

LAYERED APRICOT PAVLOVA with LAVENDER CREAM

MAKES 4 individual desserts

FOR THE MERINGUE:

Nonstick cooking spray

6 large egg whites

1 teaspoon white vinegar

1 tablespoon cornstarch

1 cup confectioners' sugar, sifted

2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh edible lavender flowers

PREHEAT THE OVEN TO 200°F. Use a small bowl or cookie cutter to trace 12 4-inch circles onto 2 pieces of parchment paper. Lightly spray the corners of 2 baking sheets with non-stick cooking spray and put each paper, ink-side down, on top.

Combine the egg whites, vinegar, and cornstarch in the bowl of a mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Beat at medium-low speed just until the whites are foamy. Increase the speed to medium-high and gradually add the sifted sugar and lavender flowers, beating until stiff, glossy peaks form, about 10 minutes.

Very gently, spoon the meringue into a pastry bag fitted with a medium star or round tip. Using the circles as your guide, pipe the meringue into a spiraling disc on the prepared baking sheets (or using an offset spatula, gently and evenly spread the meringue to the edges of the circle). Bake for about 1 to 1 1/2 hours. If the meringue begins to color, lower the temperature of the oven to 175°F and continue to bake until the meringues are dry and crisp. Turn off the heat, and leave the meringues in the oven to dry for 1 to 2 hours. Let cool completely before assembling the pavlova. (The meringues can be prepared 1 day in advance. Store in an airtight container in a dry, cool place.)



FOR THE APRICOTS:

1/3 cup lavender honey

3 T rum

Zest and juice of 1 lemon

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1 cup water

1 pound apricots, halved and pitted

IN A MEDIUM SAUCE POT, combine the lavender honey, rum, lemon zest and juice, olive oil, and water and bring to a boil. Add the apricots and reduce the heat to barely simmering. Poach the apricots for about 15 minutes, or until they have softened but still hold their shape. Transfer the apricots, still in their poaching liquid, to a bowl set inside a larger bowl of ice water in order to cool them quickly.

Once cooled completely, remove the apricots from the liquid and slice each half into 3 small wedges; set aside.

FOR THE LAVENDER CREAM:

1/2 cup heavy cream

2 T lavender honey

1 tsp. vanilla

3/4 cup plain whole yogurt

IN A MEDIUM MIXING BOWL, whisk the heavy cream, lavender honey, and vanilla to stiff peaks, then fold in the yogurt.

To assemble the desserts, carefully remove the meringues from the parchment paper. Put a tiny dollop of the Lavender Cream in the center of each plate and place 1 meringue on top—the cream will prevent the meringue from sliding. Spoon a layer of the cream onto each meringue and arrange a layer of the sliced apricots all around. Add another meringue on top and repeat with the cream and apricots. Finally, place a third meringue onto each tower and top with a dollop of the cream. Slice the remaining apricots very thin and pile the pieces on top of the cream. Serve immediately.