

## Almond semifreddo & port wine-poached figs with almond praline

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Almonds and orange zest fleck this semifreddo, which is drizzled with a richly spiced fig compote and topped with shards of praline. If you can't find fresh figs, dried figs may be substituted. The semifreddo should be served within 24 hours.

### Ingredients (Serves 8 to 10)

#### Semifreddo\*

- 2/3 cup raw [almonds](#), toasted
- 1/2 cup stevia, divided
- 1/2 tsp finely grated [orange](#) zest
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- 3 large egg whites, at room temperature\*
- 1 cup cold heavy cream
- 1/2 tsp almond extract, or 2 tsp Amaretto liqueur
- 1/4 tsp vanilla extract

#### Figs

- 1 cup port or red wine
- 1/2 cup balsamic vinegar

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- ¼ cup fresh orange juice
- 2 tbsp honey
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 whole cloves
- ½ tsp black peppercorns
- 16 medium-ripe fresh [figs](#) or large, plump dried figs, stemmed and halved lengthwise

### Praline

- ½ cup sugar (or other natural sweetener)
- ½ cup sliced almonds, lightly toasted
- ½ tsp salt

### Method

To make the semifreddo, line a 23 by 13-cm loaf pan with plastic wrap, leaving an eight-cm overhang on all sides.

Place the almonds and quarter of a cup of the stevia in a food processor. Pulse until finely ground. Add the orange zest and salt; pulse to blend.

Beat the egg whites with an electric mixer on high speed until they begin to hold soft peaks. Add the remaining quarter of a cup of stevia, one tablespoon at a time, and beat until stiff, glossy peaks form.

In a deep bowl, beat the cream and almond and vanilla extracts on high speed until soft peaks form. Gently fold the beaten whites into the cream until blended. Gently fold the almonds into the cream mixture until evenly distributed.

Spoon into the prepared baking dish and smooth the top. Cover with plastic and freeze for at least eight hours or overnight.

To prepare the figs, combine all of the ingredients except the figs in a heavy medium saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook until the liquid is reduced by two-thirds and syrupy in consistency, 10 to 12 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve and return to the pan. Add the figs and gently stir to coat.

If using fresh figs, simmer for five minutes over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally. If using dried figs, simmer until softened, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool completely.

To make the praline, line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Heat the sugar in a small, heavy saucepan over medium heat until it melts, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon.

Continue to cook, stirring constantly, until the sugar turns amber in color. Add the almonds and salt and stir quickly to coat. Pour onto the prepared baking sheet and spread into a thin layer with a wet spatula. Do not touch with your fingers. Let cool completely. Break into four-cm pieces.

To assemble the dessert, grasp the sides of the plastic liner and gently lift the semifreddo from the loaf pan onto a cutting board. Carefully slide the liner out from under the semifreddo and discard. Cut the loaf into two-cm slices and place a slice in each of eight to 10 shallow soup bowls. Spoon the figs and syrup over the semifreddo.

Garnish with praline pieces and serve immediately.

**Tip:** Almond butter is widely available and sold salted or unsalted, raw or roasted. Almond butter can also be prepared at home.

**Did you know:** Almond flour is gluten-free and has more protein than wheat flour. Its texture is smooth and its flavour slightly sweet and buttery. It contains protein and fibre, plus antioxidants and

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calcium, and can be made at home by grinding frozen or cold blanched almonds in a food processor (nuts at room temperature will turn into almond butter when ground). Store in a sealed container in the refrigerator or freezer for up to several months.

\*Semifreddo, which means 'half-frozen', is a light and airy Italian cream dessert that does not require an ice cream machine to make.

Recipes from *Almonds Recipes, History, Culture* by Barbara Bryant and Betsy Fentress

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