



Sweet cream

Great for your morning cup o' joe – or any time, really!

My grownup self loves coffee, a romance that didn't really take shape until my early 20s, although then I preferred savoring a cup after a good meal. I suppose working in restaurants had a lot to do with that. Come to think of it, my waitress days were also the start of the morning coffee ritual, though it would be years until I wanted a cup upon waking.

I've always been a bright-and-early kind of girl, one who never needed or relied on that morning jolt of joe to get a kickstart. Even today, when sitting down to enjoy that first cup, it isn't for the perk but rather for the comfort and enjoyment, hence the fact that I take my early morning cup to the couch or front porch settee and enjoy the blissful quiet, soothed by its warmth and flavor before the rush of a busy day. For me it's an everyday indulgence, and I'd rather have good coffee or none at all.

I'm lucky to have an excellent coffee roaster mere blocks from my house, so good coffee is never an issue. I will occasionally go to The Great and Powerful Coffee Chain, but it's a rarity. I'm no snob, but I do have a budget to keep to, so home-brew is how I roll. That being said, I have a new obsession, one born of a recent trip to Atlanta. There was an afore-mentioned coffee shop temptingly close to the hotel, so

I treated myself to it the mornings I was there, and discovered a cold brew topped with a lovely sweet cream. It was perfectly balanced and not too sweet, and I fell in love all over again.

Upon arriving home, I couldn't stop thinking about it, and as I went straight to work from the airport I pulled into a rest stop to get some. Unfortunately that particular franchise didn't offer it, and I would find out later that not all do. It seems my new love was proving elusive, so I did what any besotted girl would do and sat down to write a love letter. And by love letter, I mean recipe.

You see, since my obsession with sweet cream began, I noticed it cropping up everywhere, from desserts to cocktails. This clearly was a staple I couldn't do without. With only a few ingredients it had to be a relatively simple recipe to recreate. And, as with most simple recipes, the challenge was getting the balance just right. I found quite a few recipes online, which gave me a great starting point. Turns out my recipe is even simpler than any I saw – I mean really easy – and I loved the way it turned out. I wanted the frothy quality I'd gotten in the store, not just a creamer substitute. Not having a milk frother, I opted to vigorously whisk the cream for a few minutes, but putting it

in the blender and whizzing away for 30 seconds would do the trick, I think.

SWEET CREAM

My first taste of it was only kissed with the slightest sweetness, not cloying or artificial, and all the recipes I found would have been far too much for me. You really don't need to invest in a milk frother or dirty the blender to get the foaminess – a whisk does it in no time – and the result is a cloud-like foam that sits on top of the coffee, even if you add more coffee after the fact. It's magic, I tell ya! I add salt when I make whipped cream – just a pinch – to boost flavor and avoid flatness – so I did the same here.

One more note: I considered adding vanilla but decided not to. I didn't want it to be flavored, just milky and lightly sweet, but feel free to add it. I also wondered if I should make this on the stovetop, if heat would make a difference; after all, scalding milk makes it naturally sweeter. I didn't try it this time, but experimentation may be in order. OK – on with the show.

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup sweetened condensed milk (1/2 cup if you prefer)

Pinch of salt

METHOD:

Combine ingredients in a deep medium bowl and whisk until frothy and beginning to thicken, 1-2 minutes. Pour into coffee and sip blissfully. Place extra in a lidded jar and refrigerate (up to 2 weeks). Shake to refoam before using.

This little bit of heaven is lovely in hot or cold coffee. There are plenty of pre-made cold brew coffees out there, but it's easy to make your own. I set up the French press at night with the ground coffee and water, give it a stir and let it steep overnight, pressing down the plunger in the morning. Pour it into a container and pop it in the fridge and you're good to go.

With this now in my arsenal, I will be playing with it for other uses: thickening it a bit to use for dessert sauce, salting it for cocktails. All I know is that it makes me happy. And if something so simple can bring me so much joy, then life is good and the day is mine. Enjoy!

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