

Poached Peaches with Hazelnut Meringue Eton Mess

The white peaches that come into season late January are perfect for this dessert, but any peach is fine. It is light and refreshing, perfect for summer dining. This is Stephanie's favourite dessert.

400 g white sugar

600 ml water

Split vanilla bean

Zest of lemon

6 ripe but not overripe peaches

For hazelnut meringue

4 egg whites

½ teaspoon white vinegar

240 g caster sugar

100 g hazelnuts chopped up into small pieces

500 ml cream

Serves 6

For **meringues**, preheat oven to 100C and line a baking tray with baking paper.

Slowly beat egg whites, add vinegar and gradually increase speed and add sugar in slow steady stream until stiff peaks are formed.

Fold in hazelnuts. Drop small rounds onto baking paper and bake for an hour and then reduce temperature and bake until dry (up to 30 minutes).

For **peaches**, put sugar and water in saucepan, scrape vanilla bean and add to water with the bean along with lemon zest and bring to boil.

To skin the peaches, drop them into a pan of boiling water for about 30 seconds until the skin looks little loose then drop into a bowl of cold water and remove skins. Add the skins to the poaching syrup.

Add the skinned peaches to the boiling syrup and poach for about 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat when done but leave peaches in syrup to cool for about 20 minutes.

Remove peaches from syrup and chill in refrigerator, then strain and reduce syrup to use as sauce.

For **Eton mess**, crush the meringues into large chunks and stir through the whipped cream.

Serve one peach per person with a serving of the meringue cream and a drizzle of the reduced syrup.