

Poached Pears

Swick

Serves 1 | Active Time: 15 minutes | Total Time: 30 minutes

Chef's Notes

Bartlett or Anjou pears are good for poaching due to their smooth flesh (some varieties can have a grainy texture). Pears are available year round; however, their peak season generally runs between August and December.

For this recipe, choose pears that are somewhat firm with no bruises and minimal marks. They should not be completely ripe or they'll be too soft once cooked. Choose pears that are still light-green and are just starting to turn yellow. The fragrance of the pears will indicate how ripe they are; ripe pears will be yellow in color and give off a sweet aroma.

You can flavor the poaching liquid with a variety of spices, zests, wine, juices or herbs. As long as you keep the 2 parts liquid to 1 part sugar ratio, feel free to experiment with different flavors.

Step 1: Buying the Pears

- 4 Bartlett pears
- See notes below on how to choose pears for poaching.

Step 2: Preventing the Pears From Browning

- 1/2 lemon
- Fill a medium-sized bowl with cold water and squeeze in the fresh lemon juice. Place the lemon rind in the water.

Step 3: Peeling the Pears

Using a vegetable peeler, carefully peel the pears. Once done, place into the acidulated water to prevent the pears from turning brown. Place a piece of parchment paper or a paper towel over top to protect them from the air.

Step 4: Removing the Core

Using a melon baller, remove the core from the bottom of the pear. Scoop out the flesh all the way to the center to evenly remove the entire core.

Step 5: Smoothing the Pears (optional)

- 1 small, clean scrubbie

Using a brand new kitchen scrubbie, first rinse the scrubbie to ensure it is clean.

Just like using sandpaper, gently smooth out the surface of the pears with the scrubbie. This will make for very nice presentation.

Return the pears to the acidulated water as soon as possible.

Step 6: Halving the Pears (optional)

Cut each pear in half lengthwise. To do this, place the pear on its side. Using a sharp chef's knife, first center the knife. To maintain a bit of the stem on each half of the pear, gently slice through the pear, cutting from the middle of the stem, down to the base.

If you need to trim a bit more of the core, you can use the melon scoop to do this.

Step 7: Preparing the Poaching Liquid

- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 4 cups water
- 1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract (optional)
- 1/2 lemon

To prepare the poaching liquid, place the sugar, water, and vanilla (if using) into a deep, wide saucepan. Squeeze the lemon juice and add the lemon to the pan. The pan must be large enough to accommodate all of the pears in a single layer, while also being fully submerged in the syrup.

The ratio of poaching syrup is usually 1 part sugar to 2 parts liquid. If you need to make more syrup, simply increase the quantity.

Bring the poaching liquid to a boil to fully dissolve the sugar. Turn the heat down to low and bring the temperature of the syrup between 160° F to 180° F (71° C to 82° C). Once the poaching temperature has been reached, place the pears into the poaching syrup.

Step 8: Covering and Poaching the Pears

Once you have added the pears to the poaching syrup, cover them with a parchment round (see attached drill down). Once the parchment has been folded, cut a few slits along the length of the paper to create a few holes throughout.

Unfold the parchment round and place directly on top of the fruit. Make sure the parchment lays flat on the surface of the liquid and holds down the pears.

Monitor the poaching temperature and make sure to keep it in the proper range. Poach the pears until tender, about 5 to 15 minutes (depending on how hard or soft the fruit was to begin with).

To test the pears, insert a paring knife into the thickest part. It should slide in fairly easily.

Step 9: Finishing the Pears

Once the pears are tender, use a large, slotted spoon to gently remove them from the poaching liquid. Set aside to cool.

The poaching liquid can also be simmered and reduced into a light sauce, if desired.

Step 10: Cooling the Pears (optional)

You can also store the pears directly into the poaching liquid. It is best to place the pot over an ice bath to stop the cooking process. The flavor of the poaching liquid will infuse even more into the pears as they sit.