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**Grand Prize Winner**

By Susie Iventosch



First Place Winner Lizette Marx Photo provided

My great grandmother did not like to bake much, so she often poached fruit and served it with ice cream at the end of a festive meal. My mother made this dish too and it was nice, but a little ho hum. So when I was 16, I did a little research and discovered a great dessert made with peaches and raspberry sauce. The original dish was created in the late 1800s by Auguste Escoffier for Australian soprano, Nellie Melba. Escoffier called this dessert Peach Melba so it would never be forgotten. In this rendition, peaches are poached in chai tea, enhanced with additional Indian spices, dates, and warming tawny port.

One of the things I love about this recipe is that it is quite easy to put together and the resulting poaching liquid with the tawny port can be enjoyed as the basis for a tea cocktail as well as a reduction sauce, which is the way it is used in this recipe.

Yields 3 Cups

**INGREDIENTS**

3 cups water

2 Medjool dates, pitted and sliced into thin

strips

Peel of 1 orange or 2 tangerines, cut into thin strips using a vegetable peeler

3 rooibos chai tea bags

1/3 cup port

2 tablespoons honey

1 cinnamon stick

1 star anise

4 black peppercorns

4 cardamom pods

4 peaches, halved and pitted (choose firm, ripe peaches)

8 whole raspberries for garnish

**RASPBERRY SAUCE**

1 cup raspberries (fresh or frozen)

Poaching liquid (above)

1 orange or 2 tangerines, juiced

1 teaspoon arrowroot

**Method for Poaching Liquid**

1) Add water, dates, orange zest, tea bags, port, honey, cinnamon stick, star anise, peppercorns, and cardamom pods to a medium sauce pan and bring to a simmer.

2) Add peaches and bring poaching liquid to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until peaches can be easily pierced with a fork, about 10-15 minutes, depending on firmness of the fruit.

3) Remove peaches and place in a serving dish. Add fresh raspberries and set fruit aside.

Discard tea bags and reserve poaching liquid for raspberry sauce.

Method for Raspberry Sauce

- 1) Add raspberries to poaching liquid and bring to a boil until liquid is reduced by half and becomes syrupy.
- 2) Strain sauce through a fine mesh strainer, pressing raspberries thoroughly. Spoon out about 2 to 3 tablespoons of sauce into a small cup and sprinkle in arrowroot powder. Whisk until smooth.
- 3) Add remaining sauce back into pan, followed by the arrowroot slurry. Bring sauce to a boil. As soon as sauce begins to boil, whisk quickly until sauce thickens. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly.
- 4) To serve, place a peach into an attractive bowl or wine glass and drizzle generously with raspberry sauce. Top with a couple of raspberries and enjoy. For even more decadence, top with vanilla ice cream.

Reach the reporter at: [suziven@gmail.com](mailto:suziven@gmail.com)

[back](#)

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