

SEMIFREDDO ALLA FRUTTA SECCA³

Semi frozen Nuts and Dried Fruit Dessert

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| 1/4 cup (2 ounces) shelled, unpeeled hazelnuts 1/4 cup (2 ounces) shelled, blanched almonds 1/4 cup (2 ounces) raisins or currents 4 extra large eggs ¼ pound granulated sugar 1/4 cup (2 ounces) dried apricots | 1/4 cup (2 ounces) candied citron 1tbsp Grappa (I use Triple Sec, but a liqueur which augments the taste can be used.) 1 cup fresh heavy cream Powdered sugar Salt |
| An 8-cup loaf pan | Wax paper |

When Giorgio Rocca, the owner-chef of one of Piedmont's most illustrious restaurants, Da Felicin in Monforte & Alba, comes over to your table and suggests you try something he made, however unlikely the dish may sound to you, you suspend judgment until you taste it. Skepticism comes as naturally to an Italian as breathing, and I was skeptical about a frozen dessert loaded with dried fruit, but Giorgio was right-it's good. I tinkered with it at home, eventually omitting the dried figs he uses and adding candied citron, one of my favorite flavors, but it is basically the same extraordinary dish, the most opulent of semifreddi.

1. Turn on the oven to 300°.
2. Spread the hazelnuts on a baking sheet and when the oven reaches the preset temperature, put them in and roast them lightly for about 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer them to a medium-size wire strainer and rub them against the sides of the strainer to remove as much of the peel as will slip off. Another approach is to place them on ½ of a dishtowel, fold the towel and roll the folded towel on the counter top.
3. Spread the blanched almonds on a baking sheet and bake them in the 300° oven until they are lightly toasted.
4. Separate the eggs, putting the whites in a bowl where you will later beat them and the yolks in the upper part of a double boiler or in a metal bowl that can fit into a pot of water. Add the sugar to the yolks.
5. Turn the heat on to medium under the double boiler (make sure you have water in the lower half), or under the pot in which you have put the bowl with the egg yolks. Beat the yolks with a whisk or a portable mixer until they form firm, pale ribbons. Separate the top half. (I use a digital thermometer and whisk the yolks until they are at 165°) Remove the vessel holding the yolks and continue to beat them until they are cool.
6. In a food processor process the almonds, hazelnuts, raisins (or currents), apricots, candied citron and liqueur to a fine consistency (small granules).
7. Add the fruit and nut mixture to the egg yolk mixture.
8. Whip the cream and sweeten it slightly with powdered sugar.
9. Add a pinch of salt to the egg whites, beat them until they form stiff peaks, then fold the cream, the whites and the fruit-nut mixture together.
10. Line the loaf pan with wax paper, then pour or spoon the mixture in it. Cover and freeze it overnight.
11. To serve, cut in half, then quarters, then eighths. Garnish with apricot (or raspberry) sauce, a mint leaf and a few dried cherries or cranberries or chopped dried apricots if the raspberry sauce is used.

Recipe for sauce follows.

Serves 8.

³ This recipe is taken from *Marcella Cucina* by Marcella Hazan. Some changes have been made.

Raspberry Sauce⁴

½ lb. fresh raspberries or 1 bag frozen
Juice of 1 lemon
1 ¼ C sugar

Purée the ingredients in a food processor or blender for 3 minutes.

⁴ Apricot sauce may be made by replacing the raspberries with cooked, sweetened dried apricots.