

Matthew May's

TEACHING KITCHEN

BETTER LIVING THROUGH FOOD AND SCIENCE

Valentine's Dinner
February 14, 2024

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.

HERB-CRUSTED BEEF TENDERLOIN

2 TBSP. Garlic & Herb Sea Salt (found at www.eastcoastsaltcompany.com)

1-tsp. cracked black pepper

¼-cup fresh thyme (finely chopped)

¼-cup fresh rosemary (finely chopped)

(Mix the above ingredients until evenly combined)

1 whole beef tenderloin (cleaned and trimmed)

1-tsp. vegetable oil

stem or probe thermometer will be needed

Preheat oven to 350°F. Evenly spread spice mixture on the outside of beef tenderloin, wrap in plastic and refrigerate overnight (at least 12 hours). When ready to cook and serve, preheat oven to 300°F and preheat a large skillet or cast-iron pan (large enough to fit the tenderloin) on medium-high heat. Unwrap tenderloin and pat it dry with paper towels. At this point, you may cut the tenderloin in half to allow for even browning in the size pan you have. Add 1-tsp. of vegetable oil to hot pan (spread oil evenly along the bottom of the pan). Carefully, add beef tenderloin to hot pan, and allow to brown on all sides. This will take 7-9 minutes, depending on the temperature of your pan. After all sides of tenderloin have browned, transfer it to a baking sheet pan/tray and finish cooking in hot oven, uncovered. After 20 minutes, check the internal temperature at the fattest part of the tenderloin (if you cut your tenderloin in half, you will need to check temperature of both pieces). When tenderloin has reached an internal temperature of 125°F, remove it from the oven, cover it with foil and allow to rest for at least 10-15 minutes. The internal temperature will continue to rise to 130°F-133°F (medium rare) (this is called “carry over cooking”) If you prefer your beef medium to medium well, allow to remain in the oven until it reaches an internal temperature of 135°F. Allowing the tenderloin to rest for at least 10 minutes is critical. *If you slice the beef without allowing it to rest, the juices will escape on your cutting board or serving plate and the tenderloin will be dry. After resting for 10-15 minutes, slice the tenderloin and serve!

BLACK TRUFFLE MASHED POTATOES

2-pounds fresh, whole white or Yukon gold potatoes, unpeeled and cut into chunks

4 TBSP. unsalted butter (1/2-stick)

½-tsp. Black Truffle Sea Salt (found at www.matthewmay.org)

½-cup cream or milk

1/8-tsp. ground black pepper

In medium-size pot, add potatoes and add just enough water to cover. Cook at a low boil until potatoes are tender. Drain potatoes in a colander and add back to the pot. Add butter, milk or cream, salt, pepper, and truffle oil. Using a potato masher or electric beaters, mash the potatoes until smooth. Do not over beat/mash the potatoes, as they will become gummy and sticky from the potato starch. Taste, and adjust seasoning is needed. Serve and enjoy. *Drizzle a little bit of truffle oil over the mashed potatoes after serving.

AMARETTO POT de CREME or CRÈME BRÛLÉE

4 egg yolks

1 TBSP. amaretto

¼-tsp. almond extract

1-cup heavy whipping cream

2 TBSP. white sugar (divided)

2 6-ounce glass baking cups or ramekins

(Makes two desserts)

Preheat oven to 300°F. Separate egg yolks from eggs. Save the egg whites for another recipe. In a small mixing bowl, gently stir together the four egg yolks and three tsp. sugar; set aside. Meanwhile, bring cream and amaretto to a very low simmer over medium heat. Very slowly, pour the hot cream into the egg yolk mixture (a little at a time), while stirring the eggs constantly. Pouring too fast will result in scrambled eggs. Place your 2 ramekins into a 9"x9"-inch pan or loaf pan. Divide the custard mixture into the two ramekins. Pour water into the pan (around the outside of the ramekins) until it's about halfway up the side of the ramekins. Be careful not to pour water into the custard. Bake 40-45 minutes or until centers are just set. (There will be a little 'jiggle' in the centers.) Cool to room temperature then refrigerate for a minimum of three hours. Serve as is for pot de crème. To Brulee: Top each custard with 1-tsp. of white sugar. Using your finger, spread the sugar evenly around the tops of the crème Brulée so it is completely covering the Brulée. Brulee the tops with a kitchen torch or under the broiler until sugar browns. Wait at least three minutes before eating, as the sugar will be very hot.