

Matthew May's

TEACHING KITCHEN

“Christmas Time in the Teaching Kitchen”

December 13, 2025

MERLOT-POACHED PEARS WITH GOAT CHEESE

4 bartlet, Anjou or bosc pears, peeled
1 bottle good merlot wine
½-bottle of water (using the same wine bottle)
1 cinnamon stick
1 TBSP. sugar
4-ounces goat cheese, softened
4-ounces cream cheese, softened

In medium-size saucepan (large enough to fit all 4 pears), add wine, water, sugar, and cinnamon stick. Bring to a boil. Add peeled pears and bring wine back to a low simmer. Once the liquid has returned to a boil, turn heat down to medium low. Place a round plate or small bowl on top of the pears to help keep them submerged in the wine. Simmer pears on low heat for 40 minutes, remove from heat, remove plate/bowl, and allow to cool to room temperature on the countertop, about three hours. Cover and refrigerate until cold (about 3-4 hours) until ready to use. The longer the pears remain in the poaching liquid, the darker and more vibrant the color! Pears can be poached up to three days in advance. When ready to serve, remove pears from wine. Cut pears in half, lengthwise through the stem. Using a melon baller or small spoon, remove the seeds/core from all the pear halves, leaving a neat, small cut-out oval hole in the pear. Remove the hard flower-end of the bottom of the pear. In a small mixing bowl, combine goat cheese and cream cheese until smooth. Spoon about 1 TBSP. goat cheese mixture into each pear. Serve immediately. You may prepare the pears ahead of time but spoon the goat cheese mixture into the pears right before serving. (You do not want to refrigerate the pears with the goat cheese already in them, as the goat cheese mixture will become too firm for serving, and the acid from the wine will begin to break down the cheese.) You want the pears cold, and the goat cheese mixture at room temperature. In my cooking classes, I top each pear with my candied pecans, coarsely chopped. Candied pecans can be found at www.matthewmay.org. Sweet and savory!

LEMON-GARLIC BUTTER POACHED SHRIMP

1-pound 16-20 shrimp, peeled and deveined
¼-pound unsalted butter (one stick)
1 lemon, juiced
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 TBSP. Italian parsley, chopped
½-tsp. Lemon Garlic Sea Salt (found at www.matthewmay.org)
1/8-tsp. ground black pepper

In a medium-size skillet or sauté pan, melt butter over medium heat. Add minced garlic, salt, pepper, and juice from half of the lemon. Bring poaching liquid to simmer (light boil). Your pan should be hot enough that you can see steam rising from the pan. Add shrimp and poach on this first side about 2 minutes, then turn shrimp over to cook the other side. By this time, most of the water may be evaporated and the butter may start to brown. Add 2 TBSP. water to prevent the butter from browning. Cook shrimp on this second side for only 60 seconds and remove from heat. The shrimp will still be slightly raw at this point, but will finish cooking out of the pan. This is called “carry-over cooking”. Transfer the shrimp to a serving plate or platter. Taste the poaching liquid, and adjust salt, pepper, and lemon juice if needed. Add chopped parsley. You should taste a flavorful balance of fat (butter), acid (lemon juice), and salt.

BEEF WELLINGTON

2-pounds button mushrooms, finely chopped

1-TBSP. chopped garlic
3-TBSP. unsalted butter
½-tsp. ground black pepper
¼-cup red wine or sherry

1 beef tenderloin, trimmed and cut into 3-4-ounce filets
2-TBSP. “Steaks and Chops” Sea Salt Blend (found at www.matthewmay.org)
1-tsp. vegetable oil (for searing steaks)
4 puff pastry sheets, chilled
1 egg + 1-TBSP water for egg wash
2-TBSP. Dijon mustard

*Preparation for this recipe starts the day before you are going to serve it.

In a large sauté pan, add mushrooms, wine or sherry, butter, pepper, and garlic. Cook on medium heat until the water has cooked out of the mushrooms, and they begin to brown on the bottom of the pan. Transfer to a bowl or small pan and cool completely in the refrigerator.

On a baking sheet tray, season both sides of the beef filets with the Steak And Chops sea salt. Wrap and store in refrigerator overnight. (This process is critical as the salt will penetrate the beef filets and make them very flavorful and tender). When ready to assemble the wellingtons, remove the beef filets from the refrigerator. In a hot skillet, add vegetable oil, then sear both sides of each fillet until browned. Remove from pan and allow to cool before proceeding. Add 1/2-tsp. Dijon mustard to the tops of each fillet. Spread mustard to cover the entire tops of each fillet. Add 1-TBSP. of chilled mushroom mixture on top of the mustard. Spread the mushroom mixture evenly over each fillet.

Sprinkle a little flour over your counter and roll out your first puff pastry sheets into a 10”X10” square. Using a sharp knife, cut the pastry sheet into quarters so that you have four 5”X5” square sheet. Carefully, transfer your prepared filets to the puff pastry upside down, so the mushroom layer is on the bottom. Carefully pull up the four corners of the pastry to wrap each fillet. Trim any excess dough that overlaps or that is not needed. Gently turn each wrapped fillet upside down again and transfer to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet tray. Repeat process until all filets are wrapped and evenly spaced on the sheet tray. In a small bowl, combine 1 egg and 1-TBSP. water, whisk to combine. Brush each wrapped fillet with the egg wash. You may also cut small leaves or other shapes to decorate the tops of each Wellington. Be sure to egg wash your pastry décor as well.

Preheat oven to 425°F. Bake Wellingtons until golden brown and a thermometer inserted in the center of each fillet registers between 120°F - 125°F, about 45 minutes. Using a spatula, remove the Wellingtons from the sheet tray and allow them to rest about 15 minutes before serving.

CHOCOLATE PEPPERMINT POT DE CREME

1-cup heavy cream
3-ounces dark chocolate chips
1-tsp. cocoa powder (unsweetened)
4 egg yolks
2-tsp. crushed peppermint candy or candy canes (divided)
1 TBSP. sugar
2 6-ounce ramekins or glass dessert dishes
(Makes two desserts)

Preheat oven to 300°F, with rack positioned in center of oven. For custard, add cream to saucepan, along with vanilla, chocolate chips and cocoa. Bring to a low boil; stirring to keep the chocolate from settling on the bottom. In a medium sized bowl, whisk egg yolks and 1 TBSP. sugar together. Slowly whisk in hot chocolate cream, a little at a time, until smooth. Add 1-tsp. crushed peppermint candied into each ramekin. Pour hot chocolate cream mixture evenly into the 2 custard cups, on top of the peppermint candies (6–8-ounce custard cups or ramekins). Transfer the filled custard cups to a deep baking dish and pour enough water in baking pan to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Bake until custards are JUST set, about 40 minutes. (Remember that chocolate is in a liquid state when hot, so it will appear that it is not cooked all the way). Remove from oven and remove ramekins from hot water and allow to cool on the counter about an hour before refrigerating. (May be prepared 2-3 day ahead; cooled, tightly wrapped, and stored in refrigerator.) Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving. Enjoy!