

POACHED PEARS WITH HIGHLAND BLUE ON BITTER GREENS

Ontario Bosc, Bartlett and Anjou pears are all at their peak throughout the fall. Look for pears that are ripe yet still firm.

2 cups (500 mL) water
1 cup (250 mL) dry white wine
½ cup (125 mL) sugar
½ tsp (2 mL) whole black peppercorns
¼ tsp (1 mL) ground cardamom
4 pears
4 tbsp (60 mL) extra virgin olive oil
4 slices bacon, sliced into ½-inch (1-cm) pieces
1 tsp (5 mL) Dijon mustard
2 tbsp (25 mL) white wine vinegar
¼ cup (50 mL) red onion, finely diced
12 dates, pitted and coarsely chopped
8 cups (2 L) mixed bitter greens, i.e. escarole, endive, radicchio or frisée lettuce
½ cup (125 mL) blue cheese
¼ cup (50 mL) pecans, toasted and coarsely chopped

1. In a large saucepan bring water, wine, sugar, peppercorns and cardamom to the boil, reduce to a simmer.
2. Peel pears and halve lengthwise. With a melon baller or small spoon core the pear halves making a cavity for the cheese. Place pear halves flat-side down in the poaching liquid. Cover and simmer until knife tender, more or less 25 minutes depending on ripeness of pears. Once cooked remove from poaching liquid and let cool in refrigerator.
3. In a small sauté pan, heat 1 tbsp (15 mL) olive oil over medium heat, add bacon and sauté until golden, about 5 minutes. Transfer bacon to a paper-lined plate and remove pan from heat. Pour drippings from pan into large bowl, scraping up any browned bits from bottom of pan and adding them as well. To the bowl add the rest of the olive oil, Dijon mustard and vinegar, whisk together. Add to the dressing the onions, dates, bacon pieces and greens. Toss well with vinaigrette and season generously with salt and pepper. Taste a leaf and adjust, adding more vinegar, oil, salt or pepper if necessary. Place 1 tbsp (15 mL) cheese into each cavity of the pear halves.
4. Divide greens between 4 plates, top each with 2 pear halves and serve.

Serves 4