

March 2018

DRIED FRUITS

Dried Fruits in Red Wine and Orange Juice Syrup

Pound Cake with Prunes

Umbrian Dried Fruit *Strudel*

Vanilla – Peach Sauce

Winter Fruit *Mousse*

Zucchini Stuffed with Lentils and Dried Fruits

Clementines, tangerines, oranges, grapefruits, apples, and pears fill the fruit bins at our grocery stores all winter. As the season stretches on, one could easily tire of winter fruit selections. Imported pineapples and mangoes add variety without sacrificing flavor but there is no need to give into the often tasteless, expensive summer fruits from the Southern Hemisphere. We have always augmented the fresh fruit selection with an assortment of dried fruits.



Before our daughter went to school, I visited my grandmother in Rochester, New York, every October. The aroma of apples filled the car as I drove back downstate because I brought back a bushel of this variety and a bushel of that variety and a half-bushel of another for eating and for baking. Many of these apples were peeled, cored, sliced, and dried for snacks and for lunch bag desserts. Dowels, hung between tall *étagères* and strung with apple rings, “graced” our dining room for several weeks each fall before efficient home dehydrators were available.

An inexpensive dehydrator refines this chore today; it is a great tool for drying banana slices too. Dried mangoes, papaya, cranberries, blueberries, dates, and pineapple are generally available at natural food stores. Quality unsulfured dried peaches, apricots, and cherries can be obtained by mail order from several west coast orchards. I can cherries in June, blue prune plums in late September, and apples in October. These, together with containers of strawberries, blackberries, and blueberries, frozen at the peak of their summer goodness, round out our supply.

Yes, I do advocate eating fruits and vegetables in season but there are tools in our quivers which we can use to extend those seasons.

DRIED FRUITS IN RED WINE AND ORANGE JUICE SYRUP

TPT - 32 hours and 21 minutes;
8 hours = cherry soaking period;
24 hours = fruit maceration period

The first time I made this compote, I served it as a garnish/relish with a simple meal of home-fried potatoes and soy sausages. It was a remarkable contrast. Since then it has accompanied many meals but my favorite way to serve it is as a lovely treat over ice cream or pears as an adult dessert. It is also a perfect compliment to puddings with rice, tapioca, and grain.

2 tablespoons *dried* sweet cherries
1/2 cup *boiling* water

1/4 cup red wine
1/2 cup freshly squeezed orange juice
1 1/2 teaspoons sugar

1/4 cup chopped *organic* dried apricots
1/4 cup chopped, pitted, *preservative-free* prunes
1/2 cinnamon stick
1 clove of star anise (*just one clove*)
3 whole allspice berries

In a small bowl, combine *dried* cherries and *boiling* water. Cover the bowl loosely with a saucer and allow the cherries to rehydrate at room temperature for 8 hours. Drain. Turn cherries into a saucepan.

Add wine, orange juice, and sugar. Set pan over *MEDIUM* heat and allow to come to the boil. Remove from heat and pour into a shallow bowl.

Add chopped apricots and prunes, cinnamon stick, star anise clove, and allspice berries. Stir to combine, cover, and refrigerate for 24 hours. Remove and discard cinnamon stick, star anise clove, and allspice berries.

Turn compote into a chilled serving bowl with any remaining syrup.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Note: When required, this recipe can be doubled.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 1.1 g.; FAT = 0.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 24.8 g.;
CALORIES = 107; CALORIES FROM FAT = 3%

POUND CAKE WITH STEWED PRUNES

TPT - 3 hours and 17 minutes;
2 hours = soaking period;
1 hour = chilling period

A close friend went practically mad trying to get prunes into the recalcitrant GI tract of her young son. She even rolled the prune pieces in chocolate and froze them for candy treats. The soft, sweet, pitted prunes available today may have been better received. Stewed prunes were always on the menus of diners and small restaurants that served breakfasts and lunches. I remember my dad always ordered stewed prunes with his coddled eggs on toast when we traveled. One time in the 1950s as we were traveling to Illinois from New York, the cook in a family-owned restaurant asked Dad to show her how to prepare coddled eggs. I know coddled eggs can not be ordered in fast food chains that serve breakfast to hungry travelers today due to Salmonella safety but I wonder if you can still order a dish of prunes. Sometimes those soft, sweet prunes that you can buy today do dry out in the box. This is a good way to salvage that healthy fruit. The dessert is probably best characterized as a series of garnishes for a slice of pound cake. The prunes garnish the pound cake; the lemon slice garnishes the prunes; and the whipped cream crown garnishes the garnishes which garnish the pound cake.



8 pitted, *preservative-free* prunes
2 cups *boiling* water

2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

3 tablespoons heavy whipping cream
1 teaspoon confectioners' sugar

2 slices pound cake
2 slices lemon, for garnish

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine prunes and *boiling* water. Allow to simmer for about 15 minutes.

Add sugar and lemon juice. Stir to dissolve sugar. Remove from heat and allow to sit at room temperature for 2 hours. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or until cold. Turn prunes into a sieve set over a cup or glass.* Turn prunes into a small dish.

