



Caramelized Pineapple Timbales with Lemongrass Creme

In this recipe, it is actually the pineapple juices that are caramelized, rather than the fruit itself. The pineapple is first "poached" in its own juices, and then once removed from the pan, the juices and sugars are caramelized and tossed with the poached fruit. By employing this technique, the diced pineapple keeps its shape during the cooking process and adds a dramatic textural element to the stunning visual presentation of the timbale.

Serves 8

Ingredients

3 cups diced fresh, ripe pineapple (from 1 large pineapple)
¼ cup sugar (to taste, depending on the sweetness of the pineapple)
¼ cup light brown sugar gently packed
2 teaspoons lime zest
2 teaspoons finely chopped mint
Lemongrass Creme (see preparation below)
Mint Syrup (see preparation below)

Preparation

Place pineapple and the sugars in a large sauté pan over low heat. Cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. The pineapple will release its juices and soften. Using a slotted spoon, remove the diced pineapple to a bowl and set aside to cool.

Return the pan to the heat and allow the juices to continue cooking over low heat. Once the juices begin to caramelize, remove the pan from the heat. Deglaze the pan with the juices that have accumulated in the bowl of the reserved pineapple. Add the caramelized sauce to the reserved pineapples. Gently toss to coat. Set aside to cool. When cool, add the lime zest and mint and gently stir to combine. Cover and refrigerate until well chilled, about 2 hours.

Prepare the Lemongrass Creme:

1 cup heavy cream
2 stalks lemongrass
½ cup pineapple juice, from chilled caramelized pineapples

Pound the stalks of lemongrass lightly to release their oils. Add them to the pineapple juice and bring to a boil, then steep for several minutes. Allow the juice to come to room temperature. Remove the lemongrass stalks from the liquid.

Place the cream in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Whip the cream until just soft and then add a tablespoon or two of the reserved pineapple juice. Whip just until the juice is incorporated and you have a thick, but pour-able creme; do not whip into peaks.

Prepare the Mint Syrup:

1 cup sugar
½ cup plus 2 tablespoons water
2 cups lightly packed fresh mint leaves

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Combine sugar and water in a small, heavy bottomed saucepan. Place over medium-high heat and bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and allow to cool to room temperature.

Pour sugar syrup into a blender. Add the mint leaves to the syrup and puree until the mint is finely chopped and blended with syrup. Transfer to a serving bowl.

[Chef's Note: Can be made ahead and stored covered in a refrigerator for up to 2 days. Whisk to reincorporate the mint into the sugar syrup before serving.]

Service

Remove the chilled pineapple from the refrigerator. Place 1 tablespoon of the Lemongrass Creme in the center of the plate. Place a 1½-inch ring mold in the center of the creme. Spoon the pineapple into the mold, gently pressing on it with the back of the spoon to compact it. Carefully remove the mold. Repeat the process on the other dessert plates. Dot a bit of the Lemongrass Creme around the timbale. Carefully garnish the timbale with a mint sprig and drizzle the Mint Syrup around the timbale.

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