

Pickled Fig and Prosciutto Crostini

Every fruit has its secret. That's what D.H. Lawrence said when he wrote an epic poem celebrating the virtues of the fig. Their symbols, their sensuality, their secrets. Figs are indeed one incredibly beautiful fruit, and we pay homage in two ways — leaving some in their pristine glory and giving others a pickle bath. Sure, they're addictive on their own, but when paired with oozing cheese and a slip of prosciutto, the secret is revealed.

Ingredients

pickled figs

6 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
6 tablespoons white wine vinegar
6 tablespoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1 cinnamon stick
1 dried arbol chile
1 star anise
1 thin lemon slice (wheel)
1/2 teaspoon black peppercorns
6 fresh Black Mission figs, washed, dried

crostini

1 pound taleggio, at room temperature
36 slices baguette, 1/4-inch thick, lightly toasted
4 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto, torn into smaller pieces
6 small fresh Black Mission figs, stemmed and cut into sixths

special equipment

24-ounce jar with a tight-fitting lid

Directions

for the pickles

Combine the vinegars, sugar, salt, cinnamon, chile, star anise, lemon and peppercorns in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat, gently stirring occasionally until the sugar dissolves, about 5 minutes. Prick the figs in 2 or 3 spots with a paring knife (or you can halve the figs) and add figs to the liquid. Return to a simmer. Cook the figs until just tender, about 5 minutes. Cover the pot and let cool. They can be served immediately. If you don't plan to use all of the figs and need to store them, gently transfer the figs, aromatics and liquid — while everything is still hot — to a clean jar, cover, let cool, and refrigerate until ready to serve. Note that the figs will take on more flavor from the aromatics as they sit. Hold up to 4 weeks.

for the crostini

Drain the pickled figs, remove stems and cut each into 6 wedges. Spread 1 tablespoon of the cheese on each toast, then top with a layer of prosciutto and the pickled and fresh figs. Serve.

total time: 35 minutes plus at least 2 hours to cool and pickle

active prep: 25 minutes

serves: makes 36 pieces

difficulty: *easy*