ tangerine-passion fruit syrup

YIELD

12 babà

Babà Base

175 g bread flour (400 w)
3 g granulated sugar
90 g water
20 g fresh (compressed) yeast

Blend the ingredients to create the pre-ferment (biga). Allow to rest for 30 minutes at 24-26 °C (75-79 °F) and 65% relative humidity. The mass should triple in volume.

830 g bread flour (400 w)
10 g fresh (compressed) yeast
70 g honey
20 g salt
450 g butter (18 °C / 64 °F)
975 g eggs (4 °C / 39 °F)

In a vertical mixer fitted with a dough hook begin working the pre-ferment with the yeast, honey, flour and half of the eggs. When the gluten structure begins to develop, add the remaining eggs, butter, and the salt in a few additions.

Divide the dough into 170 g portions, roll each and place in a lightly buttered 850 ml jar suitable for sous-vide cooking. Allow to rise at 26-28 °C (79-82 °F) for approximately 90 minutes. Transfer the jars to perforated baking sheets and bake in a preheated 170-180 °C (338-356 °F) oven for 20 minutes. Open the valve and complete cooking at the same temperature for an additional 12-14 minutes. Cool.

Tangerine-Passion Fruit Syrup

950 g granulated sugar
350 g passion fruit puree
450 g tangerine juice
100 g water
200 g Mandarino distillate
200 g natural infusion Orange Royale

Dissolve the sugar in the fruit puree and tangerine juice. Add the water, the Mandarino distillate and the Orange Royale. Mix well and reserve at (4 °C / 39 °F).

PREPARATION

AND PRESENTATION

Bring the fruit syrup to 60 °C (140 °F). Soak each babà in 300 g of syrup and transfer to hermetically sealable jars. Place in a preheated 120 °C (248 °F) oven for approximately 16-18 minutes. Cool and gently turn the jars upside down to “unmold” the babà. Store at room temperature opening only when serving. Portion with a serrated knife and accompany with sweetened whipped cream with a touch of vanilla.



The sous-vide technique confers a much longer shelf-life on the babà (up to a few months) with no loss to their organoleptic qualities.





HERBS, SPICES, AND AROMAS

On average, only 20% of our gustatory experience is attributable to taste receptors on the tongue. Aromas, perceived through the nose (orthonasal) and through the mouth (retronasal) have a far the greater influence on the way we perceive flavor, as anyone who has ever had a cold soon discovers. The number of aromatic and volatile compounds present in different ingredients varies widely. Coffee, for example, contains nearly a thousand while a wild strawberry has fewer than eighty. Aromatic herbs, flowers and spices offer very particular scents, often notable for their persistency as well as their intensity. Used judiciously, they can be among the most intriguing ingredients at a pastry chef's disposal.

Because their essential oils are most often extracted through maceration or distillation these aromatics are often invisible in the finished dessert. They are sensed, but not susceptible to our laziest form of identification: sight. With olfactory attention sharpened, a new and more focused concentration is brought to the tasting experience. Those gifted with a fine sense of smell may be quicker to pinpoint the particular aromatic "surprise" that has been added to a batter or cream, but others may require bit more time and attention to arrive at a conclusion. When an ingredient is an unexpected presence, the moment of focalization expands, as consciousness tends to insist on identification.

In the recipes that follow I have introduced jasmine, basil, thyme and saffron, fragrances (and flavors) that you might not expect to encounter in a dessert, yet I have also included coffee and vanilla. It is challenging to try and give these more familiar aromatic presences fresh expression.

Lemon Basil Gelato Sandwich

A Mediterranean take on a perennial favorite, this ice cream sandwich features a gelato made with olive oil and infused with the aromas of basil and lemon. By using the citrus zest and none of the pulp, the fragrance is drawn from the essential oil, a technique that confers lemon flavor without the usual acidity. A touch of almond in the sandwich component brings another fruit, which thrives in the Mediterranean basin, into the equation.

