

BANANAS FOSTORIA

Bananas Foster is a dessert made from bananas, butter, brown sugar, cinnamon, rum, and banana liqueur, served over vanilla ice cream. It was created in 1951 by Paul Blangé at Brennan's Restaurant in New Orleans, LA, in honor of Richard Foster, then chairman of the New Orleans Crime Commission. Now it is served throughout the southland and in many restaurants around the world. It is the premier dessert of Louisiana.

Fostoria is a town in Ohio known for its fine glass crystal, which was manufactured from 1897 to 1983. Since Fostoria shut its doors, collectors have scrambled to gather up the most impressive and important crystal pieces, but collections may still be found via the internet. My mother's crystal was Fostoria, so I enjoyed its beauty all throughout my early years.

Of course, Fostoria doesn't have anything to do with Bananas Foster, but the following recipe does, although, as you will see, it has been personalized by my diet guidelines and an appreciation of those early remembrances of crystal elegance.

**3 bananas, peeled and sliced lengthwise
and crosswise once each way**
2 tbsp "butter"
2 tsp Splenda® brown sugar blend
¼ cup sugar-free maple syrup
¼ cup dark rum
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 tsp banana extract
1 tsp cinnamon
lower G. I. vanilla ice cream
¼ cup chopped walnuts

Combine the "butter", "brown sugar", syrup, rum, vanilla, banana extract, and cinnamon in a large non stick skillet. Bring it to a slow, gentle simmer over medium low heat, stirring to mix thoroughly. Simmer for

a couple of minutes to let the fragrant liquid reduce a bit.

Add the bananas and cook for about 2 minutes, carefully turning them to coat evenly, or until the bananas are softened. Put bananas over scoops of vanilla ice cream, drizzle a little of the liquid, sprinkle with walnuts, and serve immediately.

Serves 3 to 4.

CHOCOLATE-PECAN FUDGE ‡

There are fine chocolates sold commercially that are delectable, sugar free, and do not attack my glycemic index nor promote decay in my teeth, as sugars do. They are made with sugar alcohols,¹ which are generally incompletely digestible substances that can lead to bloating, diarrhea, and flatulence if you eat too much of them. However, with continued use, most people develop a degree of tolerance to them and no longer experience such symptoms. Some polyols raise blood glucose in some people, and not in others. Also, they are not generally on sale in your local food stores.

So I thought I'd see if I could make my own, using my regular sugar substitutes, even if I could not duplicate the smooth creamy texture and glossy appearance of Russell Stover® Sugar Free Candies or get the same addictive taste that makes them disappear from my shelves rather quickly. I'm still working on it. The recipe below is my best attempt so far, and it's not bad at all! Even my wife, a non-diabetic, prefers it over commercial sugar-free brands because it has a few less calories.²

8 oz unsweetened chocolate bars
2 cups "sugar"
1 cup nonfat half-and-half
3 cups of pecans

¹a.k.a. polyols, which are non-intoxicating organic compounds known as alcohols.

²I know, I know. The pecans have calories. Use fewer or eat less candy if this bothers you.

Mix the half-and-half with the “sugar” in a microwavable bowl. Break up the chocolate into pieces, add them to the bowl, and nuke for two minutes on high heat. Whisk the mixture. If it is not smooth yet, nuke another minute and whisk again. Repeat until the chocolate has all melted and incorporated into the cream. Fold in pecans and turn out on a parchment covered sheet pan. Use a spatula to produce a uniform overall thickness. Refrigerate. When chilled, cut into serving-size squares (you know how big these are!).

I leave my batch in the fridge because pieces will tend to melt on your fingers (bad) when you hold them, as well as in your mouth when you taste them (good).