

JP'S KITCHEN

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PEARS POACHED IN RED WINE

INTRODUCTION

This is one of my favourites, it's a great dessert for all year round. It's a classic French dessert that has developed a multitude of variations (just take a look at the internet).

The pear is an ancient fruit and has been called the royal fruit of France and the prince of fruits, and has been written about in history as being infinitely superior to the finest apples. Prepared any number of ways, including served freshly cut, it also makes for a great cider.

Our recipe today involves poaching pears in red wine which gives the pears a rich fragrance and deep luxurious colour. This method brings out a great balance between the sweet, spicy, and fruity flavours.

It also simply looks like a perfect, restaurant dessert prepared by a professional chef but it's pretty easy to make and the deep luscious colour, when served, will make it a centrepiece of your table.

It has brought me a lot of praise from my dinner party guests on the occasions that I have served it and I'm very sure that you will receive the same praise, too.

You can make one for yourself or make a dozen at a time for a dinner party, you can even pre-make a day ahead then finish off the sauce next day. The added bonus is that the left-over sauce can be reserved as a decadent syrup over vanilla ice cream up to several weeks later.

There are two things that'll make this recipe work:

- a. get the sauce right (balance of bitter and sweet), and
- b. don't overcook the pears (and use the right variety of pear).

Buerre Bosc pears are best at holding their shape while being poached and are crisp and sweet and beautifully complements the spicy flavour of the wine.

Anjou pears are the other option as they too hold their shape and don't fall apart while being poached. Their flavour is mild and also complement the spicy flavour of the wine.

The aim is to contrast and balance the sweetness of the pear against the bitterness of the spicy sauce...a taste match that's made in heaven!

The rich, bitter-sweet flavour of this dessert would wash down well with a Botrytis Riesling or similar, or of course, a strong black coffee depending on the time of day.

Try it and do write to me and let me know what you think.

INGREDIENTS

The Sauce

¾ to 1 bottle of inexpensive red wine (Merlot works best; Cabernet Sauvignon is Ok)

1 flat tablespoon of black whole peppercorns

2 sticks of Cinnamon

10 whole cloves

3-4 star anise

2 vanilla pods (split top-to-bottom and open) or 3 teaspoons of vanilla essence

½ cup brown sugar

¼ cup white sugar (or more to your taste)

METHOD

Prepare the sauce:

- Put a stainless steel pot, which is large enough to hold the pears tightly (without too much "wiggle room"), on a high heat.
- In to the pot, combine the above-listed ingredients for the sauce (ie, not the pears).
- Bring the pot to the boil, then reduce heat to a simmer for about 20-30 minutes until the liquid becomes infused with the spices and starts to reduce a little.

Poach the Pears:

- Place the pears into the simmering sauce and cover, poach for 30 minutes in the simmering sauce – turn them around every 5 minutes so that they poach evenly.
- Test the pears to see if they have softened. Once ok, take them out carefully and put on to a plate and let them cool to room temperature.



INGREDIENTS

½ cup liquor (Grand Marnier or Cointreau or cognac/brandy) + ¼ cup more

The juice of 1 orange

½ the peel of that orange

1 tablespoon of red berry jam + another tablespoon more

The Fruit

2 firm pears (not ripe; if soft, they will fall apart), peeled

Vanilla ice cream or mascarpone (as you prefer) to serve

1-2 teaspoons Crème Fraiche (optional)

METHOD CONTINUED

Finish off the Sauce:

- Strain the contents of the pot through a sieve (strainer) – if you want, you can strain the sauce before putting in the pears. Then put the liquid sauce back into the pot.
- Add a little more of some ingredients:
 - ¼ to ½ cup white sugar (depending on your taste...don't burn your lips)
 - a little more liquor...maybe ¼ cup
 - another tablespoon of red berry jam.
- Turn up the heat to high and let the pot with wine mixture sauce boil 15 minutes or more until the liquid reduces by about half.
- Don't forget to stir the boiling sauce every 3-4 minutes...this helps you to keep your eye on how it is reducing.
- Once it is like syrup (ie; a little thick), turn off the stove
- Brush the pears with the hot sauce to make them look shiny

Serve:

- Place vanilla ice cream (or Mascarpone) on to a plate or in to a bowl.
- Set a pear on top of the ice cream
- Pour some warm sauce over the pear and ice cream
- Add 1 teaspoon of Crème Fraiche (if you like)

BON APPETIT - I HOPE YOU ENJOY; JP.