COMPONENTS

_ almond shortcrust pastry
_ lemon-basil extra virgin
olive oil gelato
_ meringue

YIELD

18 single servings

Almond Shortcrust Pastry

230 g butter (8-12 °C /46-54 °F)
115 g powdered sugar
115 g almond tpt
95 g eggs
3 g salt
4 g natural Tahiti vanilla extract
443 g pastry flour

In a vertical mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter with the sugar and the tpt. Add the eggs, salt, and vanilla and, when blended, add the flour beating until just combined. Reserve at 4 °C (39 °F) for 12 hours.

Roll out the dough to a 2.5 mm (scant 1/8 in) thickness and cut out 18 rectangles that are slightly larger than the molds selected for the ice cream. Chill and place on baking sheets lined with micro perforated silicone mats. Bake in a preheated 160 °C (320 °F) oven for approximately 14 minutes.

Lemon-Basil Extra virgin Olive Oil Gelato

5 g basil leaves
6 g organic lemon peel
918 g whole milk
135 g granulated sugar
105 g dextrose powder
5 g stabilizer
37 g lpm (low-fat powdered milk)
105 g extra virgin olive oil
(a light and fruity variety)

Allow the basil leaves and lemon zest to infuse the milk for 12 hours at 4 °C (39 °F).

Heat the milk and pass through a conical sieve. Disperse the dextrose powder, stabilizer and powdered milk in the sugar and add to the milk. Begin the pasteurization process by bringing the mixture to 82-85 °C (180-185 °F). Emulsify the oil when the temperature is in the descending phase. Chill and mature the mixture and churn in an ice cream machine according to the manufacturer's instructions. Distribute among 18 rectangular molds and blast chill to -18 °C (0 °F).

Meringue

280 g granulated sugar
3 g powdered egg whites
200 g egg whites
70 g glucose syrup DE 60

Disperse the powdered egg whites in the sugar. Add to the egg whites along with the glucose syrup and heat to 60 °C (140 °F).

Transfer to a vertical mixer fitted with the whisk attachment and beat until the mass has completely cooled. Use promptly.

PREPARATION

AND PRESENTATION

Remove the gelato from the molds and sandwich between two of the prepared rectangles of almond shortcrust pastry. Decorate with the meringue and color with a kitchen torch. Complete with leaves of crystalized basil, discs of white chocolate and gold leaf.



Extra virgin olive oil is the unexpected ingredient in this summer treat. It not only adds a beautifully smooth texture to the gelato but also gives a lift to the infused lemon and basil flavors.







Today's pastry chefs have a global pantry at their disposal, and their work has never been easier to publicize. Less ideal than it might seem at first glance, this situation is the source of a dilemma: the twin imperatives to continually embrace the new and self-promote leave less time for reflection and research and the hegemony of social media accelerates the pace. When every new creation or aesthetic flourish is quickly churned by the system, how can the professional pastry chef distinguish his work?

Riccardo Magni has responded by taking a hard look at his raw materials, reassessing fine Italian ingredients hiding in plain sight. In eight thematic chapters, he presents recipes that focus on cereals, dairy products, wines and spirits, oil and vinegar, fresh fruit, candied and preserved fruit, herbs, spices and aromas, and chocolate and nuts.

This focus, articulated in 52 recipes, led him to explore the concept of terroir, so often cited by cooks, but rarely by pastry chefs. Transforming hazelnuts, pistachios, citrus fruit, balsamic vinegar, extra virgin olive oil, mascarpone, ricotta, farro, buckwheat, basil, saffron, wine, panettone, torrone and more into innovative desserts became a way to highlight a distinctly Italian approach to pastry making. An invitation to use Italian ingredients with an Italian eye, this collection offers a fresh look at the familiar through the eyes of a seasoned professional.

*A creative force in the Italian pastry world for more than two decades, **Riccardo Magni** completed his training at the international level frequenting courses at Bellouet Conseil, Ecole Lenôtre and Richemont.*

On the domestic front, his experience extends to both restaurants (L'Albereta, Grande Hotel Villa Serbelloni) and historic pastry shops (Cova, Balzer 1850). Currently, he works as a consultant to top brands in the pastry sector and as an instructor at professional pastry academies.

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