



Spiced Pear and Almond Tart

This is a special occasion desert - perfect for the winter festive months. The pears sit in individual pastry cases bathed in spicy syrup. You can make these in advance, and then assemble just before serving. They are delicious served with vanilla custard.

Serves : 6

Cooking Time : 1 - 1 1/2 hours including the preparation

Ingredients

6 pears, peeled but left whole
1 lb 4 oz / 560g granulated sugar
1 1/4 pints / 25 fl oz / 720 ml water
3 oz / 75 g butter
3 oz / 75 g caster sugar
3 oz / 75 g ground almonds
1 inch / 2.5 cm fresh ginger root, peeled and grated

Herbs & Spices

10 Cardamom Whole
3 Anise Star
1 Cinnamon Sticks
amount Cloves Whole
2 Vanilla Pods

Cooking Instructions

Place the granulated sugar, the water and 2 of the vanilla pods in a pan big and deep enough in which to stand all the pears upright, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and carefully place the peeled pears upright in the syrup and simmer very gently for 20 minutes or until the pears are just tender. Leave to cool in the syrup whilst you make the pastry cases.

Preheat the oven to 180C / 350F / gas mark 4. Cream together in a processor the butter, 3oz / 75 g of caster sugar and the almonds. Grease 6 individual tartlet tins. Place 2 - 3 tsp of pastry mixture into each tin and gently press down with the back of the spoon to flatten it around the tin. Don't worry if it looks rustic and ill-fitting, that is the nature of this kind of pastry.

Bake in the centre of the oven for 20 mins until lightly browned. Leave to cool in the tins.

With the back of a spoon, crush the green cardamoms to release the round seeds. Retain the seeds and discard the empty pods. Gently pour off approximately 18 fl oz / 500 ml syrup from the poached pears into another pan. Add the star anise, cinnamon stick, grated fresh ginger, cloves and cardamom pods. Bring to a boil and then simmer for about 10 mins. Turn off the heat and leave to cool for at least 30 minutes, before straining to remove the spices (this allows the flavours to infuse into the syrup).

Slice the pears and arrange in the tart bases. Drizzle over some syrup. Delicious served with vanilla custard.