

Pear Madness

by Matt Armendariz

I'm going to let you in on a little secret: I go overboard.

Being born with an impassioned gene isn't really all that bad, though. It allows me to focus on things so acutely and really dive into subjects that might otherwise not have interested me. It allowed me to learn how to rollerskate in the 70s, leaving all the other kids biting my dust (or maybe it was my purple satin shorts, which for a 7-year old boy is probably the fast track to neighborhood ridicule, but so what, I ask?) It's kept me interested in my job for this long, helped me wrangle and eat my own snails, and allowed me to learn how to play a handful of musical instruments.

It's also the reason I have found myself up to my eyeballs in pears.

Now, a pear isn't something you always have around like an onion or a lemon. They're a truly seasonal fruit and best enjoyed when mother nature tells us they're ready. And because of this I don't really think of pears throughout the year. It's not like I find myself grilling in the middle of July and then suddenly scream out "OH MY GOD THIS RIB SOOOOOOOO NEEDS A PEAR RIGHT NOW!" If anything I'll scream out because my cocktail is empty. But that's a whole 'nuther blog. But my point is this: when I taste that first early fall pear I know I'm on a collision course with that powerful strange facet of my personality.

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Could you blame me? Each pear has its own flavor, ranging from tart to sweet and syrupy. And then there's that texture, so soft and buttery. If I'm looking for a crunch I'll go after Asian pears, but you'll never hear me complain about the softer fruit. They're just like candy. I'll happily eat 2 or 3 at a time and never get tired of them. Obviously.

This past week has particularly crazy for me. Stacks of gorgeous pears have begun to arrive at the market and like a zombie from the Thriller video I shuffle over and pick up half of dozen every time. And then I eat them instantly, racking up the pear count to a whopping 40-something over the past week alone. One track mind, I tell ya.

At least I'm getting my fiber, nutrients and a whole mess of vitamin C and potassium. Which is good, because once they're gone I can rest easily knowing I made my health quota for the year. Wait, it doesn't work that way, does it?

When I'm not stuffing pears into my face and trying to catch pear juice dripping down my arms and onto my desk I actually like to cook with them. Baked, poached, sauteed, sliced, I'll never turn down a pear anything.

Pears Poached in Red Wine

6 pears, peeled and sprinkled with the lemon juice to prevent browning

1 lemon, squeezed for juice

peel of 1 orange

2/3 cup sugar

2-1/4 cups of water

1 bottle of red wine

1 stick of cinnamon

1 peppercorn

1 pinch of salt

1. Stand the pears in a pan, not touching each other.
2. Sprinkle with the sugar. Add the salt and wine. Then add the orange peel, cinnamon, and peppercorn.
3. Bring the pears to a boil over high heat.
4. Gently lift the pears from the syrup with a slotted spoon, place on a serving platter or bowl and set aside.
5. Boil the juice down until it is reduced by half. Set aside to cool.

To serve: When the syrup has cooled, spoon it over the pears and chill until ready to serve.

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