

Apple Crisp Parfait

Ingredients

- 4 pounds firm, tart apples for baking
- Zest of 1 lemon, finely grated
- Juice of 1 lemon (about 3 tablespoons), freshly squeezed and strained
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup water
- 3 cups heavy cream, for whipping
- 2 to 3 cups Brown Sugar Crisp Crumbles



Directions

Poach the apples by cutting them in thick wedges, peel, and cut away the cores and seeds. Slice the wedges into chunks and cubes, an inch thick or larger (don't cut them too small or they will overcook). As you work, put the apple chunks in a mixing bowl and toss with some of the lemon zest and juice, to prevent browning. When you're finished, you should have about 10 cups of apples mixed with all the zest and juice.

Pour the sugar over the apples, and toss gently to coat the pieces. Turn all the fruit into the saucepan, slosh the bowl with the 1/2 cup water to rinse out all the sugar, and pour that into the pan too.

Set the saucepan over medium-high heat and bring the water to a boil. Stir the apples gently (so they're all heating), cover the pan, and cook about 2 minutes. Remove the cover, and continue to boil, reducing the juices, stirring the apple chunks around a couple of times, but not mashing them up. After 5 or 6 minutes, when the apples have softened and turned translucent on the outside (they won't be cooked all the way through), remove the pan from the heat. If the chunks have started to fall apart, turn them out of the saucepan into a bowl to stop cooking; otherwise, let the apples and the remaining liquid cool to room temperature (the chunks will reabsorb some of their juices as they sit).

The apples can be cooked a day ahead and refrigerated; let them warm up a bit before serving.

To assemble the parfaits, have the apples, crumbled-up crisp, and serving glasses ready.

Whip the cream until soft peaks form, by hand or in an electric mixer. (No sugar or flavoring is needed, since the apples and crisp are quite sweet.)

Spoon about 1/2 cup of apple chunks into each glass, making a thick layer that fills the bottom. Scatter crisp crumbles on top -- anywhere from 2 to 5 tablespoons on each parfait. Plop 1/2 cup or so of whipped cream on top of the crisp crumbles.

Now repeat the layer -- apples, crumbles, cream -- in each glass. These can be smaller amounts, or as ample as the bottom layers, for an impressive and generous dessert.

Brown Sugar Crisp Crumbles

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 4 ounces (1 stick) cold butter, in 1/2-inch pieces
- 3 tablespoons cold water

Directions

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

It is quickest to mix the crisp in the food processor, fitted with the metal blade. Put the flour, sugars, cinnamon, and salt in the work bowl. Process briefly to blend the dry ingredients. Drop in the butter pieces and pulse a dozen or so times, until the butter has been uniformly cut into a sandy powder of small bits. Sprinkle on the water, and process for a couple of seconds only, just to moisten the dough; it should still be rather loose and granular.

To mix by hand, blend the dry ingredients in a large mixing bowl and cut the butter into the grainy powder with a pastry cutter. Toss the powder and water with a fork to moisten.

Line the baking sheet with the parchment paper. Sprinkle the loose grains of dough evenly - in one layer - in an oval shape about 8 to 12 inches, filling in any holes and keeping the layer thin; don't compress them.

Bake for about 10 minutes, then rotate back to front, for even heating. The crumbs will have melted together, spread out in a thin layer, and perhaps started to bubble. Bake to another 7 to 10 minutes or more, until the layer is deeply caramelized, golden brown all over (and probably very dark on the edges). It will resemble a giant brown sugar cookie.

Set the pan on a wire rack, and cool until the cookie is very crisp. Cut or break off any burnt edges. Crack the cookie into crispy flakes, an inch or smaller. This is a good size for munching; you can crumble them up a bit more when layering the parfait.