



RECIPE for health

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featured food:

PEARS

By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

In the world of fruit, pears seem to be second-bananas. Not to upset the apple cart, but why is there not a single pear saying, such as "an apple a day..." or "apple of my eye"?

Truthfully, pears are complicated. For instance, you would think that all pears are pear-shaped but, in fact, those classified as Asian pears are round (yes, like an apple). Asian pears have other similarities to apples: they are crisp, sweet and ready-to-eat right from the tree. Asian pears can be stored for a week or two at a cool temperature.

European pears, the ones with the traditional pear shape, are temperamental about ripening. If you went pear-picking and bit into one, you would be sorely disappointed. European pears must be picked before they're ripe (in August and September), stored at a cool temperature (for weeks or months) and then held at room temperature (on your countertop) to finish ripening.

At the market, choose firm pears without blemishes and bruises. Store them at room temperature and check daily to see if they are ripe. Placing them in a paper bag speeds the process. The best sign of ripeness is to test the area around the stem of the pear. Press gently on the neck of the pear; if it yields to gentle pressure, it's ready to use.

Since they store well, European pears are available from September through spring or summer of the following year. Choose Anjou as a citrusy-sweet and juicy all-purpose pear; Bartlett for its creamy, juicy, sweet flesh, musky aroma and traditional pear flavor; Bosc for its elegant shape and firm, honey-flavored flesh, perfect for cooking; and Comice for its red blush of color and mellow sweet flavor, just right for eating out-of-hand.

Try this month's recipe for wine-poached pears, Chef Kurt's version of the classic French dessert. Or pair a pear with a strong-flavored cheese. Either way, you'll forget about apples.

Red Wine-Poached Pears

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services. Serves 4-6.

- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups dry red wine, such as Cotes du Rhone, Pinot Noir or Merlot
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup port wine
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups water
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 4 whole cloves
- Orange zest from $\frac{1}{2}$ orange
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 4 to 6 (about 8 ounces each) ripe but firm pears, preferably Bosc or Bartlett

Bring wine, water and sugar to a simmer in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add cloves, zest and vanilla. Simmer for about 20 minutes then remove from the heat.

Peel the pears, halve them lengthwise then remove stem lines and cores. Add the pears to the wine syrup. The liquid should just barely cover the pears; add more wine and sugar if necessary. Place pan over medium heat and bring liquid almost to a simmer. Cook gently (poach), uncovered, for 10 to 15 minutes until the pears are tender (a toothpick can be inserted with little resistance).

Remove from heat and let cool in the syrup for at least 20 minutes and up to 1 day in the refrigerator. To serve, place pear halves in individual bowls and spoon wine syrup over the pears.

Try **Red Wine-Poached Pears** for lunch at The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips, Brody Square and Riverwalk Market at Owen on September 10.

- Join us in person at Brody Square Demo Kitchen. Sign-up at health4u@msu.edu.
- Watch online: alumni.msu.edu/livestream.