



## ANSON MILLS

### **Semifreddo di Riso with Wine-Soaked Grapes**

#### **Yield**

About 6 servings

#### **Time**

About 1½ hours active time

#### **Cooking Remarks**

The semifreddo base is lightened with Italian meringue. But because a two-white meringue is all that's needed for loft, we found a handheld mixer to be more effective than a stand mixer. With the former, you can ensure the beaters make good contact with the whites, whereas in the latter, the whites sit in a small puddle at the bottom of the bowl and barely engage with the whisk attachment.

To prevent the semifreddo from becoming icy and freezing so solid that slicing is difficult, we turned to gelatin—and vodka. Gelatin helps prevent the formation of large ice crystals so that the consistency of the dessert remains smooth. Alcohol lowers the freezing point, to help guard against an impenetrable firmness. We chose vodka, which is essentially flavorless.

#### **Equipment Mise en Place**

For the grapes, you will need a digital kitchen scale, a medium saucepan, a fine-mesh strainer, a small bowl, a liquid measuring cup, and a clean pint-size glass jar or container for storage.

For the semifreddo, you will need a digital kitchen scale, an 8 by 4-inch loaf pan; an oven-safe 2- to 3-quart saucepan; a medium bowl, a small bowl, and two large bowls; a whisk; a rasp-style grater; a very small heavy-bottomed saucepan; a handheld mixer; an instant-read thermometer; and a silicone spatula.

#### **Ingredients**

*for the wine-soaked grapes*

12 ounces seedless red grapes, stemmed and halved

1¼ cups fruity, full-bodied red wine

3 ounces (⅓ cup plus 1½ tablespoons) sugar

Pinch of fine sea salt

Generous ¼ teaspoon black peppercorns

1 (1-inch) piece cinnamon stick

2 teaspoons good-quality balsamic vinegar

2 drops almond extract

*for the semifreddo*

3.5 ounces (½ cup) Anson Mills Carolina Gold Rice  
2 cups whole milk  
½ cup plus ⅓ cup heavy cream  
1.5 ounces (3½ tablespoons) plus 3.5 ounces (½ cup) sugar  
⅝ teaspoon fine sea salt  
3 gelatin sheets  
2 large eggs, separated  
2 tablespoons vodka  
Whole nutmeg  
2 tablespoons water

**Directions**

**1. Make the grapes:** In a medium saucepan, stir together the grapes, wine, sugar, and salt. Bring to gentle simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, set a fine-mesh strainer over a small bowl. When the liquid reaches a simmer, pour the mixture into the strainer to drain the grapes. Return the liquid to the saucepan and set the strainer with the grapes back over the bowl. Add the peppercorns and cinnamon to the liquid, then bring to vigorous simmer over medium-high heat. Let the mixture simmer until syrupy and reduced to a scant ½ cup, 12 to 15 minutes. Near the end of simmering, check if any more liquid has drained off from the grapes and add it to the saucepan if it has. Transfer the grapes to a clean pint-size glass jar or container and return the strainer to the bowl. Pour the reduced liquid into the strainer; discard the spices in the strainer. Stir the balsamic vinegar and almond extract into the strained liquid, then pour the liquid over the grapes. Let cool, then cover and refrigerate for at least 12 hours or up to 5 days.

**2. Make the semifreddo:** Adjust a rack to the lower-middle position and heat the oven to 325 degrees. Place an 8 by 4-inch loaf pan in the freezer.

**3.** In an oven-safe 2- to 3-quart saucepan, combine the rice, milk, cream, the 1.5 ounces (3½ tablespoons) of sugar, and ⅜ teaspoon of the salt. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve the sugar, then lay a sheet of aluminum foil across the top of the pot. Cover with the lid, pressing it down very firmly to create a good seal, then transfer the pan to the oven. Cook until the rice is very tender and has absorbed most, if not all, of the liquid, about 50 minutes, stirring once about halfway through.

**4.** About 5 minutes before the rice is done, fill a medium bowl with room-temperature water. Add the gelatin sheets to the water, pushing them in to submerge, then set aside to soak. In a small bowl, whisk the egg yolks with the remaining ⅓ cup cream.

**5.** When the rice is ready, remove the pan from the oven and scrape the rice into a large bowl, leaving any caramelization on the sides in the pan. While whisking the yolk mixture, very gradually spoon in about ½ cup of the hot rice, then whisk the yolk-rice mixture into the rice in the bowl. With your hands, lift the gelatin sheets out of the water and gently squeeze them to remove excess water. Add the gelatin to the rice mixture and stir until it fully melts. Stir the

vodka into the rice, along with the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt and a few swipes of the whole nutmeg against a rasp-style grater. Place the bowl in the refrigerator and let the rice mixture cool until it is no longer warm to the touch and is thick enough to barely mound; stir it occasionally to help speed the cooling.

**6.** When the rice mixture is cooled, in a very small heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine the water and the remaining 3.5 ounces ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup) sugar. Set the pan over medium heat and bring to a simmer, occasionally swirling the pan. Simultaneously, in scrupulously clean large bowl set on a damp kitchen towel to prevent the bowl from spinning, begin beating the egg whites on low speed; gradually increase the speed to medium and beat the whites until they're just shy of the soft-peak stage. Turn off the mixer. Cook the sugar syrup until it registers 238 degrees on an instant-read thermometer; tilt the pan to pool the syrup to one side so that the temperature reading is accurate. While beating the egg whites on medium-high speed, gradually pour in the hot sugar syrup and continue beating until the meringue is glossy, liting, and barely warm to the touch. Do not overbeat the whites.

**7.** Scoop about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the meringue into the cooled rice mixture and fold with a silicone spatula until almost fully incorporated. Add the remaining meringue and fold until no white streaks remain. Turn the mixture into the chilled loaf pan and spread into an even layer. Rap the pan against the counter to remove any air bubbles, then press a piece of plastic wrap directly against the surface of the semifreddo. Freeze until firm, at least 8 hours, or for up to 1 week.

**8.** To serve, run a small metal spatula around the edges of the pan to loosen the dessert on the sides. Have a clean cutting board or platter at your side. Without removing the plastic wrap, invert the loaf pan over your hand and wrist, and, holding the pan aloft over the sink, allow hot tap water to flow along the bottom and edges of the pan, tilting the pan and adjusting the angle constantly. The semifreddo will loosen and drop from the pan. Flip it over gently onto other arm, peel off the plastic, and invert the dessert onto a cutting board or platter. Cut the semifreddo into slices and serve topped with wine-soaked grapes and a drizzle of the syrup.