

Roasted figs

When weekendening in the Russian River area recently with friends (picture higgledy hills, back-to-back vineyards of Zinfandel, Merlot and Cabernet, pasty San Franciscans soaking up the rays by day and in the hot tub by night...), we were delighted to find a fig tree in the garden. Roasted on their leaves, the figs went a treat with the grilled lamb we had for dinner.



Serves: 8 as part of a small plate or as an accompaniment to meat

Time: 40 mins

several fresh fig leaves, washed (If you don't have any, use parchment paper, or nothing, instead)

750g (1 lb 10 oz) ripe figs (I used green ones; black or a mix also works well)

4-5 tbsps good olive oil

2 tbsps white dessert wine (If you don't have any, use water or white wine and a tiny sprinkle of sugar)

coarse salt, such as Maldon sea salt

freshly ground black pepper

1-2 tbsps balsamic vinegar (If you don't have a good one, boil it until it reaches a syrupy consistency)

1. Heat oven to 230C (450F). Line a small rimmed baking sheet or roasting dish with fig leaves. Trim stalks off figs and cut larger figs in half lengthways. (It's nice if some figs are whole and some are halved.) Arrange figs on the leaves. They should form one layer but be in quite close contact.
2. Drizzle over the olive oil and wine, making sure each fig gets a little of each. Then sprinkle quite generously with salt and a few grinds of pepper.
3. Roast in oven for approx 30 mins, or until figs are soft and caramelising in a few places, yet still holding their shape.
4. Drizzle figs with balsamic vinegar and serve warm or at room temperature. They will be delicious as an accompaniment to roast or grilled meat (lamb, duck and pork all come to mind), with cheese as pre- or post-dinner small plate, or simply on their own with some crusty bread to mop up the juices.

