

RECIPES FOR HOMEMAKERS

Brandy Cookery Is Easy: Experimenting Is The Key

Creative cookery is a matter of applying a little imagination and effectively using a few different ingredients that add flair and distinction to meals. Brandy is one ingredient that can add subtlety and depth of flavor to many foods, and mastering the art of cooking with spirits is easy if you follow a few simple rules.

Remember that brandy cookery is not a complicated secret ritual limited to top chefs at fancy restaurants. It is easy enough for almost anyone to master with a minimum of time and effort. Yet the results are spectacular.

Brandy is aromatic and harmonizes easily with other flavor combinations; your own taste should be your guide. Experiment and adjust the amount of brandy to your personal preference.

Soups

Start with an ordinary soup or stew and transform it into a surprising new creation with the addition of 1/2 to 1 cup of California brandy. For example, take a large pot of homemade vegetable soup, add 1 cup of brandy and the soup takes on a whole new dimension.

Or try a hearty bean and sausage soup, featuring carrots, celery, onions,

tomatoes, chili beans and garlic sausages or frankfurters. Delicious by itself, but add 1/2 cup California brandy to create Brandied Bean and Sausage Soup, an extraordinary new creation that family and guests will savor.

Refreshing cold soups make a delicious treat or appetizer. Some unique variations include a Chilled Brandied Avocado Soup, combining chicken broth, avocado, light cream and 1/4 cup California brandy. Cold Cream of Curry Soup, combining heavy cream and cream of chicken soup seasoned with curry powder, onion powder and oregano, gets a boost from 1/3 cup California brandy.

Serve a Brandy Garden Consomme filled with crisp blanched vegetables, a hint of tarragon vinegar and 1/3 cup California brandy in a clear consomme broth. Tangy gazpacho, the snappy Mexican soup that features a variety of garden vegetables in tomato juice, becomes your own creation when you add 1/4 to 1/3 cup California brandy.

Outdoor Fun

When the weather is nice, it's time for outdoor foods like hamburgers. At a picnic or broiled on the patio, make hamburgers deluxe by adding 1/4 cup California

brandy to the uncooked meat mixture. You've created Brandy Beefburgers. Top the burgers with a Brandy Mushroom Sauce for variety on other occasions. The simple sauce combines butter, fresh mushrooms, beef broth, and 1/3 cup California brandy added to the flavorful drippings left after the burgers are cooked.

Brandied sauces for meats and poultry generally contain 1-2 tablespoons of brandy per 1 cup of liquid. Add 1/4 cup California brandy to the ever popular tomato sauce and you turn it into zesty Spirited Tomato Sauce, superb over all kinds of pasta. Brandied sauces are easy to make and greatly enhance the versatility of economic dishes.

Salads

Salads are also a popular accompaniment at any meal. Start with your favorite salad dressing mix or homemade dressing and add 1 tablespoon of brandy per cup of liquid. Voila! You have your own brandied French dressing or brandied bleu cheese dressing.

When you want a special party salad, create a creamy homemade Brandied Roquefort Dressing by blending 2 egg yolks, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon dry mus-

tard, 1 tablespoon tarragon wine vinegar and 1 tablespoon California brandy. Slowly blend in 1 cup olive oil until the mixture is smooth and thick. Stir in 1/4 cup crumbled Roquefort cheese.

Desserts

Brandy is perhaps best known for its use in elegant desserts and pastries. Try substituting 1/3 cup brandy for some of the liquid when you make a cake, either from scratch or from a mix. For example, try Brandy Pour-Over Cake. Make a basic yellow sponge cake in a Bundt pan, but add brandy to the cake recipe and a sweet syrup of sugar and brandy that is "poured over" the top.

Dessert toppings generally use 1-2 tablespoons of brandy per 1 cup of liquid. A tasty and versatile crepe topping is a brandied custard cream made from vanilla pudding mix (not instant), California brandy and whipped cream. Adding a tablespoon of California brandy to your chocolate sauce also creates a distinctive dessert sauce that can be used over ice cream and pastries.

For brandied cherries, combine 1 pound of pitted sweet cherries, 1/2 cup currant jelly and 1/4 cup California brandy, then refrigerate for

3-4 hours. For brandied peaches, combine 1/2 cup brandy with 1 package frozen sliced peaches in syrup, and chill for several hours or overnight. Apricots and prunes are also delicious when brandied.

