

CLASSIC CLAFOUTIS WITH SWEET CHERRIES

Adapted from a recipe by master chef Hubert Keller of the famed, but now sadly closed, Fleur de Lys restaurant in San Francisco. Clafoutis is a very old traditional dessert from the south of France (the name is an Occitan word). Sweet cherries are the traditional fruit used, but it works with many others as well. We have made this with tart cherries, blueberries, apricots, plums, and roasted/poached pears, all with delicious results.

Serves 6 to 8.

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup	blanched almonds, toasted
2 teaspoons	pure vanilla extract or 1 vanilla bean, cut in half lengthwise
1/2 cup	sugar
1/2 cup	flour (whole wheat pastry, oat, or white)
4	eggs (warmed ahead to room temp)
1 cup	milk
1/2 cup	creme fraiche (or heavy cream)
1 tablespoon	kirsch or other liqueur or brandy
1 pound (about 2 1/2 cups)	fresh sweet cherries, pitted

Preheat the oven to 400F (with convection, 425F without) and place a rack in the bottom third of the oven. Butter a 9-inch round cast iron skillet (can substitute a baking dish or pie pan).

Place the toasted almonds in a food processor and grind to a fine powder. If using vanilla beans, scrape the seeds from the vanilla bean into the ground almonds (reserve the pod for another purpose). Add the sugar and flour and process to mix dry ingredients together.

In a large mixing bowl, beat together the eggs, milk, cream, and liqueur (and the vanilla extract, if not using a vanilla bean). Add the dry ingredients to wet ingredients in the mixing bowl, mixing until just combined. Let the batter rest for 10 minutes.

Arrange the cherries (or other fruit) evenly on the bottom of the prepared baking dish and carefully pour the batter over them.

Bake in the oven until the Clafoutis is puffed up and golden brown, about 25 to 30 minutes,. Remove from the oven and place on a wire rack to cool.

When cool enough to comfortably touch, dust the Clafoutis with the confectioners' sugar and serve warm or at room temperature. Add a dollop of freshly whipped cream, if desired.