

Gam's Penuche

from In Our Grandmothers' Kitchens

Ingredients:

1 cup sour cream
1 pound light brown sugar
1 cup white sugar
1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts (optional)
a generous splash of vanilla

Instructions:

Combine the sour cream and the sugars in a heavy, medium-size saucepan, and place the pan over low to medium heat.

Stir the mixture constantly until it comes to a boil; then cover it for a minute or two to wash down the sides of the pan. Uncover the mixture, and cook it, without stirring much, until it reaches the soft-ball stage (234 degrees). Remove from heat.

Add the nuts (if you want them) and the vanilla, and let the mixture cool for a few minutes without stirring it. Don't let it get cooler than lukewarm; optimally, it should be a bit warmer than that.

Beat the warm fudge until it becomes creamy and thickens slightly—in other words until it begins to seem fudgy. Quickly pour it into a buttered 8-by-8-inch pan, and let it cool before cutting it into squares. Store the fudge in an airtight container.

Makes about 36 squares, more or less, depending on your cutting. Penuche is best when eaten within 24 hours. Happily, it rarely lasts that long.