





Prune and Armagnac crème brûlée with a pecan nut shortbread biscuit

Crème brûlée must be one of the world's most popular desserts. This version is just a little richer than the classic recipe thanks to the addition of prunes and brandy.

Ingredients

Serves four

Prune marinade

Brandy - 1/2 bottle

Hot water - 200ml

Caster sugar - 200g

Prunes (pitted) - 500g

Brûlée mix

Double cream - 360ml

Full fat milk - 120ml

Caster sugar - 100g

Egg yolks - 6

Brown sugar - 4 tbsps

Marinate the prunes in Armagnac or brandy with a good sprinkling of sugar to stop them becoming too boozy. Add hot water and leave for as long as you have patience. After a week they'll taste superb.

Mix milk and cream in proportions of three-to-one and bring to the boil. In a separate bowl whisk together egg yolks and sugar until smooth. Pour the milk and cream into the sugar and egg mix, stirring until the sugar has dissolved into the custard.

Add finely chopped prunes to the mix plus a little of the prune syrup. Pour into ramekins. Prepare a bain marie (a large flat pan containing a shallow 'bath' of hot water). Place the ramekins in the pan, ensuring that the water comes no more than half way up their sides.

Cook in a slow oven at 110-120C (Mark 1) and test after about 20 minutes to ensure that the crème brûlée is nicely set. Allow to cool, sprinkle brown sugar on top and caramelize with a blow torch or under the grill. Turn out of the ramekin and put prunes round the outside and on top.

For decoration we've made a disc from brown sugar caramelised on baking paper. We've also baked our own shortbread made with finely ground pecan nuts. To save time at home you could use ordinary shortbread instead.

Recommended wine: Vilmart Grande Reserve Champagne