

Sweet and innocent

Cutting out butter needn't be a bore – treat your taste buds to clementines Suzette, dark chocolate sorbet or Armagnac jelly with filled Agen prunes



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CONFRONTED WITH THE NEED TO CUT DAIRY FROM YOUR DIET, PUDS can be a challenge. Benecol (the butter kind) is a great help and works well as a butter substitute. Dark chocolate is permitted, as are luscious Agen prunes, which I have teamed with Armagnac for a delicious jelly. For those of you unfamiliar with Agen prunes, they're like velvet, compared to the concrete-like quality of dried prunes, which need soaking. Agen prunes are now widely available – Marks & Spencer sells them – so do make sure you try them.

The first of today's recipes takes its inspiration from crêpes Suzette, but substitutes the crêpes with clementines, which are poached in water and then simmered in a butterscotch-type sauce. The dark chocolate sorbet, meanwhile, is very good by itself – but it's delicious served with the clementines.

CLEMENTINES SUZETTE

SERVES 6

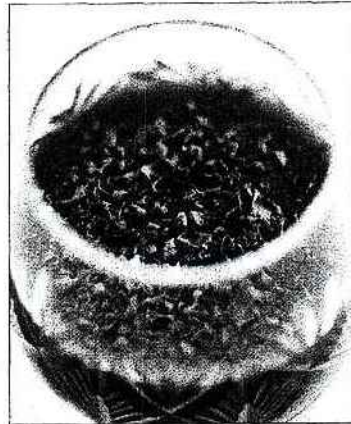
12 clementines

3oz/85g buttery Benecol, or similar
low-fat spread

8oz/225g demerara sugar

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Wash the clementines thoroughly,



Preparing
clementines
Suzette, main;
Armagnac and
Agen prune jelly
with dark choco-
late, right

removing any stalks, and put them, whole, into a wide sauté pan and cover with water. Over moderate heat, bring the water to the boil and simmer gently for about 20 minutes, until when you prod a clementine with a fork the skin feels quite tender. Then remove from the heat, drain off the water, and leave the clementines to cool. When cold, cut them in half, crossways.

In a wide sauté pan, melt the Benecol (use butter if your diet is not restricted), then add the demerara sugar and heat it over a moderate heat until it has quite dissolved. Stir in the vanilla. Then slip the poached and halved clementines into the caramel-like mixture and cook them on a moderate heat, turning carefully once or twice, for about 7 to 10 minutes. When done, remove the clementines and sauce to a warm serving dish, and keep warm until you are ready to serve. These are delicious alone, with dark chocolate sorbet or any vanilla or chocolate pudding of your choice.

DARK CHOCOLATE SORBET

SERVES 6

1½ pint/855ml cold water

½ cinnamon stick

1 split vanilla pod

12oz/375g granulated sugar

8oz/225g dark chocolate,
coarsely grated – I do
this in a food processor

Put the water, cinnamon, vanilla pod and sugar into a saucepan over moderate heat and stir till the sugar has completely dissolved. Then raise the heat under the pan and boil the syrup fast, for 5 minutes. Take the pan off the heat, allow the liquid to cool completely, then fish out the cinnamon stick and vanilla pod, scraping down the pod and dropping the sticky black seeds back into the syrup. Stir in the grated dark chocolate.

If you have an ice-cream maker, you then simply freeze and churn this mix-

ture and freeze the end result. Otherwise, freeze the mixture in a solid polythene box and, when it is frozen, take the box from the freezer and chip the contents into a food processor

and whiz. You will probably need to do this in two lots, depending on the size of your processor.

Refreeze the result, then repeat the process three more times – four in total – and you will end up with a spoonable sorbet of good, smooth texture.

FOOD FLASH

Keep dark chocolate cool, but not in the fridge, as the cold causes cocoa butter to separate from the solids

ARMAGNAC AND AGEN PRUNE JELLY WITH DARK CHOCOLATE

I put this into glasses to set. The jelly isn't clear – it is cloudy due to the prune juice and the Armagnac.

SERVES 6

3oz/85g dark chocolate, no less than
75 per cent cocoa solids (I use Lindt)

2oz/55g buttery Benecol, or similar low-fat spread
¼ pint/140ml Armagnac
¼ pint/140ml water
4 leaves of gelatine soaked in cold water for no less than 10 minutes – more won't harm it – then drained of the water
1 pint/570ml prune juice – you can buy prune juice in cartons
6 Agen prunes – they come with their stones removed

Break the chocolate into bits in a small, heatproof bowl and add the Benecol (use butter if your diet is not restricted). Put the bowl over a saucepan containing barely simmering water – be sure not to let the base of the bowl touch the water. Heat until

the chocolate and Benecol have melted, stirring together well. Allow the mixture to cool, then divide it between each stoned prune, filling each cavity. Put one chocolate-filled prune in each of six quite large glasses.

Mix together the Armagnac and water and heat gently. Drain the soaked gelatine leaves and drop them into the warm water mixture, swirling the pan so that the gelatine dissolves completely. Pour this mixture into the prune juice and stir well. Divide between the six glasses, to cover each prune. Leave to set. If you like, grate some dark chocolate over each jelly.

For details on Claire's three-day residential cookery demonstrations at Kinloch Lodge, tel: 01471 833214 or visit www.claire-macdonald.com