

Mulled Bartlet Pear Crisp with Ginger, Honey, and Lemon Ice Cream

Time: For the ice cream, 10 minutes to infuse the cream, overnight to steep it; 10 minutes to make the custard base, several hours to chill it; 40 or 50 minutes to churn it; and about 2 hours to temper the cream in the freezer.

For the crisp, about 40 minutes to prepare, and 15 minutes to bake.

A pear, whether raw or baked, lacks the bold, operatic range of an apple. A raw apple is crisply explosive and perfumed; a raw pear is yielding and juicy, neutrally sweet. A baked apple delivers rich basso, fleshy succulence; a baked pear issues a far away lilting aria. Each could be called autumn's leading lady, but for this performance we've chosen the pear. A poached pear is so quenchingly light, so lush and silken slipping down your throat that you crave it no matter how sated you are. Season the pear with red wine, the dry pucker of cranberry, the low notes of cinnamon and clove, a short, high burst of lemon, and this dessert gets close to *Glühwein's* wintry mystique.

But wait, the pears fall back to earth in a meteor shower of crunchy, buttery streusel topping, and lo, they're a crisp. A crisp must be coddled with ice cream, but not mere vanilla, in this case. We've made a fresh ginger, honey, and lemon ice cream: part hot, part warm, part cool—all creamy.

It adds up to a lot of dimension in one gravity defying dessert.

Equipment Mise en Place

For the ice cream you will need a digital scale; a peeler or sharp paring knife; a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan; a medium mixing bowl; a whisk; a fine, conical strainer; an instant-read thermometer; 3 quarts of ice; a pitcher or other vessel with a pour spout; and an ice cream maker.

For the streusel you will need a digital scale, a small saucepan, a mixing bowl, a sheet pan, some parchment paper, and a long metal spatula.

For the filling you will need a deep 10- or 12- inch sauté pan; a fine, conical strainer; a large mixing bowl; a tea strainer, a peeler; a melon baller or small measuring spoon; a paring knife; and a shallow 1 ½-quart baking dish.

Ingredients

Baking Notes

The ice cream base takes a two-step infusion: one for the ginger when the cream is very hot (overnight) and one for the lemon peel after the custard is cooked (briefly). There is a reason for this: lemon peel loses flavor when it is over-heated or cooked too long; ginger needs the heat and time to come biting through. We also suggest that you grate the ginger directly into the saucepan: ginger likes to oxidize and this will prevent its oxidation.

We have also adopted a two stage cooking process to maximize the impact of both fruits and the topping. Most of the cranberries called for in the recipe are used to make a spiced stock with red wine. But a good spoonful of cooked berries is held back to grace the top. The pears are cooked in the cranberry stock, the streusel is given a head start on its own in the oven, and everything comes back together briefly in a shallow baking dish at 400 degrees.

One of the nicest things about this recipe is that the pectin in the cranberry skins thickens the sauce, eliminating the need for cornstarch or flour instead.

Bosc pears are often regarded as the best variety for cooking due to their firmer texture; but we love the supple, juicy Bartlett for this crisp.

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For the ince cream:

3 cups heavy cream
4 ounces unpeeled ginger
6 ounces (1/2 cup) honey
1/4 teaspoon salt
6 large egg yolks
1 lemon, washed

For the streusel:

4.7 ounces (about 1 sifted cup) Anson Mills Fine Cloth-Bolted Pastry Flour
1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
1/4 cup packed (2 ounces) light brown sugar
4 tablespoons (2 ounces) unsalted European-style butter, melted and lukewarm

For the filling:

5 ounces granulated sugar
1 cup good cabernet sauvignon
1/2 whole cinnamon stick
2 whole cloves
6 peppercorns
1/8 teaspoon salt
3 wide strips of zest and 2 tablespoons juice from one large, juicy lemon
8 ounces fresh cranberries, picked over and rinsed
3 pounds red or yellow Barlett pears, ripe, but not spongy

Directions

1. *Several hours or the day ahead, steep the cream for the ice cream base (if you aren't making ice cream, move on to Step 4):* Pour the cream, honey, and salt into a medium saucepan and warm them over medium heat, stirring occasionally to melt the honey. While the cream is warming, peel the ginger and grate the root directly into the saucepan with the cream. Allow the cream to simmer, then pull the saucepan off the heat. Transfer the saucepan to the refrigerator with a lid, and steep the cream until it is spicy-rich and gingery, several hours or overnight.

