

Garden pears poached in a vanilla bean & orange syrup

Season: Autumn/Winter

Type: Sweets & Drinks

Difficulty: Easy

Serves: 24 tastes in the classroom or 8 adult serves at home

Fresh from the garden: edible flowers, lemons, oranges, pears

Recipe Source: Collingwood College, Victoria

When pears are in season, they are abundant and fragrant. This recipe complements their natural floral flavour with vanilla and citrus for a delicious dessert that can be served warm or cold, with a spoonful of yoghurt, or just as is.

Equipment:

clean tea towel
large knife
vegetable peeler
chopping board
lemon juicer
very large pot or stock pot
melon baller
slotted spoon
colander

Ingredients:

1 orange
1 lemon
16–20 pears
2 L cold water
1 kg sugar
1 vanilla bean
edible flowers, to garnish
6 verbena leaves, to garnish (optional)



What to do:

To make the syrup:

- Set out the chopping board and knife. Dampen the tea towel and place it under the chopping board to prevent it from slipping.
- Peel the zest from the orange and the lemon with the vegetable peeler.
- Cut the lemon in half with a large knife, then juice it. (Adding the lemon juice helps the pears remain a pale yellow colour, rather than turning dark as they cook.)
- Pour the water and lemon juice into the pot, then add the sugar, orange peel, lemon peel and vanilla bean. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 10 minutes to infuse the flavours.

To prepare the pears:

- Wash the pears. Check each pear carefully for caterpillar holes. (Discard any that have caterpillar holes.)
- Peel the pears with the vegetable peeler.
- Cut the pears in half and scoop out the cores with a melon baller.
- To stop the pears from going brown, use a large slotted spoon to lower the pears into the syrup straight away. (The acid from the lemon and orange prevents the pears from oxidising, which is why they turn brown if left in the air too long.)

- Once all the pears are in, gently heat the pot to barely simmering.
- Poach the pears until they just soft when pierced with a knife, then turn off the heat.
- Leave the pears in the syrup to cool.
- To serve, use the slotted spoon to lift the pears out of the pot and place one half in each bowl. (One pear half per person.) Decorate with edible flowers and verbena leaves, if using.

Notes: Don't throw away the vanilla bean at the end – it can be re-used for another batch of pears. Volunteers should check that each student will get about half a pear (some pears may be discarded if they are damaged).

