



Poached Pear Parfait with Sweet Pastry Cream

By Dylan Sabuco

Prep Time 10 / **Cook Time** 15 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

measure: to calculate the specific amount of an ingredient required using a measuring tool (like measuring cups or spoons).

mix: to thoroughly combine two or more ingredients until uniform in texture.

simmer: to cook a food gently, usually in a liquid, until softened.

slice: to cut into thin pieces using a sawing motion with your knife.

knife skills: Bear Claw (growl), Pinch, Plank, and Bridge (look out for trolls).

Equipment

- Small saucepan
- Medium saucepan
- Heat-safe bowl
- Liquid measuring cup
- Dry measuring cups
- Measuring spoons
- Cutting board + kid-safe knife
- Wooden spoon
- Whisk

Ingredients

Poached Pear Parfait with Sweet Pastry Cream

- Poached pears:
- 3 to 4 medium pears (your choice of variety)
- 1/2 C granulated sugar
- 1/2 C water
- 1/2 C pomegranate juice (or cranberry juice)
- Pastry cream:
- 1 C heavy cream **** (for DAIRY ALLERGY sub coconut or plant-based heavy cream)****
- 1/2 C granulated sugar
- 1 T cornstarch
- 1 egg **** (Omit for EGG ALLERGY and cook cream for an extra 2 minutes)****
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract **** (for GLUTEN ALLERGY use certified gluten-free pure vanilla extract, not imitation vanilla flavor—check label)****

Food Allergen Substitutions

Poached Pear Parfait with Sweet Pastry Cream

Dairy: Substitute coconut or plant-based heavy cream in pastry cream.

Egg: Omit egg and cook pastry cream for an extra 2 minutes.

Gluten/Wheat: Use certified gluten-free pure vanilla extract, not imitation vanilla flavor in pastry cream.

Instructions

Poached Pear Parfait with Sweet Pastry Cream

intro

Poached pears have a history that is actually wrapped up in the origin story of the modern kitchen itself. Auguste Escoffier is the chef who created the chain of command in kitchens. In the latter half of the 1800s, Escoffier revolutionized the way restaurants worked. His brigade system introduced the idea of an executive chef with their "brigade" of chefs answering to them. To this day, restaurants still use this system. In 1864, Escoffier also invented the dish "poires belle Hélène" (roughly "pears for beautiful Helen"), named after a French operetta called "La Belle Hélène." The dish began as an elegant peeled pear, poached in sugar syrup and served with ice cream and chocolate sauce. Over time, this dish has simplified greatly. Nowadays, poached pears can be found in a can at your grocery store. Let's try our hand at making this classic dish.

measure + simmer + cool

We will start by making the pastry cream. This pudding-like cream will take only a few minutes to cook, but requires most of your attention to ensure none of the ingredients burn. In a small saucepan, measure **1 cup heavy cream, 1/2 cup sugar, 1 tablespoon cornstarch, 1 egg,** and **1 teaspoon vanilla extract** and whisk over medium heat. Bring the mixture to a simmer, then immediately pour the mixture into a heat-safe bowl to cool while you prepare the pears.

scrumptious science

In the above step, you will use the gelling power of cornstarch. Cornstarch is a powder derived from the cellulose present in all plant cells. In its natural form, cellulose is like microscopic gelatin. It protects plant cells by cushioning them and filling in all the empty spaces in a cell. In this recipe, we use a powder version with all the liquid removed. When we add this dry cornstarch to a wet mixture (like cream and sugar in this instance), the cornstarch will absorb the liquid, and the cellulose will start to thicken our cream into a pudding-like consistency.

slice + scoop

Slice **3 to 4 pears** into 4 equal slices. Then, using a spoon, scoop out any seeds and set the pears aside. Peeling the pears before poaching may cause your poached pears to become mushy while cooking. Check the firmness of your pears before starting the recipe and decide whether you should peel your pear or not. If it is firm, peeling will be fine and result in a glossy, beautiful poached pear. If it is soft, leave the peel on. This will help the pear hold its shape.

measure + simmer

In a medium saucepan, measure **1/2 cup sugar, 1/2 cup water,** and **1/2 cup pomegranate juice.** Bring that mixture to a simmer, then add in your sliced pears. Simmer for 10 minutes or more. The longer the pears cook, the softer, more flavorful, and more colorful they become.

serve

Serve your poached pears atop a healthy dollop of Sweet Pastry Cream and Vanilla Cake Crumbles (see recipe). Bon appetit!

Featured Ingredient: Pears!

Hi! I'm Pear!

"I'm a fruit with a distinctive shape, except for an Asian pear cousin who is shaped like an apple! There's even a word for 'pear-shaped': 'pyriform!' We European pears have a thinner neck and a rounder end, but we're all juicy and delicious!"

History & Etymology

Pears have been around for a long time! There is evidence around Lake Zurich in Switzerland that pears have been eaten since prehistoric times! Pears were grown in China from around 2000 BCE, and the ancient Romans ate them raw and cooked with them.

During the reign of Henry III, King of England, in the 1200s, court records indicate he received pears shipped to him from France.

The word "pear" comes from Old English "pere," West Germanic "pera," related to the Dutch "peer," from the Latin "pirum."

Anatomy

Pear tree varieties come from the *Pyrus* genus of the Rosaceae or Rose family. There are 30 major pear species and over 3,000 cultivars (bred plant varieties). The European species include the D'Anjou, Bartlett, and Bosc. The fruit from the East Asia tree species is called by many names, such as apple, Asian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, or nashi.

The pear tree grows from about 30 feet tall, although it can reach 56 feet, and some species are shrub-like. The fruit has a stem, green to yellow skin, white flesh, and a core with seeds.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

Pears are picked before they are ripe, still green, and can easily be snapped off the tree. They ripen at room temperature.

You can tell pears are ripe when you press them gently around the stem, and their flesh gives slightly. Many pear varieties do not change color when mature; however, the Bartlett pear turns yellow. To help pears ripen sooner, place them next to bananas. To delay ripening, put them in the refrigerator.

You can purchase pears fresh, canned, as purée, or juice. You can add pears to salads, soups, breads, desserts, and preserves.

Nutrition

Pears are part of a healthy diet. They have a moderate amount of fiber, vitamin C, and potassium. They have antioxidants that are concentrated in the peel. Pears also have a high water content and are low in calories.

Fiber aids digestion and slows sugar absorption, which is good for blood sugar. Vitamin C strengthens your immune system, contributes to wound healing, and helps build strong bones. Potassium is good for heart health, and the antioxidants in pears help prevent cancer and heart disease.