

Jugged Pear

Serves 6

There is perhaps no dish I associate with Mama more than this one, her version of Dear's dress-box apples. Deep purple, jewel-like, and magical, her pears poached in red wine and spices were the centerpiece of our large Christmas breakfasts or Christmas supper open houses. We would spend days locating a hundred or more small pears, then a night peeling and a night poaching.

These need no adornment or additions to make a perfect dessert. They can also elevate a plain lettuce salad at a luncheon. Served with Greek yogurt, these pears make an excellent simple but fancy breakfast. When choosing your red wine for poaching, pick an inky red that's fruit forward, typically a Zinfandel or a Syrah. Don't poach the pears in a wine you wouldn't drink, but it doesn't have to be an expensive bottle.

- Caroline Randall Williams

6 ripe but firm pears (Bosc are best)

1 (750-ml) bottle red wine

½ cup sugar

Zest from 1 lemon, removed with a vegetable peeler

16 whole cloves

½ tablespoon ground cinnamon

½ tablespoon ground nutmeg

1. Peel the pears, and cut off the bottoms so they can sit up when you plate them. Pour the wine into a large saucepan and set it over medium heat. Add the sugar and stir until it dissolves; continue to stir occasionally until the wine comes to a boil. Turn down the heat so that the wine simmers. Add the lemon zest, cloves, cinnamon, and nutmeg, and finally the pears. Make sure the pears are submerged in the wine. Then reduce the heat to low, cover the pan, and simmer until the pears are very dark and tender when pierced with a knife, about 45 minutes.
2. Carefully remove the pears from the liquid and let both the pears and the liquid cool. Once cool, the pears can be stored overnight in the cooking liquid; they will take on the most beautiful color and profound flavor.
3. Serve the pears in a pool of their poaching liquid.

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