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## A Pair of Pears

TWO FRESH RECIPES FOR FALL'S VERSATILE FRUIT

**O**K. YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE IT UP. Stop buying strawberries, peaches, tomatoes. Oh, they're there, alright, but they're not at their best. They're a little peaked. If they were human, you'd take one look at them and send them to bed to rest. I bought some plums and tried to make them work in a recipe I should have made all summer. The result was far from stellar. It was almost comical watching my guests push the food around their plates, trying to avoid the rock-hard fruit I had tried to coax into suppleness.

Mourn if you will the passing of summer produce. Long for your weekly sojourn to the farmers' market? So do I. But there's such an amazing treat in store. Autumn brings its own splendor

of fruits and vegetables. Instead of the primary colors...red, blue, yellow of summer, we're seeing the warm, toasty, comforting shades of fall. Burnt orange, sienna, khakis, and browns. They all had a place in my box of 48 Crayolas. They all have a place at my table.

Take, for example, the pear. It's such a lovely autumn fruit. It arrives on our shelves in October or November, and stays with us all winter long. Somehow, they're always relegated to a corner behind the stacks of ever-increasing varieties of apples. I always think of Emma Lazarus when I see them there: "...their huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

I suppose apples, with their rosy red skins,



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## Caramelized Pears



### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tablespoons grapeseed oil
- 3 large Bosc pears, peeled, cored, and halved lengthwise
- ½ cup wildflower honey
- 3 sprigs rosemary
- ¼ cup white wine

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. In a large ovenproof skillet, heat the oil over high heat until it shimmers. Add the pears and immediately place the pan in the oven. Cook, turning occasionally, until the pears begin to caramelize, about 8 minutes. Add the honey and rosemary and continue to roast for another 6-8 minutes, turning the pears once.
2. Remove the pan from the oven and deglaze with the white wine, scraping the browned bits on the bottom of the pan. Turn the pears to glaze all sides.

## Baby Greens with Pears and Persimmons

### INGREDIENTS:

- 3 cups baby greens
- 2 ripe persimmons (Fuyu)
- 2 ripe pears, cut into wedges
- 1 medium fennel bulb, sliced thinly vertically
- ½ cup lightly toasted pecans
- Fig Vinaigrette (recipe below)



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### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide the greens among six chilled salad plates. Arrange the sliced persimmons, sliced fennel, and pear wedges around the greens. Top with the pecan halves and drizzle with fig dressing.

## Fig Vinaigrette:

### INGREDIENTS:

- 2/3 cup chopped dried figs
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- 2 teaspoons minced thyme
- 2 teaspoons mustard seeds, lightly toasted
- 1 tablespoon minced shallot
- 1/4 cup sherry vinegar
- 1/3 cup olive oil

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a small saucepan, combine 1/3 cup figs with the water. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer the figs, covered, for 5 minutes or until the figs are soft. Cool.
2. Puree in a food processor. Transfer to a bowl and whisk in the wine, apple juice, thyme, mustard seed, shallots, vinegar, and olive oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Fold in the remaining chopped figs. *Source: Fetzer Vineyards*

beckon brighter. I've not heard of youngsters bobbing for pears. Nor does my nemesis, the donut, tempt me with a sugar-coated pear cider cake. But pears, in their own quiet way, lend themselves to so many preparations.

The most popular variety we see is the Bartlett. It's large, bell-shaped and pale yellowish green. It doesn't fall apart while cooking, so it is ideal for poaching. With its sweet, syrupy flesh, it is a beautiful foil for serving alongside cheese, particularly blue cheese.

The next bin houses Anjou pears. Their short,

squat shape contrasts pleasantly with their neighbor, the tall, thin, long-necked Bosc. Both have tan skins and are crisp and sweet. The Bosc takes well to storage, so they can remain in the food drawer of the refrigerator for a longer amount of time.

And then there's that most elegant of all, the Comice. As the chef, Albert Portale notes, "It's the pear you might associate with Monet still-life paintings." Yellow, with a faint blush of red. It's remarkably sweet, and its juices invariably run down my chin when I take that first bite. Not only do I savor its taste, I get giddy with its heady

perfume.

For all their charm, pears do require a little work on our part. They only ask that you check them once in a while. Since they ripen off the tree, they should be looked at each day while they're on the counter. Once they have a little give when gently pressed, they should be refrigerated. There, they'll happily stay, waiting to enchant you with their possibilities. They're here for the whole winter. Grab some and bring them home. They sweeten up the short days and ever longer nights. 