

build your best...



Healthy Frozen Treats

I grew up in Oak Park, Michigan, where a summer highlight was 7-Eleven Slurpees. Could we find an adult to drive us there? Ride there on our bikes and balance the Slurpees on the way back? Would you get a small for 49 cents, or a huge cup you could literally dunk your head into? Did you have enough change left from allowance, or did you have to suffer silently while your friends went all out?

My mother wasn't a big fan of those Slurpees, and she'd freeze fruit cocktail in Dixie cups for us, with a nice wooden stick in the middle to make us think it was a real Popsicle. That worked well — until we saw what our friends had.

Alas, I am now a grown-up and wouldn't drink a Slurpee if I were paid big bucks to do it. I still enjoy the occasional frozen treat, but a much healthier version. So I'm sharing with you some of my favorite recipes, tips, and tricks for making your own frozen treats — ranging from easy homemade ice cream to store-bought hacks. But they'll all create summer memories that will last a lifetime, and are a whole lot healthier than a 24-ounce wax cup filled with Blue Raspberry Arctic Blast.



I SCREAM FOR NICE CREAM

Glad people are so excited, but wondering what it is? Nice cream is a term used for healthy ice cream made out of frozen bananas. And yes, if you leave out any additional flavorings, it does taste like bananas. But add frozen berries, flavored extracts, chocolate chips, or peanut butter, and the end result will have you believing you're indulging in the real thing, minus all the fat, sugar, and other unknown ingredients in store-bought ice cream. Here's how: Buy ripe bananas whenever you see them in the store. Peel, slice, and store in ziplock bags in the freezer. When you're ready for a treat, simply pull out your food processor and whip up those banana slices until they're soft and creamy. You'll have to scrape down the sides a few times, but be patient. The texture will end up like perfect, soft-serve ice cream. This treat is best served immediately — when frozen for more than an hour or two, it's still tasty and sweet, but loses the smooth texture.

KEEPIN' IT REAL

Serve nice cream in a soda-shop type glass with a tall spoon, or in sugar or cake cones for a more authentic experience. You can make your own hot fudge sauce (see recipe on the right) and drizzle it over the top, topped with some crushed nuts for a rich, delicious treat. For the kids, you can crush cookies or sprinkle with mini chocolate chips to give them a gourmet ice cream experience.



CURB APPEAL

So much of our pleasure in eating is about the presentation or the appearance of the food we're served. For a quick, cool, healthy snack, take pretty small clear bowls or dessert cups and fill them with frozen mango chunks, blueberries, cherries, or grapes of varying colors. Stick a decorative toothpick or cocktail fork into the cup, and send the kids back outside, where the fruit will start softening in the sun. They'll love it! (If you're serving preschoolers, cut the grapes in half lengthwise to reduce the risk of choking.)



NICE CREAM MIX-INS

You can add cacao nibs, cinnamon, instant coffee granules, and a drop of vanilla bean paste to make my special blend. Looking to hide the banana flavor? Add frozen blueberries, raspberries, or cherries for a nice bright color and a fruity taste.

MAGIC ICE CREAM IN MINUTES

Want to try a fun activity with your kids? Give each kid a ziplock sandwich bag filled with 1 cup half-and-half, 2 tablespoons sugar, and a few drops of flavoring — vanilla, lemon, or mint. Place each sandwich bag into a gallon-sized ziplock bag with ½ cup coarse kosher salt and a bunch of ice cubes. Shake it up until the ice cream is frozen and ready to enjoy! (This typically takes 5 to 10 minutes. If they can dance around to some music while shaking the bags, even better. The perks? They'll have worked out before enjoying their cool treats, and will enjoy the fruits of their own labor!)



GO BANANAS

Yep, bananas again! But this time even easier. Cut ripe (not overripe) bananas in half and slide a Popsicle stick into the cut half, going halfway up the banana piece. Freeze until cold, and then dip into Magic Shell or homemade chocolate topping. Use a spoon to completely coat the banana, and then sprinkle with crushed nuts, sprinkles, crushed cookies, toffee bits, granola, or mini chips.

You can make these in advance and store in an airtight container in the freezer for several weeks.



CHOCOLATE PEANUT BUTTER NICE CREAM

YIELDS 4

- 4 frozen, sliced bananas
- 3-4 Tbsp pure peanut butter
- 3-4 oz (85-110 g) chocolate, roughly chopped

Process frozen bananas and peanut butter until smooth. Add chocolate, and process until chocolate is flecked and starts to darken the ice cream.



ICED COFFEE, ANYONE?

It's a favorite summer treat for adults, but what about the kids? Try this easy version, and the whole family will swoon with delight. Layer a pan of healthier chocolate brownies with the purest vanilla ice cream you can find. Soften the ice cream to make it more spreadable, and top with a thin layer of coffee ice cream. Freeze, then garnish with whipped cream and shaved chocolate. Cut into squares, serve, and watch their eyes light up! Freezes beautifully, even after the whipped cream and shavings are added — just use a deep pan or a domed lid.

PICK YOUR OWN

Did you go fruit picking this summer? If you've got loads of strawberries, peaches, or blueberries going soft on the counter, here's a great way to use them up. Make a simple syrup of ½ to 1 cup sugar and 1 cup boiling water. Throw a few cups of fresh fruit into your fruit processor with a squirt of fresh lemon juice. Process until smooth, and then combine with simple syrup and freeze for several hours. Cut into chunks and process again until smooth, and then freeze for another few hours. Serve in large scoops with some sliced or chopped fresh fruit for a pretty presentation.



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HOMEMADE HOT FUDGE SAUCE

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YIELDS 2 CUPS

- 8 oz (225 g) semisweet or dark chocolate
- ¾ cup coconut milk
- 4 Tbsp refined coconut oil (see note)
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp cocoa powder

Chop chocolate into small pieces. Place in a medium-sized pot and add remaining ingredients.

Over medium heat, stir and scrape the sides with a heat-proof spatula until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. This should take a few minutes. Don't turn the heat high enough to bring mixture to a boil. Remove from heat.

Pour fudge sauce into a glass jar. Use immediately, or refrigerate for later use. It can be softened in a small pot or in the microwave. You can add a few more drops coconut milk, if needed, to make it pourable.

NOTE: You can use virgin coconut oil in place of refined, but it will add a bit of a coconut taste.