

juice and zest, and some double cream thrown in to really up the calorie count.

In Brazil, *brigadeiro* are a popular treat at birthday parties. Condensed milk, butter and cocoa powder are mixed and heated to a smooth sticky texture, then rolled into little balls coated in chocolate flakes. Decadent indeed. A variation is the same without the cocoa, rolled in desiccated coconut instead of chocolate.

Many Indian desserts make use of it as well, often starting from fresh milk, although the canned variety is becoming more popular. These range from sweets similar to *brigadeiro*, to ice cream, and rice *kheer*, a pudding made by boiling rice in milk, then mixing in custard powder condensed milk, sugar, raisins and nuts. Topped with a sprinkling of cardamom, this can be served hot or cold.

“Vietnamese have a sweet tooth but not many use condensed milk unless it’s in tea or coffee,” says Jim Patrick Tawa, food and beverage southern manager for Al Fresco’s group. “Westerners have known it for years and usually keep some in the cupboard if they run out of milk”

In parts of Asia this sweet stuff is used on toast as a substitute for jam, or if you want something a little more upmarket, try substituting the milk in French toast with condensed milk. It dampens the egg flavour and the sweetness can be offset with a few fresh berries scattered over the top.

In the Philippines, condensed milk is mixed with sister products, evaporated milk and eggs, spooned into shallow metal containers over caramelised sugar syrup and then steamed to make *leche flan*, akin to *crème caramel*. The latter can be made the same way, replacing evaporated milk with fresh milk and a splash of vanilla essence.

Condensed milk is a popular topping for a snowball, a crushed ice concoction flavoured with syrup, popular in New Orleans. The white stuff can also be used to make a fuss-free fudge. Mix it over heat with chocolate and butter and once thickened whisk in icing sugar. Leave it in the fridge as long as you can bear and *voilà*, velvety chocofudge. Press nuts in before cooling for an added layer of



complexity. A variation in Scotland is called Swiss Milk Tablet. Dissolve sugar and butter in fresh milk over a low heat before adding condensed milk and boiling until it can be rolled. When semi-cool, add vanilla essence to bring out the true caramel flavour.

Down in Mexico, one kind of milk is just not enough. *Pastel de tres leches* is a light meringue topped cake soaked in a syrup of condensed milk, evaporated milk, evaporated cream and egg yolks. This may sound obscenely sweet, but in reality these combined milks make a light, tasty cake with a moist sauce. Heavenly.

But wait, there’s more. *Sua dac* is the staple of roadside *sinh to* stands, giving the smoothies their creamy sweetness. It can also be found in pumpkin pie, chocolate chunk cookies, fudge cake, cheesecake, sticky toffee pudding, coconut ice, caramel apple crumble, carrot cake, and so much more.

“We use it often in Vietnamese cakes like coconut, banana or green bean cakes. Also in avocado ice cream, and some sweets like beans in syrup and jelly cake,” says Nguyen Huu Huong, executive chef at Ana Mandara Villas Dalat Resort and Spa. Chef Huong goes on to explain that it adds a smooth sweetness to avocado ice cream, which itself is not naturally sweet.

There are even a couple of savoury recipes that make use of the sweet syrup. Make a tasty sandwich spread by combining mayonnaise with Dijon mustard, condensed milk, lemon juice and water. It adds pizzazz to a ham baguette. For something extra special, condensed milk mayonnaise combines sweet and savoury to add zing to a green salad.

Whether it’s drizzled over ice cream, sweetening your Christmas eggnog or boiled into toffee, condensed milk is a beautiful thing. Nothing beats a dripping spoonful straight from the tin, apart from a second dripping spoonful. 

RECIPES WITH CONDENSED MILK

GRANDMOTHER BRIDGET’S MAYONNAISE

Beat two eggs and add half a cup of brown vinegar combined with a teaspoon of dry mustard, salt and a pinch of cayenne pepper. Keep beating while adding a can of condensed milk. It should thicken but if it doesn’t leave it in the fridge overnight

MINI MERINGUES WITH LEMON CREAM

Preheat the oven to 150 Celsius. Whisk four egg whites until they peak, then mix in 225g of caster sugar. Dollop a spoonful onto a baking sheet and put a dent in the centre. Make 12 of these, and then put in the oven, reducing the temperature to 140 ° C for 30 minutes. Leave to dry for a minimum of four hours. Whip 170g of condensed milk with 300ml of whipping cream until thick, then stir in the juice of half a lemon. Scoop the mixture into the meringue shells. Add some passionfruit or your preferred fruit on top for decoration and added flavour

CARAMEL PARFAIT

Stir 115g of butter and 55g of caster sugar over a low heat until it dissolves. Add 200g of condensed milk and bring to the boil, stirring continuously to make caramel. Stir in 75ml milk and leave to cool. Whip 300ml double cream with 75ml milk until thickened. Fold in the caramel and chocolate chips to taste. Pour into a loaf tin and freeze overnight

MANGO WHIP

Blend 400g of fresh juicy mangos with two tbsp water to make a smooth puree. Whip 150ml double cream until peaks form then combine with 150g Greek yoghurt, the juice of half a lemon and eight tbsp of condensed milk. Swirl the mango puree and cream mixture into glasses and serve with a wafer