**Sahlab**

*This delightful hot beverage (or alternatively cold pudding) is rarely made the traditional way—from the tubers of orchid roots—since these have been overharvested (even to extinction, in some areas).* *Read all the way through, as I have included two more alternatives for this recipe: chilled* ***custard/pudding****, and* ***booza*** *stretchy ice cream.*

Ingredients

* 4 cups whole **milk** (or substitute skim, oat, or almond milk)
* 4 TBSP (aka ¼ cup) **cornstarch** (or substitute 1 TBSP store‑bought **sahlab** or **salep** powder)
* A bit of **water**
* 2 TBSP **sugar**
* 1 tsp **vanilla** (or substitute 1 tsp **rose water** or **orange blossom water**)
* [For booza recipe only:¼ tsp crushed/powdered **mastic**]

Topping choices

* powdered or stick **cinnamon**
* sliced **bananas**
* chopped **walnuts** or **pistachios**
* slivered **almonds**
* **raisins**
* sliced dried **apricots**
* flaked, shredded, or desiccated **coconut**
* chopped **pralines**
* salted **toffee**

Direx for the hot beverage:

* Pour **milk** into a sauce pan. Start up a low flame.
* Place **cornstarch** in a small bowl, adding just enough **water** to dissolve it. Use a fork to break up any lumps and keep on mixing until you obtain a stretchy, lump-free consistency.
* Scoop out a bit of the milk and pour over cornstarch mixture. Whisk to obtain an even smoother consistency. Using a sieve and whisk, strain mixture into the milky sauce pan, discarding any remaining lumps.
* Increase heat to a medium flame. Add **sugar** and **vanilla**. In the case of booza, also add the **mastic**.
* Continually beat mixture with a whisk as it cooks.
  + **Tip:** Do not walk away, not even for one minute—things get messy and burn really easily.
* After boiling point is reached, continue to cook, stirring (not whisking) constantly, until mixture is thick and creamy (about 2 minutes).
* Remove from heat. Ladle gently into mugs.
* Add (or even bury) toppings. Don’t forget to offer everyone a spoon!

Direx for the chilled custard/pudding:

* Prepare mixture as shown above.
* Remove from heat and wait several minutes for mixture to set.
* Ladle or pour into small bowls, and chill in the fridge for an hour.
* Add topping only when ready to serve.

Direx for the booza stretchy ice cream:

* Prepare mixture, including the mastic, as shown above.
* Remove from heat and allow mixture to cool down to room temperature.
* Once cool, whisk well, cover, and freeze for 30 minutes.
* Remove, whisk again, and refreeze for 30 minutes.
* Remove once more. This time, use a spatula to mix and fold over mixture. Refreeze for 30 minutes.
* Repeat former step as many times as necessary to obtain the consistency of frozen ice cream.
* Place in an airtight container and freeze.
* To serve, scoop into a ball and sprinkle with your favorite toppings.