

CHOCOLATE-GLAZED PEARS

A perfectly elegant dessert.

Fruit Poaching Syrup (page 381)

6 large pears

*1/3 cup dried apricots,
coarsely chopped*

1/3 cup raisins

*1/3 cup shelled black walnuts,
coarsely chopped*

Chocolate Glaze (recipe follows)

Dried apricots and walnut halves, for garnish

1. Prepare the poaching syrup and simmer for 10 minutes.
2. Peel the pears and core them from the bottom, leaving the stems in place. Reserve the cores.
3. Poach the pears in the syrup, standing them upright, until tender but not mushy, about 12 minutes. Let the pears cool in the poaching syrup.
4. Meanwhile, combine the apricots and raisins in a small bowl. Measure out 1 cup of hot syrup from the pot of pears, pour over the fruit, and let stand for 1 hour.
5. Drain the pears and gently pat very dry. Drain the soaked dried fruits and combine with the black walnuts. Stuff some of the mixture into each pear, leaving 1/2 inch of space at the bottom. Trim a piece 1/2 inch thick from the end of each reserved pear core and plug the pear cavities. Arrange the pears, standing upright, well apart on a baking sheet.
6. Using a large spoon, gently and slowly pour the chocolate glaze over each pear. Be careful to coat them completely without being overly generous. Let the chocolate set completely, about 45 minutes.

7. To serve, gently transfer the pears to individual serving plates.

6 portions

CHOCOLATE GLAZE

*10 ounces semisweet chocolate,
in pieces*

3 tablespoons solid vegetable shortening

Melt the chocolate and shortening in a stainless-steel bowl over simmering water, whisking until smooth. Cool slightly before using.

Enough glaze for 6 pears

CHOCOLATE-DIPPED FRUITS

Strawberries, raspberries, cherries, orange sections, bananas, and apple and pear slices—all taste just a little bit better when dipped in chocolate. And making these confections couldn't be easier.

Simply gather your fruits together and choose your favorite eating chocolate—dark, milk, or white. We prefer dark. Melt two thirds of the amount of chocolate you are using, broken into pieces, in the top of a double boiler over simmering water (judging this amount is always a bit of a guessing game and depends on the quantity of fruit you plan to dip—for reference, 8 ounces of chocolate will coat about 12 to 14 large strawberries). Once the chocolate is melted, remove it from the heat and add the remaining chocolate, incorporating it well, to temper it. (You're cooling the chocolate so that it's right for dipping and will harden fairly quickly.) Let it cool for 10 to 15 minutes while you turn your attention to the fruit.

Whenever possible leave the stems and leaves on whole fruits; be sure the surface of the fruit is dry and use a toothpick to hold the fruit. Dip the fruit into the chocolate and cover it halfway. If you can, poke the other end of the toothpick into a piece of Styrofoam, letting the fruit dry upside down. Otherwise place it on a baking sheet covered with aluminum foil or parchment paper. Work quickly so that the chocolate doesn't start to thicken too much. If it does, simply set it over low heat for a moment or two and temper it again. Allow the fruit to dry in a cool, dry place. Chocolate-dipped fruit is best eaten within twenty-four hours.