

Vanilla Poached Pears

2 ripe pears (Bosc pears work well) with nice stems attached
3/4 c. sugar
1 1/2 c. water
1 c. red wine
1 whole cinnamon stick (3 inch piece)
4 black peppercorns
2 whole cloves
1/2 of a vanilla bean,
split in half lengthwise
a pinch of salt
Scharffen Berger prepared chocolate sauce (optional)

Combine sugar, water, red wine, spices, vanilla bean and salt in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil. Simmer 5 minutes. Meanwhile, leaving pears whole and stem intact, peel completely and trim off part of the bottom so that the pear stands straight. You can scoop out some of the seeds from the bottom with a small spoon, apple corer or a melon ball scoop if desired, but it is not necessary.

Place pears in poaching liquid (add more water if pears are not submerged) and simmer until pears are tender (test by piercing with a toothpick or small knife). Cooking time will vary depending on ripeness of pears (30-45 min). Remove pears from liquid and cool to room temperature.

Serve pears with chocolate sauce and red wine sauce (recipe follows). Ladle a small amount of wine sauce onto the center of a dessert plate. Place the pear in the center and then drizzle chocolate sauce over the pear.

Simple Low-fat Vanilla Red Wine Dessert Sauce

Strain out spices from poaching liquid and pour back into the pan and reduce the liquid until you have about 1/2 cup of liquid (it should have a syrupy consistency for an intense flavor). This will be your sauce for the pears. Cool slightly before serving (it is nice when served warm).