

Thanksgiving Desserts

November 2009

Menu:

Simple Apple Puff Pastry Tart with Bourbon Caramel Sauce
Mini Pumpkin Ricotta Cheesecakes with Amaretti Crusts
Brown Sugar Pavlova with Muscat Poached Pears
Dark Chocolate Spiced Pot de Crème with Mocha Whipped Cream



Simple Apple Puff Pastry Tart with Bourbon Caramel Sauce

serves about 8-10 people

For the tart:

- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry
- 3 large granny smith apples, cored and cut into 1/8" thick
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 4 tablespoons butter, cold, cut into small pieces
- 1 egg, mixed with 1 tbl water

For the sauce:

- 1 1/2 cups white sugar
- 1/3 cup water
- 1 tablespoon light corn syrup
- 1 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons bourbon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

*** Preparation ****

For the tart:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Lay the sheet of pastry on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Use a fork to poke holes all over the pastry, leaving a 1/2-inch border on all sides of the pastry.

Lay out the slices of apples, overlapping on the pastry, still leaving a border. Stir together the sugar and cinnamon. Sprinkle all over the apples. Dot the apples with the cold butter. Brush the pastry border with the egg wash. Bake until the pastry is golden and apples are soft.

For the sauce:

In a large saucepan, combine the sugar, water and corn syrup. Place over medium-high heat. Cook mixture until sugar is melted, swirling the pan as needed. Cook until sugar is deeply golden. Add the cream (it will bubble up!) and whisk over medium heat until the sugar is dissolved again. Add the bourbon and salt. Remove from heat and let cool to room temperature before serving -- it will thicken more as it cools.



Mini Pumpkin Ricotta Cheesecakes with Amaretti Crusts

makes 1 9-inch cheesecake or 12 mini cheesecakes

24-32 amaretti cookies, to make 3 cups crushed cookies

1/3 cup melted butter

16 oz cream cheese, very soft

1 cup whole milk ricotta cheese, at room temperature

1 15-oz can pureed pumpkin

4 large eggs

1/4 cup sour cream

1 1/4 cups sugar

1 orange, zested

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

1/2 teaspoon salt

***** Preparation ******

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Pulse the cookies in a food processor to create fine crumbs. Add the melted butter and pulse again.

Line a muffin tin with 12 paper liners and spray lightly with non-stick spray. Fill each paper with about 1/4-cup of the crumbs.

In a large bowl, combine the cream cheese, ricotta and pumpkin. Beat until smooth. Add the eggs and sugar. Beat again until smooth. Add the remaining ingredients and beat for 1 minutes.

Spoon the mixture into each of the cups. Place the muffin pan on a rimmed baking sheet or in a roasting pan lined with a paper towel. Pour in about 1/2-inch boiling water. Bake for about 35 minutes or until filling is set. Remove from oven and take the tin out of the roasting pan. Let cool completely before serving (it's best to refrigerate overnight if possible).

Brown Sugar Pavlova with Muscat Poached Pears

serves 8-10 people

For the meringue:

1 cup white sugar
1/2 cup dark brown sugar
1 1/2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup egg whites, from about 5-6 eggs
2 teaspoons white vinegar
1 teaspoon vanilla paste
non-stick cooking spray

For the pears:

6 each bosc pears, peeled, cored and quartered
2 cups muscat wine
1 cinnamon stick
1/2 cup brown sugar
2 cups heavy cream
1/3 cup powdered sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

***** Preparation ******

For the meringue:

Preheat oven to 275 degrees. In a food processor, pulse together the sugars, cornstarch and salt. In the bowl of a standing mixer, beat the egg whites with a whisk attachment until holding soft peaks. Continue beating on high, adding the sugar mixture about 1 tablespoon at a time. Once all the sugar has been added, beat for 1 minute on high. Add the vinegar and vanilla and beat until meringue holds stiff peaks, it should be quite glossy, about 3-5 minutes. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Spray lightly with cooking spray. Spoon all the meringue into a large pile and spread it out to be about 2-inches thick into a large rectangle or oval shape. Bake for about 1 hour - meringue should be cracked and dry on the outside, but soft on the inside. Turn oven off and leave the meringue in the oven for 1 more hour.

For the pears:

In a saucepan, combine the pears, muscat, cinnamon stick, brown sugar and enough water to JUST cover the pears. Bring to a simmer, reduce heat and cook for about 15 minutes or until pears are tender. Remove pears with a slotted spoon and continue boiling the sauce until reduced and thick. Set aside. Whip the cream with the powdered sugar and cinnamon until thick and glossy. To serve, top the meringue with the cream and then the pears and then a drizzle of the reduced sauce.



Dark Chocolate Spiced Pot de Creme with Mocha Whipped Cream

makes 8 servings

for the pot de creme:

4 oz bittersweet chocolate, chopped
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
1 1/2 cups whole milk
1 cinnamon stick
1/4 teaspoon grated nutmeg
4 whole cloves
1/2 teaspoon black peppercorns
5 egg yolks
1 eggs
1/4 cup sugar
pinch salt

for the mocha cream:

1 1/4 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup powdered sugar
1 tablespoon instant espresso, mixed with 1 tablespoon hot water

***** Preparation ******

For the pot de creme:

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

Place the chocolate into a bowl. Bring the cream to a boil, watching carefully so it doesn't over-boil. Pour the cream over the chocolate and let sit for about 1 minute. Stir until chocolate is melted and combined.

Meanwhile, combine the milk with the cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and pepper and bring to a boil. In another bowl, whisk together the eggs and the sugar and salt until mixture is pale. Once milk is boiling, strain out the spices. Add a splash of the milk to the eggs and whisk. Add a little more and whisk to temper the eggs. Add the rest of the liquid and whisk to combine. Add the egg mixture to the chocolate mixture and stir to combine. Pour the mixture into 8 ramekins or small baking dishes. Line the bottom of a roasting pan with paper towels and place the ramekins in the pan. Carefully add boiling water to the pan -- about 1/2-inch. Bake for about 35-40 minutes or until the custards are set and jiggle slightly in the center when shaken. Remove from the pan and let cool before serving.

For the cream:

Whip together the cream, powdered sugar and coffee mixture until thick and glossy. Serve the pots chilled or at room temperature topped with the mocha cream.