

GINGERBREAD TRIFLE WITH POACHED PEARS

SERVES 8-10

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For an 8 x 8 pan of gingerbread:

¾ cup unsulphured molasses (not blackstrap)

¾ cup 100% pure maple syrup (Grade B is fine)

½ cup unsweetened applesauce

½ cup melted unrefined coconut oil or unsalted butter

*2 ½ cups whole wheat pastry flour or white whole wheat flour**

1 ½ teaspoons aluminum-free baking soda

½ teaspoon fine grain sea salt

3 teaspoons (1 Tablespoon) ground ginger

3 teaspoons (1 Tablespoon) ground cinnamon

¾ teaspoon ground cloves

1 cup hot water

1. **To make the gingerbread:** preheat the oven to 350 degrees and grease and flour an 8-inch square baking dish.
2. In a blender, combine the molasses, maple syrup, applesauce and coconut oil. Blend until smooth.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, sea salt and spices.
4. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry and mix until just combined. Stir in the hot water. Pour into the prepared pan.
5. Bake 45-55 minutes (ovens vary wildly) until a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool for 15 minutes, remove from pan and place on wire rack and allow to cool completely. You can freeze this or make this several days ahead. Cut into 1/2 –inch cubes and set aside.

For the Pastry Cream (or you can make or buy pudding):

½ cup cane sugar

6 large egg yolks

6 Tablespoons non-gmo corn starch

2 ½ cups whole milk

1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise or 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste

2 Tablespoon unsalted butter, at room temperature

1. **To make the pastry cream:** in a medium saucepan whisk the sugar, egg yolks and cornstarch together until thick and pale.
2. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan over medium heat bring the milk and vanilla bean (if using) just to a boil (just until milk starts to foam up). Remove from heat and add about ½ cup slowly to egg mixture, whisking constantly to prevent curdling (if you get a few pieces of egg (curdling) in the mixture, pour through a strainer).

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3. If using vanilla bean, remove from mixture and scrape out seeds and add the seeds to the egg mixture.
4. Pour the remaining milk into the egg mixture, whisking constantly. Bring the egg-milk mixture to a boil over medium heat whisking constantly. When it boils, whisk mixture constantly for another 30-60 seconds until it becomes thick. Remove from heat and whisk in vanilla extract if you are using that instead of the bean. Immediately transfer the pastry cream to a clean bowl, whisk in the butter and allow to cool on the countertop for a few minutes.
5. Press a piece of plastic wrap directly on the cream to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate. You can make this up to 2 days in advance.

For the Poached Pears:

1 (750-ml) bottle white wine, such as Riesling or Viognier

1 cup water

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup cane sugar

1 whole vanilla bean, split and scraped

1 whole clove

1 cinnamon stick

1 star anise

6 firm Bartlett, Anjou or Bosc pears, peeled, halved and cored

1. **To poach the pears:** place the white wine, water, sugar, scraped vanilla beans, vanilla pod, clove, cinnamon and star anise into a saucepan large enough to hold all the pears. Bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar.
2. Decrease the heat to medium low and place the pears into the liquid. Cover and cook for 20-25 minutes or until tender and easily pierced with a knife. Remove the pears from the liquid and chop into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces.
3. Remove the vanilla bean from the saucepan, increase the heat to high and reduce the syrup to approximately 1 cup of liquid, approximately 20 to 25 minutes. Do not allow the syrup to turn brown. Pour the syrup over the diced pears and refrigerate until cool, at least 1 hour. You can do this up to 2 days in advance.

For the Whipped Cream:

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups heavy cream

2 Tablespoons cane sugar or powdered sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

About 30 minutes before assembling the trifle, **make the whipped cream:** If you can think about it ahead of time, place your mixing bowl and whisk in the freezer. In a deep bowl or electric mixer, whisk the cream, sugar and vanilla together until soft peaks form. Refrigerate until ready to use.

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1 cup pomegranate seeds

To assemble the trifle: place half the gingerbread on the bottom of a 7 ½ or 8 inch trifle bowl or other deep bowl. (You can also do individual trifles in glass jars.) Spread half the pastry cream on top, then half the pears (remove with a slotted spoon,) then half the whipped cream, then half the pomegranates. Repeat layers, ending with the whipped cream and then the pomegranate seeds. Or don't add the whipped cream until the top.