Chilled Brandied Avocado Soup

1 (10 1/2 ounce) can condensed chicken broth
1 medium-large avocado
1/2 cup light cream or half-and-half
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/16 teaspoon white pepper
1/4 cup California brandy
2 teaspoons lemon juice
Sour cream
Paprika

Chill chicken broth in can; skim off and discard any fat. Combine peeled and seeded avocado with the clear broth, light cream, salt and pepper in blender jar; blend smooth. Stir in brandy and lemon juice. Cover and chill well. Serve topped with sour cream and a sprinkling of paprika. Makes about 2-3/4 cups (4 or 5 servings).

Brandied Cream of Curry Soup

1/3 cup California brandy
1 cup water
1 teaspoon curry powder
1 teaspoon onion

powder
1/4 teaspoon oregano, crumbled
2 (10 1/2 ounce) cans condensed cream of chicken soup
1/4 teaspoon salt
Dash garlic powder
Dash white pepper
2 teaspoons lemon juice
1 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup finely chopped parsley
1/4 cup finely chopped pimiento

Heat brandy, water, curry powder, onion powder and oregano to boiling. Remove from heat and blend into soup. Add salt, garlic powder, pepper and lemon juice. Cool, then stir in cream. Cover and chill. Add parsley and pimiento before serving. Makes about 4-1/2 cups (6 servings).

Brandy Beefburgers

1 pound ground beef
1 teaspoon seasoned salt
1/4 teaspoon thyme
1/8 teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons instant minced onions
1/2 cup soft bread crumbs
1 egg, beaten
1/4 cup California brandy
1/4 cup water
1 tablespoon oil
**Brandy Mushroom Sauce

4 green pepper rings
4 pimiento rings

Combine beef with seasonings, onion, bread crumbs, egg, brandy and water. Mix well. Shape into 4 patties (3 1/2 diameter). Cook in heated skillet in oil, until meat is desired degree of doneness, turning to brown evenly. Remove and keep warm while preparing Brandy Mushroom Sauce. Return meat patties to sauce, and heat a minute or two longer. Top each patty with a green pepper and pimiento ring. Makes 4 servings.

**Brandy Mushroom Sauce

Sauce: Stir 2 tablespoons butter into drippings remaining in pan from cooking meat. Add 2 to 3 cups sliced fresh mushrooms and saute lightly. Combine 1 1/2 tablespoons cornstarch, 1/3 cup California brandy, 1 (10 1/2 ounce) can condensed beef broth and 1/3 teaspoon pepper. Pour over mushrooms. Bring to boil, and simmer until thickened.

Brandy Pour-Over Cake

3 cups sifted cake flour
3 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup soft shortening (half butter or margarine)
2 cups sugar
3 large eggs
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon grated orange peel
1/3 cup California brandy
1/3 cup orange juice
1/3 cup milk

**Brandy syrup

Resift flour with baking powder and salt. Cream shortening, sugar, eggs and lemon juice together at high speed of electric mixer for 3 minutes (or, beat vigorously 300 strokes by hand). Add orange peel. Add dry ingredients alternately with liquid using low speed. Turn batter into well greased and floured 10-cup Bundt or tube pan. Bake in moderate oven (350°F.) 50 to 60 minutes, until cake tests done. While cake is baking prepare Brandy syrup. Cool cake 10 minutes in pan, then with cake tester or long narrow pick poke holes in cake. Slowly spoon half of Brandy syrup evenly over cake. Unmold onto serving plate. Poke holes in top and drizzle on remaining syrup. Let stand until cool. Makes 1 large cake.

**Brandy syrup

Combine 3/4 cup California brandy and 3/4 cup sugar in a saucepan. Warm gently, stirring until sugar is dissolved.

Brandied Bean And Sausage Soup

1 cup sliced carrot
1 cup chopped celery
1/2 cup chopped onion
1 tablespoon butter
1 (10 1/2 ounce) can condensed consommé or bouillon
1/2 cup California brandy
4 large garlic sausages or frankfurters (about 3/4 pound)
1 (30 ounce) can chili beans
1 (1 pound) can stewed tomatoes

Saute carrot, celery and onion slowly in butter 5 minutes. Add consommé and 1/4 cup brandy. Heat to simmering, cover and cook 5 minutes. Make 3 or 4 diagonal cuts in each frankfurter (or, cut into generous slices, if desired). Add to soup and cook 5 minutes. Coarsely mash 1 cup of the beans. Add to soup, along with remaining beans, tomatoes and remaining 1/4 cup brandy. Simmer 5 minutes longer. Makes a



This main dish soup, thick and aromatic, is the center of interest for a friendly supper party.

Brandy blends all the meat and vegetable flavors and adds a fine touch of its own.

generous 2 quarts.

