No-Bake Chocolate Éclair Cake

Makes: 9 servings

Ingredients:

1 (3.4 ounce) package instant vanilla pudding (must be instant, not cook and serve)

2 cups cold milk, either whole or 2%

1 ¾ cups heavy whipping cream, divided

3 tablespoons granulated sugar

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

14 to 15 full-size graham crackers

1 ½ cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

¼ teaspoon salt

Directions:

In a medium bowl, add the packet of vanilla pudding and the cold milk. Use a whisk or fork to vigorously combine the mixture until it thickens, about 2 minutes; set aside.

In a large bowl, use a hand or stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment to whip 1 cup of the heavy cream with the sugar and vanilla extract. Beat until stiff peaks form. Use a rubber spatula to gently fold the whipped cream into the pudding until well combined and no cream is visible.

To prepare the chocolate ganache, heat the remaining ¾ cup of heavy cream in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring often, until almost boiling, about 3 minutes. The cream will bubble around the edges first and then just begin to bubble in the center when it is ready.

Remove the pan from the burner and add the chocolate chips, stirring continuously until the chocolate is fully melted. Let the ganache cool for 15 minutes, then add the salt and stir until incorporated.

To assemble the cake, line the bottom of a 9x9 square pan with a layer of graham crackers, breaking them into smaller pieces as need to fill the pan.

Pour half of the vanilla custard over the layer of graham crackers and use an offset spatula or knife to spread it evenly over the crackers. Add another layer of graham crackers, followed by the remaining custard, and top with a final layer of graham crackers.

Pour the chocolate ganache over the cake and use a knife or offset spatula to smooth it evenly across the entire surface.

Cover lightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least four hours, or even overnight, before serving so that the cake has time to firm up before slicing.