Enlightened Hot Chocolate

in a new light

Makes: 4 servings
Prep Time: 5 minutes
Cook Time: 12 minutes
Difficulty: Easy

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 3 cups nonfat milk, divided
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon unsweetened cocoa
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise, or 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 ounces good-quality bittersweet chocolate (60–70% cacao), chopped
- 1/2 cup fat-free half-and-half, steaming hot

Directions:

Sprinkle cornstarch over 1/2 cup of the nonfat milk in a small bowl and whisk to dissolve. Whisk in cocoa and sugar until smooth.

In a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan over low heat, bring the remaining 2 1/2 cups nonfat milk and the vanilla bean just to a simmer. Remove the bean, scrape the vanilla seeds into the milk, and discard the bean. Gradually whisk the cocoa mixture into the milk.

Cook, whisking often, until the mixture comes to a full boil, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and, if using vanilla extract, stir it in now.

Add chopped chocolate and hot half-and-half; mix until smooth. Strain through a wire sieve into four mugs and serve at once. If not using immediately, cover surface with a piece of plastic wrap to prevent a skin from forming.

Cook’s Note: Any kind of flavor (preferably sugar-free) can be added. Try raspberry, cinnamon, or holiday ginger-spice. Or substitute milk or white chocolate for the bittersweet chocolate.

Nutritional Information: Per serving (3/4 cup): 230 calories, 7 g fat (4 g saturated, 0 g trans), 5 mg cholesterol, 140 mg sodium, 34 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 9 g protein.