

# Crema de Chocolate

*This is a velvety smooth, deliciously decadent way to end a meal or simply to indulge yourself. Just knowing that these are in the refrigerator could get you through a bad day. Use the best-quality chocolate you can get. We recommend Valrhona 70 percent cacao. For the liqueur, we use Gran Torres, a relatively inexpensive but good-quality Spanish orange liqueur, but you can use Cointreau, Grand Marnier, or even good triple sec.*

Combine the chocolate, liqueur, and vanilla in a large heatproof bowl and set aside.

Combine the egg yolks and 1 tablespoon of the sugar in a medium bowl and whisk until blended. Set aside.

Heat the cream, the remaining 2 tablespoons sugar, the cinnamon, and the orange zest over medium heat in a large saucepan until steam is rising. Do not let the cream boil.

Pour  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the hot cream mixture into the yolks and whisk together to temper them. Pour the egg mixture into the hot cream mixture. Using a heat-resistant rubber spatula, stir constantly over medium-low heat until the pudding thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon, about 5 minutes.

Pour the pudding over the chocolate and whisk until the chocolate melts and the mixture is blended. Strain the mixture through a fine sieve. Divide among eight 3-ounce ramekins and chill, uncovered, for 2 hours. Wrap with plastic and refrigerate until serving.

To serve, top each portion with a few toasted hazelnuts and a dollop of whipped cream, then dust with cinnamon.

SERVES 8

6 ounces **semisweet chocolate chips** or bulk semisweet chocolate chopped into bits

1 tablespoon **orange liqueur**

$1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons **vanilla extract**

**6 egg yolks**

3 tablespoons **sugar**

2 cups **heavy cream**

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon **ground cinnamon**

**Grated zest of 1 orange**

**Garnish**

16 toasted **hazelnuts**, skins removed (see page 196).

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup **heavy cream**, whipped

2 tablespoons **ground cinnamon**