- Prep time: 20 minutes
- Cook time: 20 minutes (plus 4–6 hours chilling and freezing)
- Total time: 5 hours (including inactive time)
- Yield: Approximately 1.5 quarts (about 8 servings)
- Course: Dessert
- Cuisine: American

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Ingredients

For the Buttered Pecans:

- 1 ½ cups (180g) pecan halves
- 3 tbsp unsalted butter
- ¼ tsp salt (plus a pinch more if desired)
- 2 tbsp brown sugar (optional, for a candied effect)

For the Ice Cream Base:

- 2 cups (480ml) heavy cream
- 1 cup (240ml) whole milk
- ¾ cup (150g) granulated sugar
- 5 large egg yolks

- 1 tbsp pure vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter (added to the custard for richness)

Instructions

Step 1: Toast the Pecans (Intensity: Medium)

Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C) . Spread the pecan halves in a single layer on a baking sheet. Toast for 8–10 minutes, stirring halfway through, until fragrant and slightly darkened. Watch carefully—pecans burn quickly. Remove from the oven and let cool slightly.

Step 2: Butter the Pecans (Intensity: Medium)

In a medium skillet, melt the 3 tablespoons of butter over medium heat. Add the toasted pecans, salt, and brown sugar (if using). Stir constantly for 2–3 minutes until the pecans are evenly coated and the butter is absorbed. The mixture should smell nutty and slightly caramelized. Spread the pecans on a plate lined with parchment paper to cool completely. Once cool, roughly chop them into coarse pieces. Set aside.

Step 3: Prepare the Ice Bath (Intensity: Low)

Fill a large bowl with ice and water. Place a medium-sized heatproof bowl inside it (or nest two bowls) to create an ice bath. This will be used to cool the custard quickly. Set a fine-mesh strainer over the bowl.

Step 4: Warm the Dairy (Intensity: Low)

In a medium saucepan, combine the heavy cream, whole milk, and ½ cup of the sugar. Heat over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is steaming and small bubbles appear around the edges. Do not let it boil. Remove from heat.

Step 5: Whisk the Egg Yolks (Intensity: Medium)

In a separate bowl, whisk the egg yolks with the remaining ¼ cup of sugar and the salt until pale and thickened, about 2 minutes. While whisking constantly, slowly pour about ½ cup of the warm cream mixture into the yolks to temper them. This prevents the eggs from scrambling.

Step 6: Cook the Custard (Intensity: High)

Pour the tempered egg mixture back into the saucepan with the remaining cream. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon or spatula, for 8–10 minutes. The custard is ready when it thickens enough to coat the back of the spoon (about 170°F/77°C). Do not let it boil. If you see steam rising rapidly or bubbles, remove from heat immediately.

Step 7: Strain and Chill (Intensity: Low)

Pour the custard through the fine-mesh strainer into the chilled bowl set over the ice bath. Stir in the vanilla extract and the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter until melted. Stir occasionally until the custard cools to room temperature, then cover with plastic wrap (pressing it directly onto the surface to prevent a skin from forming) and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or overnight.

Step 8: Churn the Ice Cream (Intensity: Medium)

Pour the chilled custard into your ice cream maker and churn according to the manufacturer’s instructions (typically 20–25 minutes) until it reaches a soft-serve consistency. During the last 2 minutes of churning, add the chopped buttered pecans.

Step 9: Freeze and Serve (Intensity: Low)

Transfer the churned ice cream to a freezer-safe container, press a piece of parchment paper onto the surface, and seal. Freeze for at least 2–4 hours until firm. Let sit at room temperature for 5 minutes before scooping.

Recipe Notes & Tips

- Tempering is Key: Never rush the tempering step. Adding hot liquid to eggs too quickly will curdle them. Pour slowly and whisk constantly.

- No Ice Cream Maker? No problem. Pour the chilled custard into a shallow container, freeze for 1 hour, then stir vigorously with a fork every 30 minutes for 3–4 hours. Fold in the pecans at the end. The texture will be slightly icier but still delicious.

- Make it Ahead: The custard base can be made up to 3 days in advance and stored in the refrigerator. The buttered pecans can be made up to 1 week ahead and stored in an airtight container.

- Pecan Alternatives: Walnuts or hazelnuts work well as substitutes, though the flavor profile will change.

Nutrition Information

Disclaimer: The following nutrition information is an estimate per serving (based on 8 servings) and will vary based on exact ingredient sizes and preparation methods.

- Calories: 410 kcal
- Total Fat: 34g (16g Saturated Fat)
- Cholesterol: 195mg
- Sodium: 135mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 22g
- Dietary Fiber: 2g
- Total Sugars: 19g
- Protein: 5g
- Vitamin A: 15% DV
- Calcium: 8% DV

- Iron: 4% DV