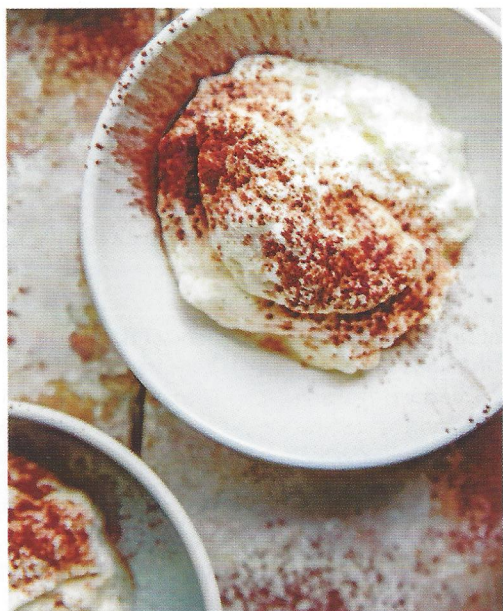


Milan's Five-Ingredient Mousse



This airy mousse comes together in just minutes.

Story by J.M. HIRSCH

I'D COME TO Trattoria Masuelli San Marco—an unpretentious father/son-operated eatery just outside Milan's city center—to learn the region's signature golden saffron risotto. It didn't disappoint. But it was the risotto's sweet counterpart—a bowl equal in its creamy-smooth richness—that was the surprise hit.

I mistook it for zabaglione, the classic Italian dessert of whipped egg yolks, sugar and sweet wine, often Marsala. One bite made clear this was no zabaglione. Delicious as that custard can be, it too often is heavy, overly sweet and boozy. This was airy and light, tasting of egg and vanilla, a dusting of cocoa powder adding complexity.

The father, Max Masuelli, explained. While zabaglione is made only from egg yolks—and is cooked over the gentle heat of a double boiler—this dish uses both the yolks and whites. And it is uncooked, bringing it closer to a French mousse.

The yolks are whisked into mascarpone, a soft, unsweetened Italian cream cheese. This gives the dessert—called *crema al mascarpone*—body without cloying sweetness. In fact, the whole recipe calls for just 3 tablespoons of sugar. The cheese mixture then is folded together with the egg whites, which are whipped until pillowy.

Adapting this recipe for Milk Street was easy.

We varied from Masuelli's method only once. All that talk about zabaglione made us miss the richness a little liquor can add. Just a splash of dark rum got us the flavor we wanted. The result was a quick, simple dessert that is satisfyingly sweet without overwhelming.

Mascarpone Mousse (Crema al Mascarpone)

Start to finish: 20 minutes | Servings: 4

THIS FIVE-INGREDIENT DESSERT requires no cooking and comes together in minutes. Just make sure that the mascarpone is softened to cool room temperature so it combines easily with the egg yolks. A hand mixer makes easy work of whipping the egg whites, but you also could use a whisk and a little elbow grease. Serve the mousse as soon as it's made, or cover and refrigerate for up to 45 minutes. A dusting of cocoa adds visual appeal as well as a hint of chocolate flavor; fresh berries or crisp cookies also are excellent. Note that the eggs are not cooked.

Don't forget to thoroughly clean the bowl and beaters or whisk that you'll be using to whip the whites. Any residual fat will prevent the whites from attaining the proper loft. —JULIA RACKOW

2 large eggs, separated
3 tablespoons white sugar, divided
8-ounce container mascarpone cheese
(1 cup), softened
4 teaspoons dark rum
Cocoa powder, to serve

■ **In a medium bowl, whisk together** the egg yolks and 1 tablespoon of the sugar until smooth and pale yellow in color. Add the mascarpone and whisk until well combined, then whisk in the rum; set aside.

■ **In a medium bowl,** combine the egg whites and remaining 2 tablespoons sugar. With a hand mixer on medium-high, whip until they hold soft peaks when the beaters are lifted, 1 to 2 minutes; do not overwhip.

■ **With a silicone spatula,** fold about a third of the whipped whites into the mascarpone mixture until just a few streaks remain. Fold in the remaining whites, taking care not to deflate the mixture. Serve right away or cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for up to 45 minutes. Dust with cocoa powder just before serving. ♦