

No Sweat Soufflé

The soufflé gets a bad rap as a pain-in-the-ass dish that requires the cook to tiptoe around the kitchen day and night so as not to collapse the delicate cake. Thing is, as long as you keep in mind a few simple details, says chef Patrick Atanalian, even a butter-finger can prepare this classic egg-y delight.

Atanalian learned these details when he was just a kid. “Every French person needs to learn to make a soufflé,” he says. And even though he can make one with his hands tied behind his back, they rarely appear on his menu because they must be finished to order, and once baked, they have an extremely short shelf life from oven to table.

But the soufflé is the perfect candidate for the home cook. With only three ingredients, (four, if you count the butter used to grease the ramekins) Atanalian’s chocolate version tastes like there’s a whole world in there, as if you put in much more effort than what’s really required. But don’t get too cocky; the chef says it’s important to start slow. This chocolate soufflé—great for a decadent breakfast—is easy, but incorporating other ingredients, like cheese or spinach, is a lot trickier.

Patrick Atanalian's Chocolate Soufflé

- 1/3 C granulated sugar
- 5 oz. good quality chocolate
- 9 eggs, separated into three yolks and six whites

1. Grease four ramekins with a little butter, then coat them with a bit of granulated sugar. Melt the chocolate over a double boiler. Meanwhile, separate the eggs. Whip the whites into stiff peaks. Add the sugar, and whip again. Add a pinch of salt. Incorporate the egg yolks into the hot chocolate, taking care to temper the eggs (Atanalian recommends adding a bit of the hot water from the double boiler to the eggs before adding the melted chocolate). Gently fold the egg-white mixture into the chocolate mixture in thirds. Pour this mixture evenly into the prepared ramekins.
2. Place the ramekins into the refrigerator for about 15 minutes before baking. What do you do in the meantime? “Go for a cigarette and a drink, of course,” he says. Of course.
3. Once the soufflés have chilled, bake for 15 to 20 minutes. They will have puffed up significantly and formed a crust on top. The soufflés should not jiggle when you give them a little shake. Garnish with powder sugar, but above all, serve immediately. Before you know it, they will begin to fall.

