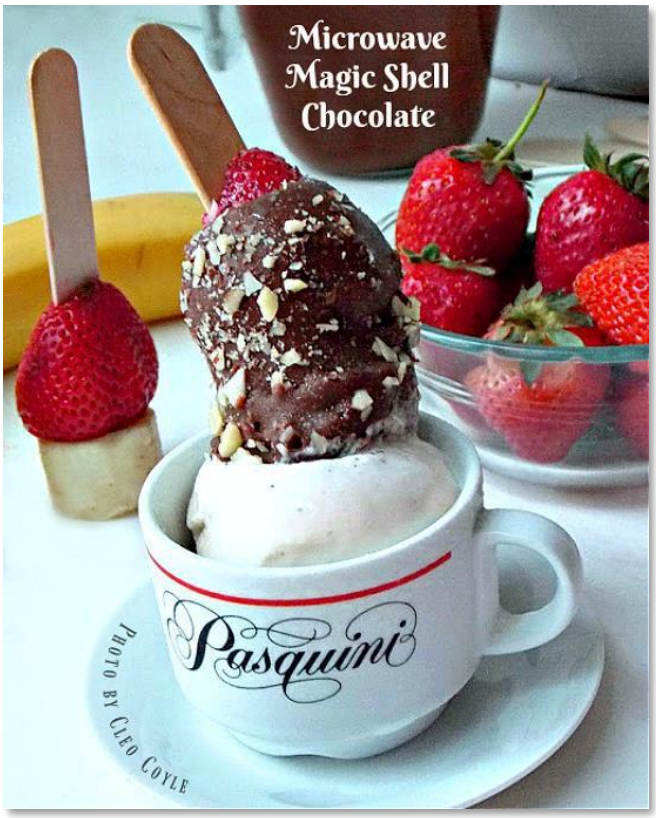
Cleo Coyle's Coffeehouse Banana Split



Text and photos (c) by Alice Alfonsi who writes The Coffeehouse Mysteries as Cleo Coyle with her husband, Marc Cerasini.

The ice cream shop banana split is a classic childhood favorite. (Okay, so it's an adult favorite, too.) While in my youth I had no problem polishing off a banana split, these days that three-scoop boat is way too large for me to sink in one sitting. On the other hand, a taste of that heavenly combination would be a pleasant finale to any meal. If you think so, too, then voila! Here is my "Coffeehouse" version of this American classic. Basically, it's a fast, fun way of fancying up the kiddie sundae for the adult table, and it includes an easy way to make your own magic shell chocolate using your microwave. If you make it, I sincerely hope you will eat with joy! ~ ***Cleo Coyle***

My adult take on this childhood favorite starts with—

* Splash some of your favorite ice cream syrup (chocolate, caramel, strawberry) into an empty espresso cup. If you like, add a bit of Kahlúa or try some Baileys Irish Cream or chocolate liqueur.

* Next comes a modest scoop of gelato (or ice cream).
In my photos, you see vanilla bean gelato.

* Finally comes a whole strawberry and piece of banana, skewered by a Popsicle stick and covered in chocolate and nuts. The key to the recipe is using magic shell chocolate. I like to make my own, and I'm happy to show you how (on page 3). In the meantime…

Ingredients for Chocolate-Dipped Fruit Skewers

13 ripe strawberries *(try to select uniform sizes close to 1-inch)*
3 medium bananas *(ripe but still firm)*
1 cup magic shell chocolate *(recipe follows this one)*
1/2 cup finely chopped nuts *(almonds, walnuts, or peanuts, your choice)*
13 wooden Popsicle sticks

(Makes 13 little fruit skewers, which can be stored in freezer for 2 to 3 weeks.)

Free Recipe Guide to Cleo's new culinary mystery ***Eat, Drink, and Get Buried:*** *click here*.

Step 1 - Prep and chill fruit: Remove green stems and hull the strawberries. For tips on hulling, click here to download another strawberry recipe of mine. Cut bananas into 1-inch pieces with flat ends. Do not use pointy banana tips. Place these fruit pieces in the freezer for 30 minutes (but no more than an hour). This will help prevent the fruit pieces from splitting in the next step.

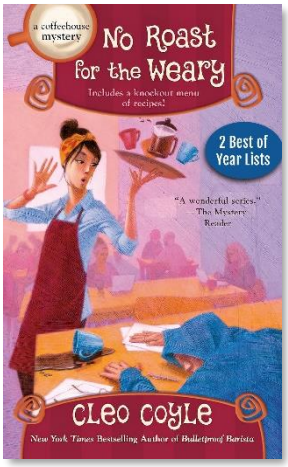
Step 2 - Make your fruit skewers: With a paring knife, cut a shallow slit on the bottom (pointy) end of a chilled strawberry. With a firm grip on the berry, gently push the end of one Popsicle stick through it and into (but not completely through) a piece of banana. The little fruit skewer should now be able to stand upright on your plate (as in my photos).

