

Mama's Old-Fashioned Banana Pudding

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups cold whole milk
1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk
1 (5.1 oz.) box instant vanilla pudding mix
3 cups heavy whipping cream, divided
3 tbsp. granulated sugar, divided
3 tsp. vanilla extract, divided
1 (15 oz.) box Vanilla Wafer cookies
5 large bananas

DIRECTIONS:

For the Pudding:

In a large bowl, whisk together the milk and sweetened condensed milk until combined. Sprinkle in the instant pudding, and mix until completely incorporated with no lumps remaining. You can do this by hand or with an electric mixer. Refrigerate for 5 minutes or until set.

Add 2 cups of cream, 2 tablespoons of sugar, and 2 teaspoons of vanilla to a bowl, then mix on high until stiff peaks form. Remove pudding from the refrigerator, then fold the whipped cream into it.

Peel the bananas and slice them into ½-inch thick coins. (I don't like to cut them until I'm ready to assemble so the slices don't turn brown.)

To assemble, add a layer of cookies to the bottom of your trifle dish or a large serving bowl. Place a quarter of the pudding mixture over the cookies, then smooth using a spatula. Add another layer of cookies, then place a row of cookies upright against the side of the dish, facing outward. Add a layer of banana slices on top. Add another quarter of the pudding mixture and smooth.

Continue layering with cookies, bananas and pudding until complete. Alternate a row of banana slices with the cookies you're pressing against the wall of the trifle dish. Chill for at least three to four hours, or cover with plastic wrap and chill overnight.

For the Topping:

Whip the remaining 1 cup of cream, remaining 1 tablespoon of sugar, and remaining 1 teaspoon of vanilla on medium speed until soft peaks form, about 2 minutes. Top the pudding with the whipped cream. Pile any remaining cookies on top, crumbling up a few, along with more banana slices if desired. Serve immediately or chill until ready to serve.

Notes

Watch the whipped cream carefully. Overwhipped cream will curdle and begin to become butter, so don't step away from the mixer while whipping the cream. The cream is ready when stiff peaks remain when you lift the beaters out of the bowl.

Dollop the pudding mixture. To preserve the placement of the cookies and sliced bananas, dollop the pudding into the trifle bowl, then smooth it out. Avoid spreading the pudding too forcefully, or the lower layers of the dish will be compromised.

A trifle dish or a large, clear glass serving bowl is best for this because it elegantly shows off the layers of the banana pudding. Feel free to experiment. I have used medium-sized Mason Jars for individual servings of the pudding and it was a huge hit. If you have medium-sized, elegant glass serving pieces, use them. Be creative!