

Champagne-Poached Nectarines With Raspberry Mousse

For the Nectarines

8 ripe nectarines
1 bottle champagne or sparkling wine
3-inch piece vanilla bean
Mint leaves for garnish

For the Sugar Syrup

2 cups sugar
2½ cups water
⅓ cup white corn syrup

For the Raspberry Mousse

12 ounces raspberries
¾ cup sugar
2 teaspoons lemon juice
1 cup heavy cream

For the Sugar Syrup

Combine the sugar, water, and corn syrup in a heavy saucepan. Bring the ingredients to a boil, stirring frequently. Lower the heat and simmer the syrup for about 10 minutes. Allow it to cool, then place in the refrigerator, where it will keep for two weeks.

For the Nectarines

Chill the champagne so it won't foam over when opened. Fill your sink with cold water.

In a large pot, pour in the champagne or sparkling wine, the cool sugar syrup, and the vanilla bean.

Bring another large pot of water to boil. With a very pointed knife, gently make a slight slit all around the seams of the nectarines. Try not to puncture the flesh. Submerge each nectarine in the boiling water for 6-8 seconds, then into the cold water in the sink.

Carefully peel the skin, and immediately place each nectarine in the champagne liquid so it does not discolor. The skin peels quite easily, except perhaps around the stem. If you can't remove the skin around the stem, leave it because more will be removed when the nectarines are poached.

When all the peeled fruit has been placed in the champagne mixture, bring the liquid to a boil over medium-low heat. Once a boil is reached, lower the heat so the liquid is at a simmer, and poach for about 5-10 minutes, depending on the ripeness of the fruit. Flip the fruit occasionally so that all parts are cooked.

Remove the fruit to a baking dish, pour over the nectarines some of the poaching liquid, and cover loosely with foil until the fruit is completely cooled. Do not refrigerate the nectarines. If the remaining poaching liquid has bits of peel in it, strain it out, remove the vanilla bean, and refrigerate it until cold.

For the Raspberry Mousse

Place the sugar in the bowl of a processor or blender, and process for 1 minute until the sugar is superfine. Then add the the raspberries, and lemon juice and process until completely smooth. Force the fruit through a sieve to remove all the seeds. Refrigerate the raspberry purée until cold. Chill a bowl and beater. Beat the heavy cream until fairly stiff peaks are formed. Gently but thoroughly fold in the cold raspberry purée into the whipped cream. Refrigerate the mousse until ready to serve.

To Assemble

Divide the mousse evenly over the bottom of attractive, shallow curved plates or serving bowls. Place one nectarine, with the stem side up on the mousse in each bowl. Decorate the stem area with sprigs of mint.

Place the cold poaching liquid in a sauceboat, allowing each person to spoon some over the dessert. The flavorful champagne poaching liquid marries perfectly with the mousse.

Serve with a fork, knife and a spoon.