

PRESERVED FRUITS IN ALCOHOL

SERVES 8

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

PEACHES IN RUM

- 1¾ cups sugar
- 1¼ cups water
- 2 cinnamon sticks, each 5cm long, broken in half
- 6 large ripe but firm peaches, washed
- ¾ cup white or dark rum

CHERRIES IN KIRSCH

- 600g dark red cherries, washed, stalks left on
- 1¼ cups sugar
- 1 ¼ cups water
- ½ cup Kirschwasser

PINEAPPLE IN CRÈME DE MENTHE

- 2 medium pineapples, skin and 'eyes' removed
- ¾ cup sugar
- ¾ cup water
- ½ cup crème de menthe

ORANGES IN BRANDY

- 12 Small oranges
- 1¾ cups sugar
- 1 ¼ cups water
- 2 teaspoons allspice berries
- ¾ cup brandy

WHAT TO DO

1. The amount of syrup required varies according to the type and quantity of fruit, so it is best to prepare the fruits individually. Although the methods of preparing the fruits before cooking vary, the method of preserving is the same for each fruit.
2. Put half the sugar and all the water specified in the recipe into a wide, shallow saucepan, adding any spices. Stir over low heat until the sugar has dissolved, then add the prepared fruit and poach it gently for the times given below.

TO MAKE PEACHES IN RUM

- Cut the peaches in half and remove and discard the stones.
- When the syrup comes to the boil, poach the peaches in two batches for about 4 minutes each batch, turning them once.
- Drain as described in the basic method below, leave until cold, and then remove the skins.

TO MAKE CHERRIES IN KIRSCH:

- Prick each cherry in two or three places with a clean darning needle, then poach for 4 minutes.
- The stalks can be left on the cherries if they are to be used to decorate cakes; otherwise, remove them before bottling, if preferred.

TO MAKE PINEAPPLE IN CRÈME DE MENTHE:

- Slice each pineapple and remove the woody core from the centre of each slice with a small plain round cutter; cut each slice in half.
- Poach for 4 minutes.

TO MAKE ORANGES IN BRANDY:

- With a potato peeler, peel the rind very thinly from three of the oranges, taking care not to include the white pith.
- Cut the rinds into fine strips and blanch in boiling water for 30 seconds, then drain and leave to cool.
- Using a very sharp knife, cut away all the peel and white pith from all 12 oranges.
- Poach the oranges for 5 minutes, turning once. Add the blanched orange shreds to the syrup before pouring it over the fruit.

3. Position a colander over a smaller saucepan and carefully spoon the fruit into it. Pour the poaching syrup into the saucepan. Leave the fruit to drain over the saucepan for 10 minutes, then transfer the colander to a plate and leave the fruit to become completely cold, covering the colander with muslin or gauze to protect the fruit from dust or insects.
4. Add all the remaining sugar to the poaching syrup and stir over low heat until every grain has dissolved. Then increase the heat, bring the syrup to the boil and boil rapidly until the temperature rises to 110°C on a sugar thermometer.
5. Remove the saucepan from the heat and pour the syrup into a measuring jug: the amount should be equal to the quantity of alcohol given in the recipe. If you have more syrup than is needed, reserve some for poaching other fruits or for using in a fruit salad; if less, make up the amount with alcohol. Cover the jug and set aside until the syrup is completely cold, then stir in the alcohol you are using.
6. Pack the cool poached fruits into clean, dry jars, filling them almost to the top. Pour enough syrup into the jars to cover the fruit completely. Cover the jars with airtight, acid proof screw tops. Label and date, and store in a cool, dry, dark, airy cupboard for at least two months before using.

7. Check the jars often. If the fruit rises to the top and is no longer covered by the syrup, turn upside-down for a short time, but make sure that they don't leak.
8. Properly sealed, the contents of the jars will keep well for six months. Once opened, they must be stored in the refrigerator.
9. Use the preserved fruits to decorate a plain vanilla cheesecake or the tops of rich little baked custards in individual pots, or spoon them over good vanilla ice cream.

COOK'S TIP

Preserving in alcohol is one of the oldest, simplest and most delicious ways of preserving fruit. These recipes use a syrup made with equal quantities of sugar syrup and alcohol. A different spirit is used with each kind of fruit, but you can, of course, use any spirit that you prefer.

Preparation:30min › Cook:20min › Extra time:10min › Ready in:1hour

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