

BAKED STUFFED APPLES

A wonderful Fall/Winter Dessert. Depending on your overall menu, serve one or a half an apple per person. An approximate ratio of stuffing is as follows:

1/2 cup of butter
1/2 cup of raisins
1/2 cup of chopped walnuts
1/2 cup of brown sugar
cinnamon to taste

Preparation: there are two ways to bake the apples, 1) halve the apples and scope out the center for a large pocket taking out and seeds and core, or 2) using a whole apple with an apple corer cut the top and then core the center and scoop out the seeds and core, optional for a presentation you can put the top back on the apple when baking

Using the mixture noted above, stuff the apples generously and bake in a Pyrex pan (my preference) . Fill the bottom of the pan with some water about a quarter to a half an inch I use a little lemon juice, water, and liquor (brandy) and bake in a 350 oven for about 45 minutes until the apples are soft. The baking time depends on the type of apple used and size, so you will need to check on them in the oven for consistency. Serve with whatever sauce is left, and, or with vanilla ice cream and or whipped cream

BAKED STUFFED FIGS

A great seasonal treat is baked stuffed figs rather than give a recipe of ratios, given the size of the figs and amount you plan on serving a brief discussion should be satisfactory. Again like the stuffed apples there are two ways to bake the figs, either whole or sliced in half.

Since figs are soft and fleshy one is really infusing the figs with a small amount of gorgonzola cheese, minced walnut, and a small piece of prosciutto, and a dab of a well-aged balsamic vinegar. Bake the figs in a low heat of 200-250 degrees, for 20 minutes so the stuffed figs caramelize slowly. Depending on the size of the figs one or two usually suffices. When I have ordered the figs at a restaurant they are usually a large brown fig, however, I bake whatever fig I can harvest. If the figs are large they are usually served with a knife and fork however if the figs are small halves they are simply eaten as finger food.

The combination is a classic dish and part of Italian rustic cuisine. I recall figs, fresh and or dried, being served simply with stuffed walnuts and sometimes dusted with powdered sugar and served unbaked.

I was not sure I would find fresh figs for this class so I purchased some dried mission figs, soaked overnight at room temperature, Patted dry on paper toweling, and sliced in half, and stuffed with a blend of mascarpone cheese, diced walnut, and a small piece of dark chocolate and baked in low heat for the same amount of time. They came out very well.

Ken Borelli

BAKED PEARS

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

4 Bosc pears (cut in half and cored)

5 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1/2 pound gorgonzola (or fresh goat) cheese

1/3 cup honey

Preheat oven to 400 degrees

Melt butter in a 9x13 pan

Place pears cut side down in butter and roast for 30 minutes

Pour vinegar over pears and roast an additional 7 minutes

Turn pears over—cut side up

Spoon juice over pears

Arrange cheese on top

Drizzle with honey and enjoy