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Seasonal Fruit Desserts

By Chef Lynda Lacher

Grilled Strawberry Shortcake Kebabs with Vanilla Sabayon

Serves 8

- 1 prepared pound cake
- 24 large strawberries, washed and hulled
- Zest of 1 orange (or lemon)
- ½ stick of butter, melted
- 8 bamboo skewers, 10-12 inch

Cut cake into 24 - 2 inch cubes. Wash and hull the berries. To prepare the skewers, alternate threading three strawberries and three pieces of cake per skewer. Repeat to make eight skewers.

Melt the butter with the citrus zest and set aside. Heat grill to medium-low (300° to 350°). Clean the grate well. Using a pastry brush, lightly dab the kabobs with melted butter to coat all over. Grill kebabs, turning once with tongs, until grill marks appear, 3 to 4 minutes. Cake should release from grate when it's toasted. Top the kebabs with whipped cream or for the adults, serve with vanilla sabayon (recipe below).

Vanilla Sabayon

- 3 egg yolks
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup dry white wine or champagne
- ½ tsp. pure vanilla extract

In a stainless steel bowl, whisk the egg yolks and sugar until light and fluffy. Place the bowl over simmering water (water bath) so the bottom of the bowl doesn't touch the water. Add the white wine and vanilla; continue to whisk until the mixture is hot and thick enough to coat a spoon. Remove bowl from heat, serve the sabayon warm or chill in the refrigerator for up to one day. If chilled, you may need to whisk the mixture before serving.

White Chocolate Soufflé with Berry Citrus Compote

Serves 8

Chilled Soufflé

- 8 oz. good quality white chocolate, chopped
- 1½ cups heavy whipping cream, divided
- ¼ cup powdered sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla or almond extract

Microwave the white chocolate and ½ cup of the cream in an uncovered, microwave-safe bowl until just melted. Stir to blend and cool completely. Alternatively, you may melt the white chocolate in a bowl over simmering water.

Beat remaining cream, powdered sugar and vanilla extract in a small mixing bowl until stiff peaks form (do not over beat). Gently fold the melted white chocolate mixture into the whipped cream. Spoon into individual dishes and refrigerate. Chill for at least 2 hours. Can be made 2 days in advance.

Note: For soft-set mousse, beat cream just until soft peaks form.

Berry Citrus Compote

- 1 cup orange juice
- 2 inch piece of fresh ginger, sliced
- 2 Tbsp. honey
- 3 Tbsp. fresh mint, minced
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice + zest of the lime
- 1 cup strawberries, sliced
- 3 oranges or tangerines, peeled and diced

In a small saucepan, combine the orange juice and ginger. Simmer for 10 minutes. Set aside to cool. Strain the orange juice into a bowl and whisk in the honey, mint, lime juice and zest. Add the strawberries and oranges. To serve, generously top the mousse with the berry citrus compote.

Fruit Dessert Nachos

Serves 4

- 3 flour tortillas (6" to 7" diameter)
- olive oil spray
- 1-2 Tbsp. sugar
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. ground allspice or cardamom
- 1 container vanilla yogurt (6 to 8 ounce)
- 2 tsp. grated orange zest
- 2 Tbsp. fresh mint, rough chopped
- 1½ cups strawberries, washed and sliced
- ½ cup blueberries
- 2 oz. dark chocolate curls

Preheat oven to 375°F. Cut each tortilla into 8 wedges. Place on an ungreased baking sheet. Generously spray both sides of the tortilla wedges with cooking spray.

Combine sugar, cinnamon and allspice (or cardamom) in a small bowl. Sprinkle over both sides of the tortilla wedges. Bake 7 to 9 minutes or until lightly browned; cool completely.

In a small bowl, combine the yogurt and orange zest. In another bowl, combine the strawberries and blueberries. Divide the tortilla wedges evenly on four dessert plates. Spoon the yogurt mixture on top. Sprinkle mint leaves on the yogurt and top with the fresh berries. Sprinkle with chocolate curls and serve immediately.

Italian Custard with Fresh Fruit

Serves 6

- 1 cup milk
- 3 tsp. unflavored gelatin
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract (almond may be substituted)
- 2 cups heavy cream
- ½ cup sugar

Fruit for topping: berries, peaches, mangoes or pineapple

Place ½ cup of milk in a saucepan and sprinkle the gelatin over it. Let set for 10 minutes. Turn the heat to low and stir until the gelatin dissolves completely. Add the remaining ½ cup of milk, vanilla extract, cream and sugar. Heat until steaming, but not boiling. Strain the mixture into a container with a spout. Divide the mixture evenly into six custard cups. Chill for 3-4 hours. May be kept in the refrigerator for 3-4 days.

When ready to serve, dip the cups into warm water for 10 seconds then invert onto small plates and top with fresh fruit and fruit purée or leave in the custard cups and top with fruit.

Italian Custard Tart

Serves 8

Crust

- 1 cup shredded coconut, toasted
- 1 cup macadamia nuts (cashews, walnuts or pecans may be substituted)
- 2 cups pitted dates

Place all ingredients in a food processor and pulse to blend well. Press into a 9 inch tart pan and chill for 2 hours. The crust may be refrigerated for 2 days or frozen for up to 3 months.

Make the previous Italian Custard recipe and pour into the tart crust. Chill for 3-4 hours. Top with fresh fruit before serving.

Marinated Seasonal Fruit

Every season of the year gives us beautiful fruit. The following simple sauce allows the flavor of the fruit to shine through and not be covered with a heavy sauce. The base of the sauce is simple syrup and from there you can choose any flavor or combination depending on the fruit chosen.

Base Recipe for Simple Syrup

- 1 cup water
- ¾ cup sugar
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice

Flavoring of your choice (see suggestions below)

Place all ingredients in a saucepan and bring to a boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat, add your selected flavorings, steep for 20 minutes and strain. The flavored simple syrup keeps in the refrigerator for 2 weeks. Toss with the fruit just before serving.

Suggested Flavorings: vanilla bean, cinnamon stick, fresh ginger slices, fresh herbs (6-10 sprigs of rosemary, bay laurel, thyme, mint, basil, lavender, tarragon, lemon balm or verbena), zest from lemons, oranges or limes. The following combinations are given to stimulate your imagination:

- Apricots, peaches & berries with basil/orange syrup
- Pear, orange and fig with lemon/thyme syrup
- Honeydew, cantaloupe & watermelon with lime/mint syrup
- Apple, pear & strawberry with bay laurel syrup
- Cherries, plums & berries with vanilla syrup
- Nectarines, apricots, berries & melon with lemon balm syrup

These marinated fruit mixtures may be served alone or as a topping on cakes, ice cream, Italian custard, chilled soufflés or in crepes.



Lynda Lacher is a Le Cordon Bleu trained professional chef who provides group cooking classes, private cooking instruction and nutritional counseling. To contact Lynda, please send an e-mail to chflacher@yahoo.com or call 303-779-0989.