

Spiked Maple Mousse with Burnt Caramel Sauce and Slivered Walnuts

Now (late Feb.) is about the time the maple sap starts running and there isn't a New England food I appreciate more than maple syrup. It is world-class delicious sweet treat and one of the pillars of great New England cooking. Here is something light but still very rich and a bit on the sweet side. The unsweetened whipped cream and walnuts cut it nicely though and the little nip you get at the end from the liqueur makes you want more.

Serves 6-8

Ingredients:

Mousse:

½ cup milk
1.5 teaspoons unflavored gelatin
1 cup heavy cream
½ cup real maple syrup (preferably Grade B)
3 large eggs, separated
3 tablespoons maple liqueur (Cabin Fever or Sapling)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Sauce:

3 tablespoons white sugar
3 tablespoons real maple syrup (preferably Grade B)
¼ cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon maple liqueur

Garnish:

1/3 cup walnut halves

Procedure:

Prep time: 30-40 minutes

Total time to service: 4-5 hours

Mousse:

1. Combine milk and gelatin and reserve.
2. Heat the syrup to a simmer. Beat the egg yolks and slowly add the maple syrup .
3. Transfer the egg yolk mixture to a small saucepan and cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture slightly thickens (170F).
4. Transfer to a small bowl, add the milk and gelatin mixture and stir until combined.
5. Add the vanilla and maple liqueur
6. Place the small bowl with the egg yolk mixture in a large bowl 1/3 filled with cold water.
7. Let it cool, stirring occasionally until the mixture is cool and starts to gel.
8. Meanwhile whip the egg whites until medium firm peaks form and fold carefully into the cooled egg yolk mixture.
9. Whip the cream until medium whipped (not stiff yet). Fold ¾ of the cream into the yolks and whites mixture (mousse).
10. Reserve and refrigerate (covered) the remainder of the whipped cream for garnish at service.
11. Transfer the mousse to a cool dish, cover and place in the refrigerator to set for at least 4 hours.

Sauce:

1. Combine sugar and 2 tablespoons water in a small saucepan. Cook until the water has evaporated and the sugar has caramelized to a dark brown and has *started to smoke*.
2. Combine the syrup and cream.
3. Remove the pan from the flame and add the syrup and cream. Mix well until smooth. Put through a fine strainer, let cool and then add the liqueur. Reserve.

Assembling the dish:

1. Using a sharp knife, cut walnuts lengthwise into thin slivers.
2. Scoop out about ½ cup of mousse onto a chilled plate.
3. Drizzle 2-3 tablespoons of the sauce around the mousse.
4. Refresh the reserved whipped cream with a couple of whisks and place a large dollop on or near the mousse.
5. Sprinkle with the slivered nuts.