Chocolate Buttermilk Pudding with Tangy Whipped Cream

I have the privilege of cooking for all sorts of people as part of my job, and I love to hang out with pals around my own kitchen table. I’ve seen the looks of surprise when I bring out chocolate pudding for dessert instead of something more elaborate, followed by looks of delight and satisfaction when they dig in. People love the friendliness and simple goodness of chocolate pudding. You can make it in one large serving bowl, of course, but most people prefer individual servings that they don’t have to share with a soul. Individual servings make guests feel special.

This pudding isn’t overly sweet in the first place, yet I like to top it with pleasantly tangy whipped cream that keeps things in balance. I use buttermilk-kissed whipped cream on other rich desserts too, such as pecan pie.

Makes 4 to 6 servings

**Pudding**
3/4 cup granulated sugar  
1/3 cup cocoa powder  
2 tablespoons cornstarch  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1 1/2 cups heavy cream  
1/2 cup well-shaken buttermilk, preferably full fat  
3 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped  
1 tablespoon butter  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

**Buttermilk Whipped Cream**
1/2 cup heavy cream, chilled  
3 tablespoons well-shaken buttermilk, preferably full fat, chilled  
2 tablespoons powdered sugar  
Pinch of salt  
Garnish with: cocoa powder

1. For the pudding: Sift together the sugar, cocoa, cornstarch, and salt into a large saucepan.
2. While whisking, add the cream in a slow, steady stream and whisk until smooth. Whisk in the remaining cream and the buttermilk.
3. Cook over medium heat, stirring continuously with a heat-proof spatula, until the mixture comes to a boil and thickens, about 10 minutes.
4. Remove the pan from the heat, add the chopped chocolate and butter, and stir until smooth. Stir in the vanilla.
5. Ladle into serving cups. Press plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the pudding to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate until chilled, at least 4 hours, preferably overnight. The pudding will thicken further as it chills.
6. For the whipped cream: Beat the cream, buttermilk, powdered sugar, and salt in a large, chilled bowl with a mixer at high speed until firm peaks form.

7. Just before serving, top each pudding with a dollop of the whipped cream mixture and dust with cocoa. Serve lightly chilled.

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