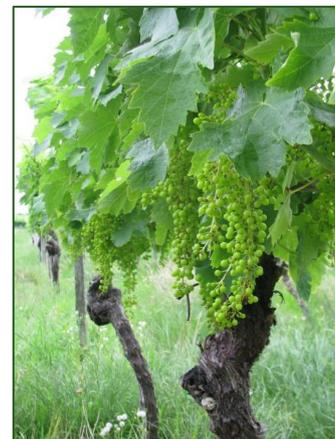


Prune and Armagnac ice cream

If possible, make this with those famous Agen prunes, and some really good Armagnac, both of course from southwest France. This recipe uses American cups, and is one of the few examples of when I think it is marginally easier to do so. 1 cup = 240ml.

Serves: 6-12, depending on portion size...



approx 200g prunes

Armagnac

1 cup whole milk

2 cups double cream

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup white granulated sugar

small pinch of salt

a vanilla bean

6 large egg yolks

1. Snip each prune into 4-6 pieces (scissors might be easiest) and place in a small bowl. Pour over enough Armagnac so they are barely covered. Leave overnight to let the prunes absorb the liquid. Make sure your ice cream maker's ice bowl is in the freezer, if you have one.
2. Place milk, double cream, sugar and salt in a saucepan. Split the vanilla bean along its length and scrape out the seeds with the back of a paring knife. Add seeds and pod to cream. Heat slowly until on the verge of simmering, then take off the heat, cover and let sit for 10-20 minutes. Meanwhile whisk yolks in a big bowl until paler in colour.
3. Pour a little hot milk/cream onto yolks while whisking, then a little more, still whisking. This is called tempering the eggs. If you poured it all on in one go, they'd scramble. Now add the rest of the hot milk/cream and return the whole lot to the saucepan. Clean your bowl and whisk.
4. Cook custard over a low heat, stirring gently and continuously, until thickened. If it comes to the boil, it will curdle. Pour cooked custard through a sieve into your cleaned bowl. This will remove the vanilla pod and any egg lumps. Stir occasionally as it cools. Once cool, chill it completely in the fridge for several hours or overnight.
5. Churn custard in an ice cream maker. Alternatively, freeze for several hours, stirring it up every now and then to keep it creamy smooth. Half way through the freezing process, stir in the prunes and their juices. Store in the freezer in a well-sealed plastic container for no more than a few days, and transfer to the fridge 15 minutes before scooping. If you like, splash over a little more Armagnac to serve.