

Passion fruit recipes to brighten late winter

By **BEN MIMS**

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — We're smack dab in the middle of citrus season, so it may be easy to overlook them, but passion fruit are at their peak right now. I've been buying them by the dozens at the farmers market lately and plan to continue that trend for the next few weeks. They bring that distinctive "tart sunshine" flavor even better than most citrus, and I love finding new ways to use the pulp, even though I often just eat it straight from the shells with a spoon, the classic approach.

But if you need inspiration for more recipes that use the wonderfully golden juice, try making sorbet, the next best thing to raw. Sweetened with a little sugar and churned until icy, it's the perfect thing to make right now and then save for a treat until another heatwave like last week's comes along. Want even more complexity and tropical brightness? Add mango to the mix.

Want something with a little more body? Whip up this simple mousse that uses meringue and evaporated milk to enrich the sunny pulp. If booze is more your speed, try this cachaça-based cocktail made with passion fruit and coconut cream.

And if you need a baking project to get you through these last few weeks of dark mornings, make my passion fruit-poppy seed muffins, a spin on the classic lemon breakfast treat that packs a more colorful punch than the yellow citrus ever could.

PASSION FRUIT SORBET

By Ben Mims

Time: 15 minutes, plus 4 1/2 hours freezing time

Yields: Makes 12

These passion fruit ices are the perfect treat for when it's too hot outside to do anything. Buy a few extra passion fruit, because some can be filled with less pulp than others even though they are the same size. The orange and lime juices help round out passion fruit's distinctive tang. If you want to make this but don't have access to fresh passion fruit, substitute 3/4 cup frozen passion fruit puree for the fresh pulp and pack the sorbet in a plastic container as you would any ice cream. If you don't have an ice cream maker, see the granita Variation, below.

6 large, wrinkled passion fruit
1 cup granulated sugar
3/4 cup filtered water
Juice of 1 large orange
Juice of 2 limes

1. Halve the passion fruit across their equators and, working over a bowl, use a small spoon to scrape out all their pulp; reserve the empty shells on a plate. Measure out 3/4 cup of the pulp in a liquid measuring cup; keep any remaining pulp for another use, such as in lemonade or as a topping for yogurt and granola.

2. In a small saucepan, combine the sugar and water and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Immediately remove the pan from the heat and stir in the passion fruit pulp, orange juice and lime juice. Let the syrup cool to room temperature in the pan, about 30 minutes.

3. Using an immersion or stand blender, pulse the passion fruit syrup a few times to break up the seeds and then pour the syrup through a fine mesh strainer into a bowl, pressing to extract as much liquid as possible. If you want some seeds in the sorbet for aesthetics and crunch, add 1 teaspoon of the broken seeds from the strainer back to the syrup;



Mariah Tauger/Los Angeles Times-TNS

Passion fruit and poppy seed muffins.

otherwise, discard all the seeds. Pour the syrup into a resealable container and chill at least 2 hours or overnight in the refrigerator.

4. Stir the syrup and then pour it into an ice cream machine and churn according to the manufacturer's instructions. Spoon the sorbet into the reserved passion fruit shells and smooth the tops flat or mound up slightly; store any remaining sorbet in a resealable container in the freezer.

5. Place the filled hulls on the plate in the freezer and chill until firm, at least 2 hours. Enjoy straight from the freezer with a spoon.

Variations

Passion Fruit Granita

In Step 4, pour the mixture into a shallow glass dish and freeze for 4 hours, scraping the mixture every 30 minutes with the tines of a fork, until it forms fluffy crystals like shaved ice. Spoon the granita into the reserved passion fruit shells and freeze until ready to serve.

Make Ahead

You can make the passion fruit syrup base up to 1 week before you plan to churn the sorbet. The churned sorbet will keep in an airtight container for up to 1 month.

MANGO AND PASSION FRUIT SORBET

By Amy Scattergood

Mango adds an extra layer of tropical brightness to this simple frozen treat. If you can't find ripe mangoes at the farmers markets, use organic frozen mango.

2 mangoes, about 1 pound (450 grams) each
2/3 cup (135 g) sugar
1/3 cup (75 milliliters) lime juice, from about 2 limes
1/4 cup (60 ml) water
Pinch of salt
1/4 pound (115 g) passion fruit (2 to 4), or 1/2 cup (120 ml) passion fruit puree

1. Stand a mango, stem end down, on a cutting board and use a serrated knife to cut from the top to the bottom, running the blade close to the pit. Turn the mango around and repeat on the opposite side. Use a spoon to scoop the flesh from the skin and transfer it to the jar of a blender. Cut away any usable flesh attached to the pit, peel it and add to the jar. Squeeze the pit over the jar to extract the juices from any flesh clinging to the pit. Repeat with the second mango.

2. Stir the sugar, lime juice, water and salt in the blender and puree until smooth. Taste the puree, and if it is fibrous, strain it through a sieve into a bowl.

3. To prepare the passion



Ben Mims/Los Angeles Times-TNS

Passion fruit ices recipe.

fruit, halve the fruit and scoop the pulp and seeds into a small bowl. Mash the pulp with a fork to liquefy, then stir the pulp and seeds into the mango mixture. (If using puree, stir directly into the mango mixture.) Cover and chill the mixture several hours, up to overnight.

4. Make the sorbet: Freeze the mixture in an ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions. Pack into a chilled container, cover tightly and freeze, preferably for several hours, before serving. Remove from the freezer about 10 minutes before serving to make the scooping easier.

— Adapted from "The Seasonal Jewish Kitchen," by Amelia Saltzman.

