

COFFEE POACHED PEARS

What you need

3 D'Anjou pears, firm
250ml drinking-strength coffee
100ml water
1 ½ teaspoons raw sugar

3 tablespoons plain yogurt, cream or ice cream, to serve
Handful walnuts, chopped, to serve
1 ½ teaspoons maple syrup

Yields 3 dessert portions

Preparation 15 minutes

Cooking 45 minutes

What to do

1. Brew some coffee—about 250ml, not too weak but as you would drink it. If the coffee is too strong it may overpower the delicate fragrance of the pears.
2. Peel and halve the pears, keeping the stalk to one side. Remove the cores, by inserting a small fruit knife at an angle just around the core in a diamond shape, removing a kind of pyramid-shaped piece. Of course if you have a melon baller or other special device for this, feel free to use it.
3. Place the pears in a saucepan with the coffee, raw sugar and water. It's best if there is enough room for the pears to lie flat in the pan, but if not you just have to keep moving them around so they cook evenly through. Cook them on a simmer for 30–45 minutes until you get a glossy, translucent amber color on all pieces. Add water as needed if the syrup is reducing too quickly.
4. The pears are ready when they still hold their shape but can easily be cut with a spoon. Carefully slice the halves, keeping the top inch or so in tact, and push the slices apart to make it more like a fan. Place some syrup from the pot into a bowl, and place the pears on top. Serve with yogurt, maple syrup and walnuts — or even heavy cream or ice cream.

Notes

I used D'Anjou pears which were great because they are so easy to peel and have a nice plump shape to them. They should be ripe but still firm. I like the contrast of warm and cold, but the pears can be served cold too.