

Baked Figs in Lemon Syrup

INGREDIENTS

1 tbs unsalted butter, softened

3 lemons

1 1/2 pounds purple figs

1/2 cup water

1/2 cup plus 2 tsp sugar

DIRECTIONS

1. Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Boil water and 1/2 cup sugar in a small saucepan, stirring, until the sugar is dissolved. Remove syrup from the heat. Squeeze enough juice from the 2 lemons to measure 1/3 cup and stir into syrup, then discard the remaining lemon halves.
3. Remove the zest from the remaining lemon in long strips with a vegetable peeler. Cut the zest lengthwise into thin julienne strips. Reserve the remaining lemons.
4. Blanch zest in a saucepan of boiling water 1 second, then drain in a sieve and add to syrup. Cut away remaining pith from lemon. Working over a bowl, cut segments free from membranes.
5. Spread the butter in a 10-inch heavy oven proof skillet. Arrange firm-ripe purple figs, cut sides up, slightly overlapping in 1 layer. Sprinkle 2 teaspoons sugar and bake until figs are softened and begin to exude juice but still hold their shape, 25 to 30 minutes. When done, transfer figs with slotted spoon to a shallow serving bowl; put skillet over a burner at a moderately high heat.
6. Add syrup and de-glaze skillet by boiling until syrup is reduced to about 3/4 cup, 6 to 8 minutes. Add lemon segments along with any juices in bowl and pour syrup (with lemon segments) over the figs. Cool food to either warm or room temperature before serving.