



fig season

by dorette e. snover

no one, certainly not i, can deny the pure sensuality of fall's premier fruit, the fig. its swollen purple shape bursts with red fleshy seeds the moment your teeth tear its delicate skin.

the season for figs seems unbearably short. before you're able to comprehend their taste or believe your good fortune at holding a few in your hand, they're out of season until the next year.

the following menu of fig and apple and pecan salad, roast chicken with a stuffing of figs and garlic, and a fresh fig tart with roquefort are sheer luxuries in spirit and ingredients. for the sake of eighteen figs you can have it all. the ease of preparation of the salad and the tart allows time for their final assembly at the table, if you so desire.

but even one recipe as a part of another menu would denote a decadent celebration. or pull out all the stops and create these three dishes in one meal as your reward for waiting all year for fresh figs.

face the luscious flavor and texture of early autumn in a moment and be like the birds, and enjoy a meal of figs.



fig and garlic stuffed chicken

i like the nutty flavors of the brown rice combined with the dense flavor of the dried figs. fresh figs are too delicate to transfer much of their flavor to the cooked stuffing but they are wonderful thrown into the bottom of the roasting pan with the carrots during the last 15 minutes of oven time.

roasting the chicken

one 4-pound roasting chicken

olive oil

salt

freshly cracked black pepper and coriander seed

fig and garlic stuffing

2 tablespoons olive oil

4 garlic cloves, minced

1/2 cup fresh fennel or celery, finely chopped

1/2 cup white onion, finely chopped

6 dried figs, coarsely chopped and steeped in warm chicken stock

1/2 teaspoon crushed coriander seed

1 1/2 cups cooked brown rice

roasting pan extras

4 carrots, pared and cut on the diagonal

1 bunch of fresh cilantro

4 fresh figs, coarsely chopped



it is important for the stuffing to be cooled prior to being placed inside the uncooked chicken. begin by heating the chopped dried figs and the 1/2 cup of chicken stock on high for 1 minute in a microwaveable bowl. allow to steep for 20 minutes while you chop the vegetables, including the carrots for the roasting pan, and mince the garlic. heat a medium skillet over medium heat. add the olive oil and when hot add the onion, fennel or celery, the crushed coriander seed and the garlic. sauté until the onions are translucent and the garlic and coriander are fragrant. add the figs and chicken stock to the pan, mixing well. cook for another 2 – 3 minutes and then stir in the cooked brown rice. combine well together and cool in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours or overnight. store the prepared carrots in the refrigerator as well. when ready to roast the chicken preheat the oven to 450 degrees. coarsely chop the fresh cilantro for the roasting pan. remove the stuffing and the chicken from the refrigerator. in a medium roasting casserole place the carrots and the chopped cilantro. fill the cavity of the chicken with the stuffing. rub olive oil, salt, coriander seed and pepper over the bird and place in the roasting pan on top of the carrots and cilantro.

place in the 450 degree preheated oven for 15 minutes, then reduce heat to 350 and roast for an additional 1 1/2 – 2 hours or until tender. when the chicken has been in the oven for an hour and fifteen minutes add the fresh chopped figs to the bottom of the pan. continue roasting. when the chicken is done, remove from the oven and let rest for 15 minutes prior to serving. remove the stuffing from the chicken. spoon the roasted figs, cilantro and carrots onto a serving platter. cut the chicken into serving pieces and arrange on the roasted vegetables and fruit. serve immediately.



fig, apple and pecan salad

the beautiful salad is a fresh and piquant way to begin your menu of figs.

the round shapes of the sliced apples roll against the purple skin and red flesh of the figs; mixed with the deep green of the lettuce and the shiny caramel pecans add an unexpected touch. if possible, bring the salad bowl to the table so your guests can participate, at least through witnessing, the ingredients being tossed together and being served. serves 4 – 6.

dressing

1/3 cup balsamic vinegar

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

salt and pepper to taste

salad

2 mcintosh apples, sliced crosswise, cored, and then halved in semi-circles

5 fresh figs, sliced crosswise in 4 slices

1 head green leaf lettuce, washed, and torn in bite size pieces

caramelized pecans

1 cup pecan halves

2 tablespoons salted butter

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper

i begin by caramelizing the pecans. in a medium skillet over medium heat, melt the butter and add the pecans. toss in the butter and add the salt and sugar and crushed red



pepper. continue stirring over medium heat until the sugar melts and forms a shiny caramel glaze. remove to a buttered plate.

prepare the dressing in a pretty salad bowl. combine the balsamic and the olive oil, whisk with a fork. add salt and freshly cracked black pepper to taste. then the apples are sliced and tossed in the dressing. these can stay at room temperature for up to two hours. the lettuce is washed, dried, torn, and chilled. if desired, the figs can be sliced up to an hour ahead of time and added to the apples in the dressing. bring the figs and apples to the table in the salad bowl with dressing. toss in the lettuce and pecans. toss and serve on individual salad plates.



fresh fig tart with roquefort

this tart is a perfect finale to your meal of figs. the simple flavors of the honey crème support each fig while the saltiness of the roquefort compliments the sweet flesh.

the most important part of preparation of the tart dough is to remember to not overprocess it. it goes together snap, crackle, and pop. flour and salt, butter, then the ice water. prepare the tart dough quickly in the processor and either bake it immediately or wrap and store in the refrigerator. bring to room temperature before rolling and baking. mix the crème and store separately in the refrigerator until just before serving. slice the figs at the last moment, too, and lay in a pretty pattern over the crème lined tart. a crumble of roquefort on the center of each fig finishes the dessert. makes one 10 inch tart. serves 8 – 10.

crust

1 3/4 cup all purpose flour

8 tablespoons unsalted butter

1/2 teaspoon salt

crème

4 ounces cream cheese

4 ounces sour cream

1/4 cup honey, or more to taste

finished tart

5 – 6 medium figs, sliced crosswise

3 ounces roquefort cheese



butter the inside of a 10 inch removable bottom tart pan; then in the work bowl of the food processor fitted with the steel knife, process the flour with the butter. remove the cover of the food processor and sprinkle the ice water over the crumbs. replace the lid and process with 2 – 3 short pulses or just until the dough forms small clumps in the work bowl. at this point remove the lid and gather up the dough. do not yet wash the bowl as you will need it to make the honey crème. pat into a flattened disc and either roll out with a rolling pin for the tart shell or wrap in plastic and store in the refrigerator to roll later. prior to baking, preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

when rolling, dust the surface and the rolling pin with a generous amount of flour. roll from the flattened disk into a round shape 1/4 inch thick and transfer to the buttered tart pan. trim off the excess and prick the bottom of the tart shell all over with a fork. bake in the center of the preheated oven for 20 – 25 minutes or until golden brown. remove from the oven and cool completely on a rack.

while the tart shell bakes and cools, prepare the honey crème. in the work bowl of the food processor place the sour cream, cream cheese, and the honey. process until completely smooth. remove from the work bowl with the help of a rubber spatula. store in covered container in the refrigerator until ready to assemble tart. the tart may be assembled up to one hour prior to serving. it only takes a few minutes to assemble at the table if you choose.

when assembling, either at the table or in the kitchen, you'll need the baked and cooled tart shell, the honey crème, the roquefort cheese, and the sliced figs on a plate. spread the tart shell with the honey crème and lay the figs on top, seed side up. place a small crumble of roquefort in the center of each slice of fig. slice and serve.