

Pears poached in white wine

This recipe is just a guide. You could use water or dry white wine and more sugar or honey instead of the dessert wine. And the flavourings are optional and really up to you. Go easy on them as their flavour will intensify when you reduce the syrup. Instead of pears, you could use quinces.



Serves: 10

a 750ml bottle of dessert wine, eg Beauges de Venise or Sauternes

sugar or honey, to taste

one or two spices – eg cinnamon stick, star anise, fresh and/or dried ginger pieces, cloves, dried rosebuds, peppercorns... (optional)

a vanilla pod, split along its length (optional)

pared zest of an orange (optional)

pared zest of a lemon (optional)

10 medium-large firm ripe pears

clotted cream, crème fraîche and/or crispy cookies to serve

1. Put the wine into a large pot and add a couple of generous spoonfuls of sugar or honey and the flavourings of your choice. Go easy on them! Set the pot over a low heat to dissolve the sugar.
2. Meanwhile neatly peel the pears in smooth strips from top to bottom. Leave the stalks in, and carefully scoop out the blossom end. Make sure they can sit upright – slice off a slither of the base if needed. As you work pop the prepared pears directly into the poaching liquid so that they don't discolour.
3. Add water if needed so that the pears are just covered, and simmer very gently, covered with a round of baking paper on the surface, until the pears are totally tender and translucent but still holding their shape, about 30 mins. NB Check the flavour of the syrup half-way through. If too spicy or zesty, fish out some of your flavourings.
4. Carefully remove the pears with a slotted spoon and let them cool. Strain the poaching liquid and return it to the pot. Boil to reduce it until syrupy. Let the syrup cool then pour it over the pears. Serve the pears standing upright with syrup poured over.