

LEMON SCENTED MASCARONE MOUSSE WITH OVEN ROAST APRICOTS

This is one of those really 'moreish' type of mousses, it'll just disappear before your eyes. Use whatever soft fruit is at it's best, apricots, peaches, or nectarines. They are best done rather at last minute, you can have them prepared and ready to bake in advance, and just pop them in the oven after dinner.

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS:

For the mousse:

180 g. mascarpone, room temperature

2 eggs

150 g. castor sugar

2 tsp. lemon zest, very fine

100 ml. whipping cream, whipped to quite firm peaks (not grainy)

2 Tblsp. lemon juice

For the apricots:

12 ripe apricots, 2 per person

100 g. sugar

60 ml. water

4 pieces of lemon peel, (use a peeler, and take most of the skin off one lemon)

juice of one lemon

juice of one orange

METHOD:

To make the mousse, whisk together the eggs, sugar and lemon zest in a mixing bowl. Place over a bain marie of just simmering water, and continue to whisk for 5 minutes. Place on the mixer, and whisk on medium speed for a further 5 minutes. The resulting mixture should be more than doubled in volume, very light in colour, and very fluffy. Most of the heat will be gone from the bowl by this time. By hand whisk in the mascarpone, followed by the fairly firm peaked whipped cream. Lastly, whisk in the lemon juice to taste. Place in a clean bowl, cover with cling film, and chill in the fridge for at least 4 hours, preferably overnight.

To prepare the apricots, preheat the oven to 190°C (185°C for a fan oven) Halve and stone the apricots, and rub a bit of the lemon juice over the cut half to prevent discolouring.

Place the water, remaining lemon juice, orange juice and peel in an ovenproof baking dish. Place the halved apricots in, skin side down, (that's cut side up) and sprinkle evenly with the sugar. Cover loosely, but firmly with foil, and place in the hot oven for approx. 10 minutes. The exact time will depend very much on the ripeness and size of

the fruit, but check after 10 minutes. If a point of a knife pierces the flesh easily, with no resistance, they are done. The juices of the fruit will have blended with the liquids in the baking dish to create a lovely little syrup. If you prefer to reduce these juices to a sauce like consistency, simply remove the fruit with a slotted spoon and pour the juices into a little pan. Boil down to the desired consistency and return to the fruit.

To serve, place the fruit and juices into a soup plate and scoop an attractive quenelle or two of the mousse in the centre. Garnish with a mint leaf if desired.