

Poached Pear ~ served with syrup or chocolate

The best varieties for poaching are Bosc, Anjou, Bartlett

*You want the pears to be firm

*You can make this a couple days before and dress pear with syrup / chocolate prior to serving

Poaching liquid

—Water + sugar (approximately 1/4 sugar or honey; but adjust as you like)

—I did 10 cups water to 1 cup sugar and it was plenty sweet

Bring water to boil and add:

—A variety of spices, such as:

-Vanilla bean

-pepper

-juice of one lemon

-lemon peel (use a potato peeler)

-anise seed (these are very strong: use 1 or 2)

-ginger

-touch of salt (always a nice contrast to sugar)

-herbs (for example, mint)

-save a few leaves to decorate your pear

**NB: it is easier to add than to remove flavor. Taste the water as you go; it's fun and your kitchen will smell marvelous*

Meanwhile, peel your pears. Leave the stem and cut the bottom so they have a flat surface to stand. Once peeled, drop into the boiling water (so they don't brown) and reduce the water to a gentle simmer

-You can use parchment paper to cover the top so all the pears are immersed in the water

Cook for 15-30 minutes: it depends on the size and ripeness of your fruit.

-I start checking after 20 minutes. Use a sharp knife to poke the thickest part of your pear. You want it to go in smoothly, without resistance.

Remove from heat and let cool. If you think the pears are a little overcooked, remove them from the flavored water until the water cools down. Then cover the pears with the flavored water and refrigerate. Otherwise, let pears cool in the cooking liquid (fully immersed) and refrigerate if not using immediately.

To serve:

Bring pears to room temperature. You can also decorate the stem with herbs.

In syrup:

For syrup, take some of the flavored water and reduce it (just boil it until it starts to almost caramelize and become syrupy.) Strain out the various spices.

Drape your pear with the syrup and serve

You can also sprinkle confectioners syrup on the pear

With chocolate:

-Chop good dark chocolate (for example, Valrhona bitter chocolate)

-Heat it in bain marie (bowl over a small amount of gently boiling water; make sure bowl does not touch the water)

-Pour it over the pear. It doesn't have to cover the pear; draping is fine

-the chocolate will solidify and is a wonderful contrast to the soft, fragrant pear

-You do not need heavy cream, but you can add a drop of warm heavy cream to the chocolate for easier pouring

You can also do a ganache, and if you are lucky, your ganache will have shine!

-Proportions are traditionally 1:1 chocolate to heavy cream, but you can play with that

-Simmer cream

-Chop chocolate finely (so it melts quickly)

-Mix chocolate with cream in a glass bowl until combined

-You can add a pinch fine salt