

Christmas Poached Pears

Serves 4

2 large firm/slightly under-ripe pears (or 3-4 smaller ones)

200ml fruity red wine (I like to use a Merlot)

40g granulated sugar

finely grated zest and juice of 1 medium orange*

1 star anise

1 piece of stem ginger in syrup, finely chopped

Method

- Put the wine, sugar, zest and orange juice into a medium-sized saucepan and heat until the sugar has dissolved, stirring occasionally.
- Meanwhile, peel and core the pears, cutting them into equal-sized wedges.
- When the sugar has dissolved, add the pears and star anise to the saucepan. If there isn't enough wine to cover the pears, just top it up with a bit of water. Turn the heat down and cover with a lid, then leave to simmer over a low heat for about 30 minutes until the pears have softened (test by piercing with a sharp knife).
- Remove the pears and star anise to a serving dish with a slotted spoon. Add the chopped stem ginger to the liquid in the saucepan. Turn the heat up and allow the liquid to bubble away (without a lid) until it has reduced to about half. Pour over the fruit and allow to cool.

Serve with some crisp biscuits (I like Almond Thins) and some ice-cream, cream or crème fraîche. The poached pears will keep well in the fridge for several days (just cover the serving dish with clingfilm).

* If you don't have a fresh orange, you can substitute 50ml of orange juice and ½ tsp of orange extract.