

grilled fig leaf panna cotta with figs and melon sorbet

1/4- ounce package (2 1/2 teaspoons) Knox powdered gelatin
5 or 6 fresh fig leaves, washed and dried
2 cups heavy cream
1 cup whole milk
1/2 cup sugar
Vegetable oil, for molds
2 tablespoons crème fraîche or yogurt
1 recipe Walnut Pain de Gênes [recipe can be found in *The A.O.C. Cookbook*]
1 recipe Walnut Lace Cookies [recipe can be found in *The A.O.C. Cookbook*]
9 ripe figs
1/2 ripe cavaillon, honeydew, or other melon
1 recipe Melon Sorbet [recipe can be found in *The A.O.C. Cookbook*]

Place 1/4 cup cold water in a large bowl, sprinkle the gelatin over it, and gently swirl the bowl to combine. Using tongs, gently grill 2 or 3 fig leaves for about 2 minutes, rotating frequently and being careful not to burn them. Or, alternatively, fan each leaf over a gas stove, without directly touching the flame, until the leaf begins to smell toasted. It is important that the leaves get toasted and have slightly golden- brown spots and edges but are not burned.

Combine the cream, milk, and fig leaves in a medium saucepan, and bring to a boil over high heat. Turn off the heat, cover, and let sit for 30 minutes, allowing the fig leaves to steep in the hot liquid. Strain the leaves from cream mixture, discard them, and return the liquid to the saucepan. Heat this cream mixture over medium heat to a scald, add the sugar, and stir until it dissolves. Slowly whisk the cream mixture into the bloomed gelatin until completely incorporated. Chill the cream mixture over an ice bath, stirring occasionally, until it's at room temperature or slightly cool.

Prepare six 3- inch ring molds (or individual ramekins) by lightly brushing vegetable oil on the inside surfaces. Pour a small amount of the cream mixture into a bowl, and whisk in the crème fraîche or yogurt. Then whisk that thickened cream- crème- fraîche mixture back into the cream. (Tempering the cream this way creates a very smooth and silky panna cotta.) Pour the panna- cotta cream into the prepared molds, and chill in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 hours, until set. When ready to serve, cut the remaining three fig leaves in half and place them on each of six dessert plates. Cut six 3- inch circles of walnut *pain de Gênes* and place one in the middle of each fig leaf. Center one walnut lace cookie atop each cake. Carefully unmold the panna cottas on top of each cake- cookie stack. (To unmold, gently press your finger down on the panna cotta close to the edge, pulling lightly inward, to the center, and then moving your finger along the perimeter of the panna cotta. When flipped upside down, it should pop right out.) Trim the stems of the figs, and cut each one in half. Place one fig half on top and one fig half on either side of each panna cotta. Thinly shave the melon with a vegetable peeler; weave the slices around the plates, and place scoops of melon sorbet nestled among the fruit.

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