2. *Make the custard base:* Strain the ginger-infused cream through a fine conical strainer into a bowl. Return the cream mixture to the saucepan and bring it to a simmer over medium-low heat. Whisk the egg yolks together in a medium mixing bowl. Set a large bowl into a sink or basin filled with lots of ice cubes and cold water. Have a fine conical strainer nearby. When the cream is just shy of a simmer, pull the saucepan off the burner and pour half the hot cream into the yolk mixture. Whisk well. Add the remaining cream and whisk well. Pour everything back into the saucepan and return the saucepan to the burner. Reduce the heat to medium and stir with a heat proof spatula or wooden spoon until the cream thickens and the temperature hovers right around 180 degrees, about 45 seconds. Do not let the temperature go over 180 degrees! Pour the custard immediately through a fine conical strainer into the bowl set in the ice bath. Peel 4 or 5 long strips from the lemon and add them to the custard. Stir briefly to cool. Refrigerate, covered, until very cold, 4 hours or overnight.

3. *Make the ice cream:* Pour the chilled custard base through a fine conical sieve into the canister of your ice cream maker, pressing on the lemon peel with a wooden spoon to divest it of as much flavor as possible. Churn until the ice cream maker indicates the cream is frozen, about 50 minutes. When the cream is set, remove the canister from the ice cream maker and place it in the freezer to temper the cream, 2 or 3 hours more.

4. *Make the streusel:* Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 300 degrees. Combine the flour, salt, and sugar in a small mixing bowl and toss together, breaking up any small lumps of sugar with your fingertips. Drizzle the melted butter into the dry ingredients and toss together with a fork. When the butter is mixed throughout, rub the streusel into chunky bits with your fingertips. Turn it onto a sheet pan lined with parchment and bake it for 15 minutes, turning it occasionally with a long metal spatula. It will seem soft, but will become crisp as it cools. Remove the streusel from the oven and set it aside.

5. *Make the cranberry stock:* Combine the sugar, red wine, cinnamon, cloves, and peppercorns in a deep, 10- or 12-inch sauté pan and bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring with a wooden spoon to dissolve the sugar. Add the cranberries, cover the pan, and cook, lifting the lid to move the berries about in the syrup. When the berries begin to pop, transfer about a half cup of them out of the syrup with a slotted spoon into a small bowl. Cook the remaining cranberries, partially covered, until they are completely spent, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Stir in the lemon zest. Pour the cranberries through a fine conical sieve set over a small bowl, pushing hard on them to extract both the juice and pulp. There should be between $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1 cup. Pour the cranberry stock back into the sauté pan and set it aside off the heat.

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6. *Poach the pears:* Pour the lemon juice into a large mixing bowl. Working one at a time, cut each pear in half lengthwise, scoop out the seeds and strip the membrane with a melon baller or small measuring spoon. Peel the pear halves, using your thumb in the seed cavity for balance. Cut the halves into large chunks, and toss them in the bowl with the lemon juice. When all the pears are prepped, bring the cranberry stock to a simmer over medium-high heat. Add the pears, lemon juice and all, and poach them in the stock, stirring frequently—but gently—until the pears are just tender, about 5 minutes. While the pears are poaching, heat the oven to 400 degrees.

7. Turn the hot pears into a shallow 1 ½-quart baking dish. Sprinkle the reserved cranberries and streusel over the top. Bake until the streusel is toasty-brown and the filling bubbly, about 15 minutes. Cool 5 minutes, then serve with Ginger, Honey, and Lemon Ice Cream—or vanilla, if you prefer.

Serves 6