Strawberry & Mint Granita with Vanilla Bean Whipped Cream
Recipe: Melissa Schenker/Foodie for Two
Serves two foodies, plus extras (makes about 3 cups granita)

**Ingredients:**

*Mint-Infused Simple Syrup:*
1 cup water  
¾ cups sugar  
2 mint sprigs  
1 pound strawberries, stems removed and cut into thin slices

*Vanilla Bean Whipped Cream:*
1 cup heavy whipping cream  
Half of one vanilla bean  
1 tablespoon sugar

**Garnish:**
Strawberry slices  
Fresh mint

**Directions:**

*Mint-Infused Simple Syrup:*
Add water and sugar to a medium sauce pan over medium-low heat. Stir to dissolve sugar. When sugar is dissolved, turn off heat and add the whole sprigs of mint. With the back of a spoon, lightly mash the mint leaves to release the oils. Let steep for 10 minutes. Return heat to medium-low and add the sliced strawberries. Stir well and let steep for 15 minutes.

Remove the mint sprigs and transfer the mixture to a blender; purée mixture until smooth, about 30 seconds. Pour through a fine sieve into a 13 x 9 glass dish. Press most of the fruit through the sieve with the back of a spoon until just solids are left (be sure to also scrape the bottom of the sieve - where all the good stuff is) and stir to combine.

Cover dish with plastic wrap and freeze mixture for 6 to 8 hours, or overnight. Scrape with a fork every few hours to form crystals (otherwise it will be a frozen block).

*Vanilla Bean Whipped Cream:*
Add the whipped cream, vanilla bean paste and sugar to a large glass bowl and mix with a hand-mixer on low until soft peaks form, about 1 ½ minutes. Cover and refrigerate if not using immediately. Can be made one day ahead.

*Assemble:*
Place some granita in the bottom of a parfait glass and add a good dollop of whipped cream. Add another scoop of granita and finish with a small dollop of whipped cream. Garnish with a slice of strawberry and fresh mint.

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