



As I plan my menu for the upcoming holidays I immediately imagine the house smelling of cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves. Those aromas then lead me down the orchard path to apples and pears.

Pears!



I love pear mincemeat pie. When I grew up we always had pumpkin pies and mincemeat pies for the winter holidays. Many people are put off by the name, but this is a meatless spin-off from the pie filling of olde. It is merely a spicy version of apple pie filling but we use firm pears, or if you prefer, a combination of apples and pears.

Making this holiday treat ahead of time and canning it will make your holiday cooking much easier. Just prepare your pie crust, open a jar or two, fill the pie shell, and either top it with a second pie crust or leave it open, as you may prefer.

This pie filling is actually quite versatile. Serve Pear Mincemeat as an accompaniment to roast pork or beef. Or, put a generous dollop of Pear Mincemeat into the cavity of halved acorn squash, during the last 15 minutes of baking. Drizzle warm honey over acorn squash before serving. Or, for a savory touch, add a bit of onion and some sage before stuffing your squash.

PEAR MINCEMEAT

Makes about 9 pints

- 7 pounds Bartlett pears (about 21 medium)
- 1 lemon
- 2 pounds golden or dark raisins
- 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups sugar
- 1 tablespoon cloves
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon nutmeg
- 1 tablespoon allspice
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1 cup vinegar, 5% acidity

DIRECTIONS:

1. **PREP:** Wash pears and lemon under cold running water; drain. Cut pears in half lengthwise and core. Coarsely chop pears. Cut lemon into quarters and remove seeds. Finely chop lemon, including peel, using a food processor or food grinder.
2. **COOK:** Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan. Bring mixture to a boil over medium heat, stirring to prevent sticking. Reduce heat and simmer 30 minutes.
3. **FILL:** Ladle hot mincemeat into a hot jar, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Clean jar rim. Center lid on jar and adjust band to fingertight. Place jar on the rack elevated over simmering water (180 degrees F) in boilingwater canner. Repeat until all jars are filled.
4. **PROCESS:** Lower the rack into simmering water. Water must cover jars by 1 inch. Adjust heat to medium-high, cover canner and bring water to a rolling boil. Process pint jars 25 minutes. Turn off heat and remove cover. