



Anise Hyssop

The herb that tastes like candy

- Don't confuse the plant with anise or with hyssop.
- The leaves and flowers have a pronounced licorice flavor
- Fresh or dried leaves, and flowers can be
 - used as an herb tea or for flavoring herb teas
 - chopped and added to cakes, muffins or cookies
 - steeped and the liquid used in custards, puddings and pie fillings
 - chopped and used in place of star anise in oriental type marinades for meats and fish
 - any place an anise or licorice flavor is appropriate
- Flowers - make a beautiful purple garnish
- Flowerlets taste like licorice "candy"!

Anise Hyssop and Almond Butter Cookies

1 cup sugar
1/4 cup anise hyssop florets
1 extra-large egg
12 tablespoons butter
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups unbleached flour
Scant 1/2 teaspoon salt
2 ounces almonds

Remove anise hyssop florets from their stalks. Measure 1/4 cup and combine with the sugar in a food processor and pulse until blended.

Add the egg and process for about 60 seconds. Cut butter into 12 pieces. Add butter and the vanilla and process for another 60 seconds.

Lightly toast and coarsely chop almonds. Mix the flour and salt and add it to the processor. Process for about 20 seconds, until most of the flour has been incorporated. Add the almonds and process until just mixed; do not overprocess.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and gather it into a ball. Divide into three parts and roll each in plastic wrap into a cylinder 1 1/2 to 2 inches in diameter. Chill for about 1 hour, until firm, or place in the freezer for about 20 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Slice the dough slightly less than 1/4 inch thick with a sharp knife. Place the rounds at least 1/2 inch apart on ungreased baking sheets.

Bake for about 12 minutes, changing the position of the baking sheets halfway through baking, until the edges of the cookies are just golden brown. Remove from baking sheets immediately to cool on racks. When cool, store in airtight containers. Makes 5 or 6 dozen cookies.

ANISE HYSSOP PEAR TART

3 large ripe Bracelet pears

Cream

1 to 1 ½ cups coarsely chopped anise hyssop leaves and flowers

2 cups half and half

½ cup sugar

2 tablespoons cornstarch

2 egg yolks

Pernod liqueur, to taste (Optional)

Pastry

½ cup cold butter or margarine

3 oz. cold cream cheese

1 cup all-purpose flour

Garnish

3 or 4 fresh or dried anise hyssop flower stalks

Cream

In a saucepan combine chopped anise hyssop leaves and flowers and half and half. Slowly bring to a simmer. Remove from heat and allow anise hyssop to steep for 2 to 3 hours. Strain and discard leaves.

When ready to assemble tart, mix sugar, cornstarch.. Stir in anise hyssop steeped cream. Stir over medium-high heat until boiling. Stir some sauce into the egg yolks; add to hot mixture and stir 1 minute. Stir in Pernod (if using). Use hot.

Pears

With a knife, decoratively score round side of pears. Lay pears, flat side down, in a buttered 9 by 13 inch pan.

Pastry

Cut butter and cheese into cubes. Combine in a food processor with flour. Whirl until mixture holds together. Press dough evenly over bottom and sides of an 11-inch tart pan with removable bottom.

In a 375 oven, set pastry on a low rack and place pears on a rack above. Bake until crust is golden and pears turn brown, 20 to 30 minutes. Cool.

Garnish

Carefully pull anise hyssop flowerlets from main stalk.

Assembly

Pour hot anise cream into crust. Set pears, round side up, in cream. Let cool, cover lightly, and chill up to overnight. Before serving scatter anise hyssop flowerlets between the pears.

Serves 6 to 12.

