

Drunken Honeyed Figs with Lemon Mascarpone Whipped Cream

By TheWimpyVegetarian

Food52 Editors' Comments: WHO: ChezSuzanne, a dedicated SF-based FOOD52er since the early days, is a seemingly boundless resource for seasonally inspired and often contest-winning recipes. WHAT: Dried figs bathe in honey and brandy, to emerge plumped and bursting. A silky bed of lemony cream whipped with mascarpone awaits them. HOW: The only trick is remembering to soak the figs overnight in honey, water and brandy. The rest is pretty breezy. WHY WE LOVE IT: A fairly straightforward list of ingredients and an uncomplicated preparation belie the beautifully exotic nature of the final dish. If you're looking to seduce, look no further.

When I think about desserts, some that come to mind celebrate the luscious simplicity of fruit, ripe from the tree. And for a Thanksgiving dinner that celebrates the bounty of autumn, this one is a lighter dessert that can balance the heavier meal quite well. Best of all, in the chaos of coordinating a lot of dishes, this dessert is super easy to make and the figs can be made ahead, leaving you with only the Mascarpone Whipped Cream to quickly make. I used dried figs as they hold their shape so much better. You could use fresh figs but be sure to adjust your cooking time. The dried figs are macerated in brandy overnight to soften them and infuse them with a contrasting flavor. They are then simmered on the stovetop in a mixture of honey, anise seed and orange juice until the liquid reduces to a syrupy glaze. Paired with the mascarpone whipped cream, you get a combination that feels luxurious and decadent without the heaviness. You can serve this by spooning or piping the whipped cream beside some arranged honeyed figs or you can arrange the figs in small tartlet shell and pipe the whipped cream in the middle. I've got pictures here of both. Enjoy!!

Serves 8 tartlets Drunken Honeyed Fig Tart:

- 16 dried figs (I used white figs)
- 1 cup brandy, or enough to cover and macerate the figs
- 1/4 cup water
- 5 ounces plus 2 Tablespoons honey (I used orange blossom honey)
- 1/4 teaspoon anise seed
- 4 strips of orange peel (removed with a potato peeler)
- 7 ounces orange juice
- juice from 1/4 of small Meyer lemon
- pinch salt
- 8 bought or made tart shells (optional)

Lemon Mascarpone Whipped Cream:

- 2/3 cups heavy whipping cream
- 6 tablespoons mascarpone cheese
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- lemon zest from 1 large lemon
- 2 squeezes of lemon juice
- pinch salt

1. Macerate the dried figs in the brandy, water and 2 Tablespoons of honey overnight. There should be enough liquid to cover the figs.
2. In a medium pot over medium-low heat, combine the rest of the honey with the orange juice, peel, anise seed, lemon juice and salt. Slice the figs in half and add to the honey mixture. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook until the mixture reduces to a glaze-like mixture. The figs should be very soft, but still holding their shape. Turn the figs carefully with a large metal spoon during the simmering process to completely cover them with the honey-orange juice. Let cool slightly in the pot.
3. Either arrange several figs on a plate, for example in the shape of a flower or place them in a tart shell, and drizzle a little of the honey-orange syrup over them. (I show pictures of both.) Either spoon or pipe the mascarpone whipped cream beside them on the plate or in the tart. Drizzle a little of the honey-orange syrup on top.
4. To make the mascarpone whipped cream, whip the whipping cream to a medium peak using a hand or standing mixer. Add the rest of the ingredients for the Lemon Mascarpone Whipped Cream and continue to beat for about 20 - 30 seconds until it is the consistency of whipped cream and can be piped.