PASSION FRUIT-POPPY SEED MUFFINS

By Ben Mims

These muffins are meant to be eaten for breakfast and are, therefore, pretty lean. The glaze on them makes them richer and imparts a powerful passion fruit taste, so if you want a more subtle flavor, omit the extra two tablespoons of passion fruit juice, the powdered sugar and the extra teaspoon of poppy seeds, and instead sprinkle some extra granulated sugar over each muffin cup before baking to get a crunchy top. Cook time: 45 minutes.

1 3/4 pounds ripe passion fruit (12 to 14)
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more for sprinkling

3/4 cup vegetable oil
2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon poppy seeds
3 large eggs
1 1/2 cups sifted powdered sugar

1. Heat the oven to 375 degrees. Line a 12-cup muffin tin with paper liners (or spray the cups with nonstick baking spray). Split each passion fruit and scoop out its pulp with a spoon and into a medium-mesh strainer set over a medium bowl. Stir the seeds and pulp with the spoon again and again until only the seeds remain and all the pulp is in the bowl (be sure to scrape the bottom of the strainer as well). Pour the pulp into a liquid measuring cup to reach 3/4 cup, then pour 2 tablespoons of the remaining pulp into a small bowl. If you have any pulp left over after this, pour it into a plastic bag and freeze it for another use, such as mixing into cocktails or eating on yogurt and granola.

2. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt. In a medium bowl, whisk together the sugar, oil, poppy seeds, eggs, and 3/4 cup passion fruit pulp. Pour the liquid ingredients over the dry ingredients, and stir until just combined.

3. Divide the batter evenly among the prepared muffin cups.

Bake until light golden brown at the edges and a toothpick inserted in the center of each muffin comes out clean, 22 to 24 minutes. Transfer the muffins to a wire rack and let cool completely.

4. In the small bowl with the remaining 2 tablespoons passion fruit juice, stir in the powdered sugar and remaining 1 teaspoon poppy seeds with a pinch of salt until they form a smooth glaze. Dip the tops of the muffins in the glaze and arrange right side up on the rack to allow the glaze to set before serving. Store any uneaten muffins in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

BATIDA DE MARACUJA

By Charles Perry

A popular cachaça cocktail, the batida is an iced drink flavored with pureed fruit, often sweet passion fruit, along with coconut milk, condensed milk or other ingredients. It has all the sublime tropical appeal of a piña colada but with a fresher taste.

About 4 passion fruit (to make 1 1/2 ounces passion fruit puree)
1 (14-ounce can) coconut milk (unshaken); to get 3

tablespoons cream)
2 ounces cachaca
2 ounces (1/4 cup) simple syrup

1. Cut the passion fruit in half and scrape the pulp and seeds into a wire mesh strainer placed over a bowl. Press down on the pulp to extract the puree. Discard the skin and seeds.

2. Open the can of coconut milk and spoon off 3 tablespoons of the cream that's risen to the top. Set aside the remaining milk for another use.

3. In a cocktail shaker, combine the passion fruit puree, coconut cream, cachaca and simple syrup. Pour into a 12-ounce glass filled with ice.

— From Margot Bull, bartender at Rio Lounge and Grill in Encino, California. To make simple syrup, combine one-fourth cup water and one-fourth cup sugar in a small pan and simmer until the sugar dissolves.

MOUSSE DE MARACUJA (PASSION FRUIT MOUSSE)

By Susan Latempa

With its cloud-like texture and fresh, bright passion fruit flavor, this dessert is the perfect thing to make ahead of time and keep in the refrigerator for a snack or dessert for guests.

14 passion fruit to yield 1/2 cup strained, fresh passion fruit juice, seeds reserved, or 1/2 cup frozen or bottled unsweetened passion fruit juice concentrate, divided
1/2 envelope unflavored gelatin
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons evaporated milk
1/2 cup superfine sugar, divided
4 egg whites
Pinch of salt

1. If using fresh passion fruit, cut the fruit in half and strain the pulp through a fine sieve, rubbing to remove the pulp from seeds. Wash the seeds in water, then dry them on a paper towel. They will be used to garnish the mousse.

2. Place 2 tablespoons puree or juice concentrate in a small, non-reactive saucepan and sprinkle the gelatin over. Stir until blended and smooth. Heat the mixture over low heat, stirring, just until the gelatin is dissolved.

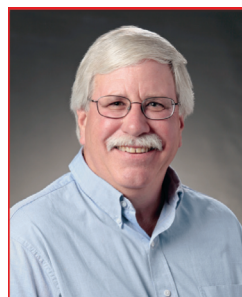
3. Remove the gelatin mixture from the heat. Add the remaining juice and stir to combine. Add the evaporated milk and one-fourth cup sugar; stir until dissolved. Chill until slightly thickened, stirring occasionally.

4. Beat the egg whites and the salt in a mixing bowl to soft peaks. Gradually add the remaining one-fourth cup sugar and beat until stiff and glossy.

5. Add a large spoonful of the egg white mixture to the chilled passion fruit mixture and combine thoroughly. Fold in the remaining meringue with a spatula, making sure not to over-mix.

6. Spoon the mousse into individual margarita or stemmed glasses. Chill. Sprinkle with the reserved passion fruit seeds and serve.

— From Cafe Brasil in Los Angeles, adapted from a recipe by Christopher Idone in "Brazil: A Cook's Tour." Use fresh passion fruit if available. If not, unsweetened passion fruit concentrate is available at Brazilian markets and select specialty markets. You'll see sweetened passion fruit concentrate in many Japanese markets, but it's too sweet for this recipe.



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