Using the electric mixer fitted with *chilled* beaters or by hand using a *chilled* wire whisk, beat heavy cream in a *chilled* bowl until soft peaks form. While continuing to beat, add confectioners' sugar. Beat until stiff peaks form.

Place the two slices of pound cake on dessert plates. Spoon four stewed prunes onto each plate next to the pound cake. Garnish each with a lemon slice. Top with whipped cream.

Serve chilled.

Yields 2 individual servings

Notes: *Refrigerate the drained prune juice as a snack or for tomorrow's breakfast.

When required, this recipe can be doubled easily. I usually double the recipe so that those soft, lovely stewed prunes are available for a breakfast fruit or even for dessert with a whipped cream-mascarpone sauce.



1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.2 g; FAT = 13.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 54.4 g.;
CALORIES = 343; CALORIES FROM FAT = 34%

UMBRIAN DRIED FRUIT *STRUDEL* *Rocciata di Assisi*

TPT - 2 hours and 58 minutes;
2 hours = dried fruit rehydration period;
15-20 minutes = *strudel* cooling period

This came about one October day when I discovered dried apricots and figs in the pantry. I was preparing to shelve dried fruits for the upcoming winter and these leftovers had to be used up. The figs were too hard for my dental work and since I had just bought a package of puff pastry in preparation for a planned Thanksgiving strudel of roasted vegetables, I decided to work out a dried fruit strudel. It turned out better than I expected and, lo and behold, I found that it was also a specialty of Assisi in Umbria, Italy.

1/2 sheet frozen puff pastry (i. e., 4 1/2 x 7 inches)
—brought to room temperature

20 dried preservative-free, organic apricot halves
7 dried preservative-free, organic mission figs
*—stems removed**

3 tablespoons dark, preservative-free, organic raisins

***Boiling* water**

1/4 cup sugar
2 tablespoons unbleached white flour
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
Pinch freshly grated nutmeg

Cinnamon sugar

Remove pastry from refrigerator or freezer and allow to come to room temperature.

In a mixing bowl, combine dried apricot halves, figs, and raisins. Add *boiling* water to cover. Allow to soak for 2 hours. Drain thoroughly. Dice apricot halves and figs. Turn diced fruit and raisins into a sieve and allow to drain while preparing the pastry.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.* Prepare a baking sheet by lining with culinary parchment paper.

Place pastry on parchment-lined baking sheet, long side toward you. Using a sharp knife, trim triangle from each corner facing you. Pulling the knife away from you at a 45-degree angle, make eight cuts on the left side *one-third* of the way across the pastry to form strips. **LEAVE THE CENTER ONE-THIRD OF THE PASTRY UN CUT.** Again, pulling the knife away from you to the left at a 45-degree angle, make eight cuts in the remaining *one-third* of the pastry on the right side. **BE SURE THE STRIPS GO IN THE SAME DIRECTION, ANGLING AWAY FROM YOU.**



Turn drained fruit into a dry mixing bowl. Add sugar, flour, ground cinnamon, and nutmeg. Stir to combine well. Spoon the mixture into the center of pastry, the part that you have left uncut. Bring strips of pastry over in a braided fashion. Moisten where pastry strips overlap to secure them. Bake in preheated 400 degree oven until pastry is puffed and golden—about 20-25 minutes. Transfer to a serving platter or board. Allow to cool for at least 15-20 minutes.

Slice with a serrated knife. Sprinkle each serving with cinnamon sugar.

Yields 6 servings

Notes: *The crystals that appear on dried figs are not a reason to discard them. It is not mold. Those crystals are sugar crystals that come to the surface during storage.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/6 SERVING (exclusive of cinnamon sugar) –
PROTEIN = 2.3 g.; FAT = 6.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 43.9 g.;
CALORIES = 232; CALORIES FROM FAT = 23%





VANILLA – PEACH SAUCE

TPT - 3 hours and 24 minutes;
3 hours = soaking period

The brief season of tree-ripened local peaches is giving way to tasteless peaches from the southern hemisphere or canned peaches. Every fall I buy dried peaches, apricots, and cherries from a firm that specializes in the best of these fruits. Although this sauce can be made with any of these dried fruits, peaches make a delicious sauce.

3/4 cup dried, preservative-free, organic peach slices
2 cups boiling water

1/4 cup sugar
6 tablespoons peach soaking liquid

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

In a bowl, combine peach slices and *boiling* water. Cover with a plate and allow the peach slices to rehydrate for 3 hours or overnight, if convenient.

In a large saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine sugar and 6 tablespoonfuls of the peach soaking liquid. Stir to combine well. Allow to come to the boil, stirring frequently. Continue to boil for a full 8 minutes. *Mixture will become syrupy. Do not allow to boil longer than 8 minutes.** Remove from heat.

Add vanilla extract. Stir.

Set aside at room temperature and allow to cool to room temperature.

Drain peach slices and dice. Add to cooling vanilla syrup. Turn into a small serving dish.

Serve chilled or at room temperature. Spoon a bit of the peach sauce over cakes, ice cream, or puddings; pass the rest.

Yields 1 cupful

Note: *The syrup will thicken somewhat as it cools. *If the syrup is allowed to boil too long, it will crystallize.*

When required, this recipe can be doubled easily.