Troubleshooting tip: If you can't get your fruit skewers to stand up, you probably have too much of the Popsicle stick pushing through the banana. Adjust the fruit along the stick so the flat of the banana is on the plate and not the end of the Popsicle stick.

Step 3 - Re-chill: Once all the fruit skewers are finished, return them to the freezer for another 15-20 minutes to chill them up again. For instructions on making magic chocolate, jump to page 3.

Step 4 - Dip, sprinkle, and chill: First cover a plate with plastic wrap, wax paper, or foil. (If you don't, the chocolate may stick to the plate.) Gently dip the fruit skewers into the warm magic chocolate. As you pull it out, allow the excess chocolate to drip off. Sprinkle with chopped nuts and stand it on the foil- or plastic-covered plate. When all of the skewers are finished, place them in the refrigerator or freezer for 10 minutes to set.

STORE: You can keep the finished skewers in the fridge for many hours before dinner or the day before. Or wrap them in plastic store in the freezer for two to three weeks.



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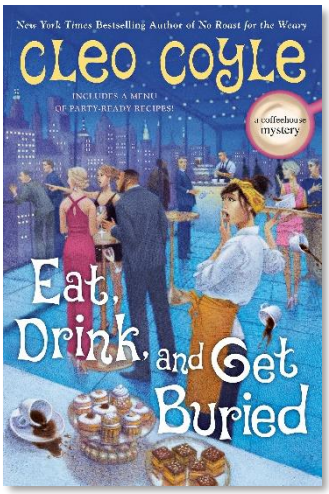
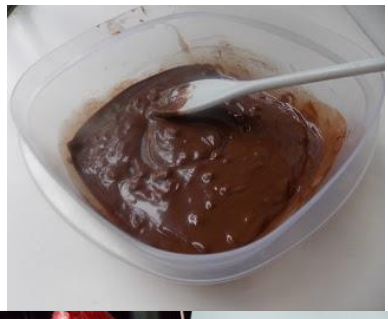


How to Make Microwave Magic Shell Chocolate

Although many versions of this basic recipe are posted all over the Inter-web, the original source is award-winning Chef Thomas Keller. Years ago, I adapted it, using a microwave & chocolate chips. The secret to this recipe is the extra virgin, cold pressed coconut oil, which liquefies around a modest 76 degrees F. yet firms up when taken below that temp. That's why you'll see a chocolate shell form if you drizzle it over ice cream. Likewise, for my Coffeehouse Banana Split, once the fruit is chilled & dipped, you can place it in the fridge & watch a shell quickly form.

Makes 1 cup



14 ounces (2-1/4 cups + 2 Tablespoons) chocolate chips*

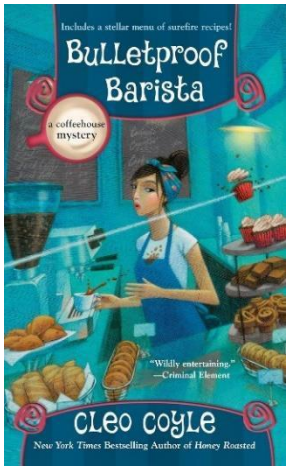
1/4 cup extra virgin, cold pressed coconut oil**

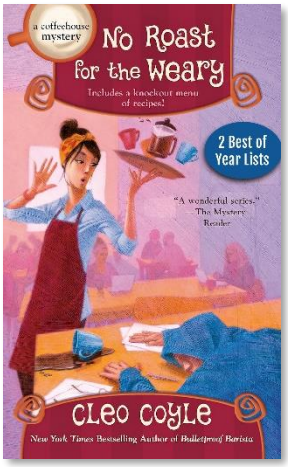
**Chocolate chips can be milk chocolate, semi-sweet, or dark (bittersweet). I use milk chocolate.*

***For the best quality coconut oil, look for "extra virgin, cold pressed."*

Directions: In a microwave-safe container, stir together chocolate chips and coconut oil. Microwave for 15 to 20 seconds and then stop and stir the chips. Chocolate burns very easily so be sure to heat the mixture in short intervals. Return the container to the microwave for another 15 to 20 seconds. Stir again until chocolate is melted and smooth. This mixture is now ready to use in the above recipe or you can drizzle it over very cold ice cream and the "magic" shell will quickly form. The chocolate should stay in its liquid form unless chilled. If the mixture begins to solidify, return it to the microwave for 10 seconds, stir until melted & smooth again.

Eat (and read) with joy! ~ Cleo





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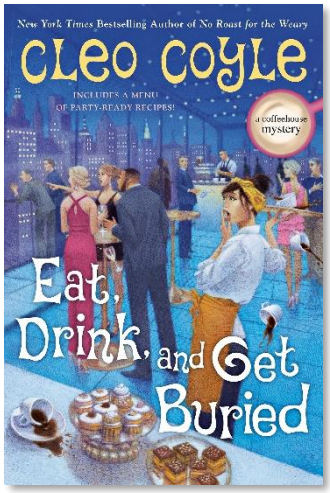

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