Winter Trifle

Pears turn ruby-red in wine and cinnamon. The same syrup softens the sponge between layers of vanilla custard cream.



MAKES 4 GLASSES / 4 GLASSES, ABOUT 250 ML EACH

Prep 25 min · Cook 25–35 min · Chill

Ingredients

2 firm ripe pears, peeled, halved and cored

200 ml red wine, 100 ml water, 75 g caster sugar and 1 cinnamon stick

200 ml milk and ½ tsp vanilla extract

2 egg yolks, 40 g caster sugar and 20 g plain flour

5 g unsalted butter

120 ml whipping cream (35% fat)

8 sponge fingers (savoiardi)

15 g dark chocolate, shaved

At the bench

1. Poach the pears

Simmer the pears gently in the wine, sugar and cinnamon until tender. Chill the pears in their syrup.

2. Lighten the custard

Cook the vanilla pastry cream until thick and chill. Fold in softly whipped cream, saving a little for the top.

3. Build the glasses

Layer custard cream, syrup-dipped sponge and pear slices. Finish with custard cream, then whipped cream and chocolate.

KOOK'S SECRET

Break a dipped sponge finger in two. A thin dry line in the middle is ideal. It will take up more syrup as the trifle sits.

Winter Trifle

The full method

01 **Poach the pears**

In a snug saucepan dissolve 75 g sugar in the wine and water with the cinnamon. Add the pear halves. Cover and simmer gently for 15–25 minutes, turning halfway, until a knife slips in. Transfer pears and syrup to a shallow dish. Chill once the steam subsides.

02 **Cook the custard**

Heat the milk and vanilla until steaming. Whisk the yolks, 40 g sugar and flour to a smooth paste. Gradually whisk in the hot milk, then return to the pan. Whisk over medium heat until it bubbles throughout. Cook for 1 minute, whisking. Stir in the butter. Spread in a shallow dish, cover the surface and chill promptly.

03 **Lighten and slice**

When the custard and pears are cold, whisk the cream to soft peaks. Whisk the custard smooth. Reserve a quarter of the whipped cream for garnish in the fridge and gently fold the rest into the custard. Lift the pears from the syrup and slice thinly.

04 **Layer the glasses**

Start with a spoonful of custard cream in each glass. Break the sponge fingers in half, dip briefly in cold pear syrup and add a layer, then some pear slices. Repeat, finishing with custard cream. Chill for at least 1 hour. Top with the reserved cream and chocolate shavings just before serving.

FROM MARK'S KITCHEN

Turn the pears halfway through poaching. The sides that start above the syrup get their turn in the wine and take on the same ruby colour.