1/8 SERVING (about 2 tablespoonfuls) –
PROTEIN = 0.7 g; FAT = 0.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 29.0 g.;
CALORIES = 83; CALORIES FROM FAT = 4%

WINTER FRUIT MOUSSE

TPT - 2 hours and 35 minutes

Winter meals during and just after World War II usually ended with canned fruits, fruits we had canned during the late summer and fall, puddings, cakes, and pies, usually apple pies as a vehicle for storage apples. Dried fruits offered an alternative. We called this recipe “stewed fruit mousse” when I was a kid. It doesn’t really sound that appetizing, does it? Trust me, it was a treat and still is a tasty end to a meal.

1 cup dried, preservative-free, organic apricot halves*
2 tablespoons dried, preservative-free, organic sweet cherries*
Boiling water

1 1/2 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons reserved fruit-soaking liquid

1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
1 teaspoon confectioners’ sugar

In a mixing bowl, combine dried cherries and apricot halves. Cover with *boiling water*. Allow fruit to rehydrate for 1 hour. Drain, *reserving soaking liquid*.

Dice apricot halves and combine with rehydrated cherries in a saucepan.

Add sugar and 2 tablespoonfuls reserved fruit soaking liquid. Set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat and cook, stirring often until a thick syrup forms. Add more liquid, if needed.

Add vanilla extract. Stir well. Remove from heat. Refrigerate for 1 hour.

Using the electric mixer fitted with *chilled* beaters or by hand using a *chilled* wire whisk, beat heavy cream in a *chilled* bowl until soft peaks form. While continuing to beat, add confectioners' sugar. Beat until stiff peaks form.

Fold cold fruit and syrup into whipped cream. Divide among four small dishes. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Yields 4 small servings

Notes: *If you do not have dried apricots and cherries in your pantry at this moment, dried mango and dried peaches make delicious additions. I have also added citron, dried lemon peel, and dried orange peel, left over from holiday baking.

This recipe can be doubled or tripled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 1.4 g.; FAT = 4.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 19.4 g.;
CALORIES = 169; CALORIES FROM FAT = 49%

ZUCCHINI STUFFED WITH LENTILS AND DRIED FRUIT

TPT - 1 hour and 40 minutes;
1 hour = dried fruit rehydration period

In volume II of “A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America’s Immigrant Soul” I shared a Mexican recipe for Cheese-Stuffed Zucchini with Lentils and Fruit (Calabacitas Rellenas y Lentejas con Frutas). Here I have replaced the fresh pineapple, apple, and banana with dried peaches, apricots, and figs in a self-contained individual zucchini “boat.” Instead of cooking the lentils from scratch, vegetarian lentil soup will save you a bit of time.

1/4 cup dried, preservative-free, organic peach slices
4 dried, preservative-free, organic apricot halves
2 dried, preservative-free, organic mission figs
— stems trimmed*

Boiling water

1 medium zucchini squash

1/4 cup shredded (about 1 ounce) sharp Cheddar cheese

1/2 cup well-drained organic lentil soup

Prepare a 9-inch ceramic *quiche* dish, pie plate, or *au gratin* dish by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.*

In a bowl or saucepan, combine dried peach slices, dried apricot halves, and dried figs. Cover with *boiling* water and allow to rehydrate for 1 hour, or until fruits are soft. Drain well and dice fruits. Set aside briefly.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Trim ends from zucchini. Wash thoroughly, but *do not peel*. Cut in half lengthwise and, using a small spoon, scoop out pulp to form “boats.”* Place in prepared baking dish.

Divide shredded cheese between zucchini “boats,” packing the cheese down slightly to compact it. Divide the diced fruit between the zucchini halves, distributing it along the length of the hollowed-out area. Spoon 1/4 cupful of the well-drained lentil soup over the fruit in each “boat.”** Bake in preheated 325 degree F. oven for 25 minutes.

Serve at once.

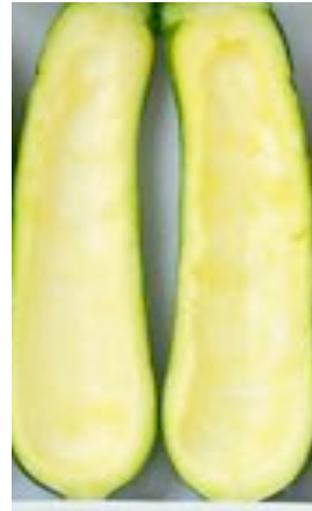
Yields 2 individual servings

Notes: *Reserve pulp for soup stock or to use in another recipe.

**The entire dish may be prepared and assembled ahead to this point, covered, and refrigerated. Remove from the refrigerator about 35 minutes before serving time, allow to come to room temperature, and bake as directed.

This recipe is easily halved or doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 8.2 g.; FAT = 6.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 45.4 g.;
CALORIES = 253; CALORIES FROM FAT = 24%



*Have you every used a slow cooker to rehydrate dried apricots?
If you pull your slow cooker from its storage shelf next month,
we can share a few recipes that put that neglected appliance back to work.*

Please, do stop by,

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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