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Crêpes Suzette

Serves 4

This dessert with French origins proves to be a very worthy wintertime dessert. Crêpes take on a sweet character in this dish while bathed in a buttery orange sauce – the combination is one delicious forkful after another. The crêpes can be made ahead of time, up to three days, then the orange sauce assembled in minutes at serving time. We use an unorthodox method for the sauce that's definitely not authentic, but is quick and tastes great. The fresh orange sections allow luscious citrus flavors to sparkle a little more. This sweet ending is deceptively easy to make and dazzles as a dessert.

Crêpe Ingredients: (makes approximately (12) 6-inch crêpes)

1/4 cup white sugar
1/2 teaspoon Kosher salt
4 large eggs
1.5 cups whole milk
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
1 cup all-purpose flour
Oil for the crêpe pan (flavorless, such as canola oil)

Sauce:

6 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 cup orange marmalade
4 oranges, sectioned
(or 2 (11-oz) cans mandarin oranges, drained well)
2 tablespoons Grand Marnier
(or other orange liqueur such as Cointreau, or Triple Sec)
2 tablespoons pomegranate arils for garnish (optional)

Crêpe Directions:

1. Combine the sugar, salt, eggs, milk, and vanilla in the bowl of food processor or a large mixing bowl. Pulse or whisk until evenly combined.
2. Stream in the melted butter and continuing pulsing or whisking. Add the flour and combine until well mixed; avoid over mixing. The batter will be very thin with the consistency of heavy cream.
3. Allow the batter to sit for several hours or overnight in the refrigerator. This chilled resting period is key to forming a good batter.
4. When it's time to make the crêpes, prepare a landing place for the finished crêpes by lining a half sheet pan with parchment paper (to prevent sticking to the pan and each other).

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5. Over medium heat, oil a nonstick crêpe pan or low-sided skillet with a paper towel dipped in flavorless oil. Pour a thin layer of the crêpe batter into the pan. Spread the batter to evenly coat the bottom of the pan to a diameter of about 6 inches. As the batter begins to cook and show signs of drying at the edges and bubbly in the center, (about 30-60 seconds), turn the crêpe and cook on the other side for an additional 15-30 seconds or until fully cooked and nicely browned. Transfer the cooked crêpe to the prepared lined half sheet pan and repeat until all the batter has been used, about 12 crêpes.

6. Allow the crêpes to cool individually, then stack with a square of parchment paper placed in between the crêpes to prevent sticking. Store for up to 3 days by wrapping the entire stack well to prevent drying out and to prevent odors from invading the flavor of the crêpes until ready to assemble and serve.

7. When time to serve, fold the crêpes in half, then half again. Plate by placing 3 folded crêpes on each plate overlapping in fan style.

Sauce Directions:

1. Prepare the oranges slices by peeling and sectioning the oranges. Place the sections and any juices in a bowl; set aside.

2. In a low-sided skillet, melt the butter, stir in the orange marmalade and any juice from the sectioned the oranges. Stir and allow the mixture to reduce a little until it becomes syrupy in consistency. Gently add the sectioned oranges and spoon the sauce over the oranges.

3. Remove the skillet from heat, add the Grand Marnier and allow the mixture to warm again. Gently cook until any alcohol has burned away. Or, if flambéing, warm the mixture, then carefully light to flame and burn away the alcohol. Gently stir to keep the sauce from separating.

4. Spoon the sauce generously over the plated crêpes and serve immediately while warm.