Desserts / Japan

Matcha Ice Cream

Ceremonial-grade Uji matcha — astringent, vegetal, the colour of moss after rain — churned into a rich custard base until it freezes into a bittersweet cream that coats the tongue in green tea tannins before the dairy sweetness follows. The tension between bitter and sweet is what makes this ice cream feel like it belongs in a tea ceremony, not just a dessert bowl.

Time 300 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 240 g Whole milk
- ☐ 360 g Heavy cream (35%+ fat)
- ☐ 90 g Egg yolks (5 large)
- ☐ 150 g Caster sugar
- ☐ 20 g Ceremonial-grade matcha powder (Uji preferred)
- ☐ 1 g Flaky sea salt (a small pinch)

Let's make it.

01 Sift the matcha powder into a wide, shallow bowl to break up any clumps — matcha is finely milled and prone to lumping. Add 3 tablespoons (about 45g) of the measured whole milk, warm but not hot (around 60 C). Using a bamboo chasen (matcha whisk) or a small balloon whisk, whisk the matcha and milk in rapid 'M'-and 'W'-shaped strokes until a smooth, lump-free paste forms. Add the remaining milk gradually, whisking to maintain smoothness. Matcha paste must be completely homogeneous before being added to the custard — a single undissolved lump will leave a bitter green streak in the finished ice cream.

02 In a medium heatproof bowl, whisk the egg yolks and caster sugar together vigorously for about 2 minutes until the mixture has turned pale, noticeably thickened, and falls from the whisk in a slow, wide ribbon. This is the ribbon stage — it indicates that enough air and emulsification have occurred to give the custard body. The yolks will be ready when they have doubled in volume, turned from deep orange to pale cream-yellow, and the ribbon holds on the surface for 3 seconds before sinking. This step also helps buffer the yolks against scrambling when the hot matcha milk is added.

03 Combine the matcha milk and remaining heavy cream in a medium saucepan. Heat over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the mixture just begins to steam and small bubbles appear at the edge — about 75 C. Do not boil. Slowly pour about one-third of the hot matcha cream into the yolk mixture while whisking constantly — this is tempering: gradually raising the egg temperature to prevent scrambling. Pour the tempered yolk mixture back into the saucepan with the remaining hot cream. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula in figure-eight patterns and scraping the bottom and corners, until the custard reaches 82 C and coats the back of a spoon cleanly. Add the pinch of salt. Immediately strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a clean bowl set over an ice bath.

04 Cool the custard base completely over the ice bath, stirring occasionally, then refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight until it is thoroughly chilled — around 4 C. Churn in an ice cream machine according to the manufacturer's instructions until the ice cream is the consistency of thick, scoopable soft-serve (about 20 to 25 minutes). Transfer to a chilled container, press parchment paper directly onto the surface to prevent ice crystal formation, and freeze for at least 3 hours before scooping. For a no-churn version: whip 200g of the heavy cream to medium peaks separately, fold into the chilled custard, and freeze in a loaf pan for 5 hours.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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