

Take the stress out of the season and get organized now for the holidays

'Tis the season to be jolly— what a great time of year! And now is the time to plan! I know I hound you every year to get organized— but those of you who do it, know how great it feels to be ready for this busy, busy season.

To make your Christmas season a little less stressful, sit down now and figure out who is coming for the holidays. How many meals are they staying for? What are you going to serve?

Remember when picking the menu to choose lots of items that can be made in advance and read through the recipes carefully to make sure that you are not selecting too many items that need last minute attention from the cook. You will have lots to do— best to choose as many foods that take care of themselves as possible!

Now, make a GIANT grocery list; put everything down— food, snacks, soft drinks, emergency food supplies (in case more people turn up), ice, candles, toilet paper, soap, extra bulbs for the tree lights, garbage bags, make sure you've got everything on there.

When you are writing the list, if you can divide it up by store or by store section, that will make things even easier. For example, put all the produce together, the dairy/meat together, the pharmacy together, etc. Now go out and order your Christmas meat: beef, fowl, pork, fish, whatever, now is the time to make sure your order is in!

You can set the shopping list aside for awhile, you don't have to buy it yet. And now, do something fun such as go for a walk with your family, read a Christmas story, watch a Christmas movie or wrap a few presents while drinking something warm and sweet.

Today's recipe is a great one if you are looking for something a little on the lighter side for one of your

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holiday meals. Pretty good for the diabetics in the crowd too—not perfect with the fruit juice being reduced to a syrup as this really concentrates the sugars. But when I serve it, I put a pear in each person's dish and then just a drizzle of the syrup over top (not a lake). A liqueur poured on top is optional— lots of people love a little liqueur, but it is not my personal cup of tea. If you do choose to serve a liqueur poured on top, there is a delightful pear one available, or grand marnier, or framboise or cointreau, all would be great.

If you are making these pears for company, they do keep well overnight. So, poach the pears in the cranberry juice until they are almost tender— you want them not quite done. Then remove from the heat and allow the pears to cool in the liquid. Once they are cool, then cover the pot and refrigerate. Next day, remove the pears and set aside. Now you can reduce the cranberry juice. You will find if you do it this way, the pears will have a deeper red colour than if you cooked and served them right away.

Have fun and keep cooking!

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Poached Pears in a Cranberry Reduction

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 4 Bartlett pears, slightly ripened
- 1.89 L cranberry cocktail
- 1 cinnamon stick (optional)
- 1 orange, washed and sliced
- Grand marnier or framboise liqueur
- good quality vanilla ice cream
- mint leaves for garnish



Method

Pour the cranberry cocktail into a pot deep enough to hold the pears submerged in the juice.

Wash the pears. Peel the pears, taking a small slice off the bottom so that the pears will sit flat when poached. Leave the stem in tact. Core the pears from the bottom, again, leaving the stem in tact. As each pear is peeled, place in pot of cranberry cocktail. Add cinnamon stick if desired and two or three orange slices.

Heat the cranberry/pears until boiling, reduce heat to a simmer. Continue to simmer, covered, until pears are softened but not mushy, approximately 15 minutes. Turn the pears occasionally.

Remove pot from the heat. Remove cinnamon stick and orange slices. Allow pears to remain in the cranberry liquid to develop more colour for at least one hour or overnight.

Remove pears from cranberry liquid. Set aside.

Remove 2/3 of the cranberry liquid. Discard or drink!

Set remaining cranberry liquid back on the stove. Bring to a boil. Continue to boil, with no lid on pot until the cranberry liquid has been reduced until slightly thickened.

To serve, place one pear, sitting on its end in a soup plate. Place one scoop of ice cream beside the pear. Pour a couple of tablespoons of the warm reduced cranberry liquid on top of the pear and the ice cream. Drizzle a little bit of the liqueur over entire dish. Garnish with a mint leaf. Serve.

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