

Lemon Mousse with Lemon Peel Garnish

Serves 8

The lemon peel guarantees a sharp lemon flavor for the mousse. The pith on a citrus peel is the soft, spongy white tissue that separates the peel from the flesh. It is usually quite bitter, so you want as little of it as possible on the peel. It is worth owning a serrated peeler, which slices so finely that almost no pith remains on the peel.

The lemon peel garnish

3 to 4 lemons
1/2 cup granulated sugar

The lemon mousse

5 large egg yolks
1/2 cup granulated sugar

1/2 cup fresh lemon juice

Finely grated zest of 1 large lemon, at least 1 tablespoon

1 pint (2 cups) heavy cream

For the lemon peel garnish:

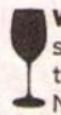
Using a serrated or vegetable peeler, cut strips from each lemon and julienne strips. Blanche the strips in boiling water for about 5 minutes. Pour into a sieve, discard the hot water and rinse the strips in cold water. (This process eliminates most of the peels' bitterness.)

In a small saucepan bring the sugar and 3 tablespoons water to a boil, swirling the pan occasionally until the sugar melts. Simmer the mixture for 1 minute. Add the blanched lemon peel strips to the syrup, and stir to coat them evenly with the syrup. Pour into a sturdy container and refrigerate until serving time.

For the mousse:

Set a sieve over a heatproof bowl and set nearby. Whisk together the egg yolks, sugar, lemon juice, lemon zest and 2 tablespoons water in a 1 1/2-quart heavy saucepan until thoroughly combined. Cook over medium-low heat, whisking constantly, until the mixture thickens slightly and it registers 165° on an instant-read thermometer. Immediately pour this lemon mixture into the sieve, pressing it through with a heat-resistant spatula. Discard the lemon zest that remains in the sieve. Allow the lemon mixture to cool before covering its surface with a sheet of plastic wrap. Refrigerate (up to 2 days) until you're ready to finish the mousse. The lemon mixture thickens as it chills for several hours or overnight. To hasten the chilling, place over an ice-water bath and gently stir occasionally.

To assemble: Whip the heavy cream until stiff peaks form. Fold half of the whipped cream into the thickened lemon mixture to lighten it. Whisk the remaining whipped cream in the bowl to thicken the cream more and fold it into the mousse. Divide it among 8 stemmed glasses or bowls and serve immediately, or refrigerate covered with plastic wrap for up to 1 day. Serve garnished with lemon peel.

 **Wine pairing:** This dessert is not too sweet. The subtle lemon flavor shines though, accented by the candied rind.

Not surprisingly, a less sweet white wine is needed, though it should be just a touch sweeter than the mousse. Otherwise, a too sweet wine will overwhelm the dessert's delicacy. A German QbA or Kabinett Riesling will have nice citrus notes and the acidity to counter the cream's richness.

Per serving: 295 calories, 3 g protein, 16 g carbohydrate, 25 g fat (15 g saturated), 214 mg cholesterol, 27 mg sodium, 0 fiber.