

# Red Wine-Poached Pears With Maple-Brandy Creme Fraiche

**Serves 6-8**

This dessert is almost as simple as boiling water, except it results in two treats: an elegant dessert and a boozy after-dinner drink. Make your life easy by poaching the pears the night before serving. Reserve some of the poaching liquid for syrup (see recipe), then make mulled wine (see below). It will fill your house with the most spectacular aroma — just don't serve the wine until after everyone's ready to fall asleep.

6 Bartlett pears, peeled, stems intact  
2 cups sugar  
1 cinnamon stick  
Zest of 1 lemon  
Zest and juice of 1 orange  
1 bunch thyme  
2 tablespoons black peppercorns

2 star anise pods  
4 cloves  
2 750 ml bottles red wine (lighter-bodied is better)  
1 cup creme fraiche  
1/4 cup maple syrup  
2 teaspoons brandy

**Instructions:** Combine the pears, sugar, cinnamon, citrus zest and juice, thyme, peppercorns, star anise, cloves and wine in a pot that comfortably fits the pears. Make sure the pears are submerged in wine. If they bob to the top, place a clean plate on top to submerge them.

Bring to a boil, lower heat to a simmer, cover and cook about 30 minutes, or until the pears are tender and pierce easily with a knife. Cooking time will vary depending on the ripeness of the pears.

Remove the pears to a plate and cover with an inverted bowl to keep warm.

Pour 3 cups of poaching liquid into a smaller pot or saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer for about fifteen minutes, or until the liquid becomes syrupy. If making the night before, refrigerate the pears, syrup and poaching liquid in separate containers.

If the pears have been made ahead,

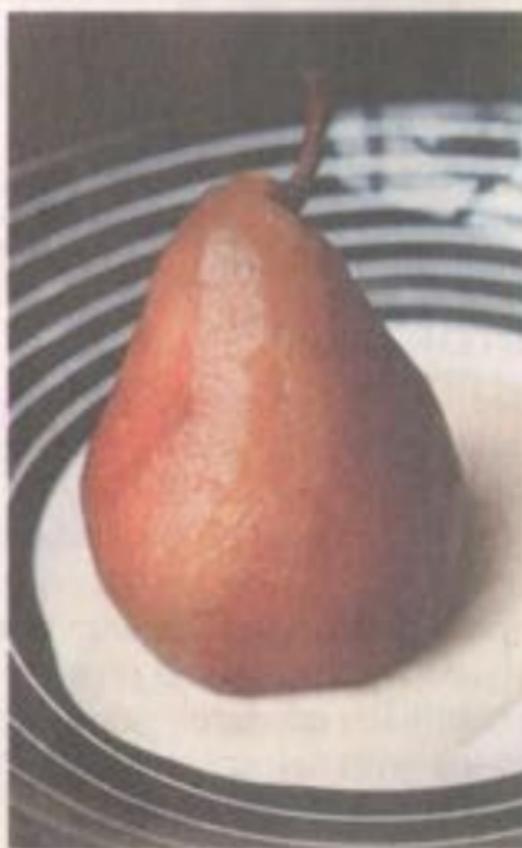
place them in a pot, cover with the reserved poaching liquid and warm gently over low heat. Warm syrup in a separate pan.

Just before serving, whisk together creme fraiche, maple syrup and brandy until light and fluffy.

Serve the pears warm, with a drizzle of warm syrup and a dollop of maple-brandy creme fraiche.

**Nutrition Information:** The calories and other nutrients absorbed from marinades and syrups vary and are difficult to estimate. Therefore, this recipe contains no analysis.

**For mulled wine:** Transfer any reserved poaching liquid to a pot and add a half bottle of the same wine you used to poach the pears, or more wine if you prefer it to be less sweet. Heat, and serve piping hot.



Michelle Gachet / The Chronicle