

Roasted Pear, Prosciutto and Watercress Salad with Candied Pecans

Sweet with salty. Cool with warm. Crunchy with tender. This winter salad hits every note to make it a player in your rotation all year long. The candied pecans are so irresistible that the recipe makes more than you'll need for the salad, a fact you'll appreciate when you can't stop noshing on them as you put everything else together. Feel free to make a double batch to keep on hand for unexpected guests.

Ingredients

the candied pecans

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1½ cups pecan halves, may substitute walnuts
Generous pinch salt
¼ cup brown sugar

roasted pears

1 tablespoon unsalted butter
2 (about 1 pound total) ripe but firm Bosc or Anjou pears, cored, each cut into 6 long wedges
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 sprigs thyme

dressing

3 tablespoons sherry vinegar
1 teaspoon honey
1 teaspoon Dijon or grainy mustard
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons chopped chives, optional
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

salad

6 cups trimmed bite-size watercress sprigs (a 4-ounce bag), washed and dried well
4 thin slices prosciutto, torn into large bite-size pieces

special equipment

heatproof silicone spatula
a melon baller is helpful for coring, but not required

Directions

for the candied pecans

Melt the butter in a medium nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the nuts and salt and stir to coat evenly. Sprinkle the sugar over the nuts and stir to coat well. Continue to cook, mostly undisturbed, until the sugar melts into a syrup, 3 to 6 minutes. Watch carefully so the sugar doesn't burn. Once the sugar melts, stir often to coat the nuts until they are nice and glossy, another 2 to 3 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat. Quickly transfer nuts to a parchment-

lined baking sheet and separate into a single layer using a silicone spatula. Set aside to let cool completely. Resist the urge to eat one immediately — the urge will be real — or you will get burned. The nuts will harden and crisp up as they cool.

for the roasted pears

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Melt the butter in a medium cast-iron or other heavy oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Arrange the pears, one cut side down, in the pan and sear until lightly browned, 3 or 4 minutes. Gently flip the pears so the other cut side is down, sprinkle with a pinch of salt and pepper, add the thyme sprigs to the skillet, and put it into the oven. Roast until pears are tender, 5 to 10 minutes, depending on how firm the pears were to start with. Discard the thyme. Transfer pears to a plate and set aside to let cool a bit.

for the dressing

Combine the vinegar, honey and mustard together in a small bowl. Slowly whisk in the oil and then the chives. Season with salt and pepper.

for the salad

Put the watercress in a large bowl, drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the dressing, and toss to coat. Divide greens among 4 plates. Arrange the pears and prosciutto over the salads and drizzle with a little additional dressing. Top with some of the nuts and serve.

total time: 40 minutes

active prep: 15 minutes

serves: 4 servings

difficulty: *easy*