Summer Garden Consomme

1/2 teaspoon unflavored gelatin
1/2 cup California brandy
2 (10 1/2 ounce) cans consommé
1 cup sliced small mushrooms
1/4 cup thinly sliced carrot strips
1/4 cup thinly sliced celery
1/4 cup cup sliced green onion
1 1/2 tablespoons tarragon flavor wine vinegar
3 drops tabasco sauce
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon basil, crumbled
Yogurt or sour cream for garnish
Dill or paprika for garnish

Sprinkle gelatin over brandy and let stand. Combine 1 can consommé with vegetables. Bring to boiling, lower heat and simmer 2 minutes just until vegetables are tender-crisp. Add softened gelatin-in-brand and stir to dissolve. Add vinegar, tabasco, salt, pepper and basil. Chill until set, then spoon into chilled serving cups. Top with yogurt or sour cream and sprinkle with dill or paprika. Makes about 3 cups (3 or 4 servings).

Note: Soup may be spooned into individual serving cups and chilled, if desired.

STARTING A PRACTICAL FAMILY TRADITION:

Brandied Fruit Compotes

Preserving fruits in compotes, conserves, rumtuffs and other combinations has been a practice dating back centuries in many families. The family legacy of brandied fruits is kept year after year, each generation adding its own special touch.

In recent years, this ancient practice has begun to spread among Americans, to create their own family traditions. According to the California Brandy Advisory Board, the creation of homemade compotes, conserves and rumtuffs is an easy process, once understood.

Recipes range from canning a single fruit with brandy added to the sugar syrup, to simple fruit-brandy combinations, to the multi-fruit melanges, rumtuffs or (referring to the container) "crooked" fruits. These usually combine fruit, brandy and sugar, either all at once or in cycles, with a holding period to let flavors develop. These mixtures are generally not sealed, just covered, and are more nearly like a jam or preserve.

Brandy's Affinity For Fruit

Pouring a spirit over fruit not only preserves the fruit but helps blend flavors. Brandy has been the traditional spirit for preserving fruits because it is distilled from wine, a product of the grape, and so has a natural affinity for other fruit products. Neutral grain spirits such as vodka and rum may also be used for perpetual preserve fruit jars. Scotch, bourbon and gin are not as compatible with fruit flavors.

Scientific Explanation

Dr. George York of the Food Science Department at the University of California, Davis, says he's fielding an increasing number of questions about brandied fruits. According to Dr. York, two things happen when fruit is preserved in brandy. Brandy extracts water from the tissue of the fruit, then the juice and water blend with the brandy.

"The juice and water mixture dilutes the alcohol, but even with an 80 proof brandy, which would be 40 percent alcohol, the mixture would be diluted only to a range of 12 percent to 20 percent," says Dr. York. "Any alcohol percentage over eight percent is enough to preserve the fruit." It is well to note that nearly all California brandy is

bottled at 80 proof.

Dr. York comments that since brandy has a low pH (a low acidity level), it does not affect the flavor of the fruit. Sugar may be added to the mixture for taste or to create a more jam-like consistency.

Wide Range Of Choices

The simplest brandied fruit jars consist of approximately two-thirds fruit and one-third brandy. Firmer fleshed fruits are recommended for best results. Apricots, peaches, grapes, pears, apples and figs work especially well. Plums can also be used although the preserving process may occasionally cause the skins to split. Some bright fruits such as cherries and some plums transfer color to other fruits but this is generally not a problem, Dr. York says.

If berries are used in a brandied fruit jar, they should be firm. If the berries are too ripe and soft, they tend to fall apart. Strawberries and blackberries are both good choices.

"Berries with tiny seeds make for a slight texture change in the brandy mixture, but most people don't find that objectionable," comments Dr. York.

Melons and bananas may also be added to the brandied mixture but should be chosen for firmness. Look for immature fruit that has not completely ripened.

The brandy you choose for the brandied fruit jars makes a difference because brandies vary greatly, depending on whether you choose a heavy import or a smooth brandy from California. In 1979, 75 percent of the brandy sold in the United States was California brandy.

Smooth and Blendable

The brandy from the Golden State is produced by the "continuous still" method which results in a smooth product that retains the taste of the grapes from which it is made. It has a softness that is appealing to American tastes and blends well with other fruit flavors.

Why not create your own family tradition? Start your own rumtuff or brandied fruit jar. In a few weeks you can have a delicious, spicy fruit topping for ice cream and pastries. Brandied fruits are also ideal for use in breads, cakes and cookies. In makes an easy dessert to keep on hand for unexpected entertaining.

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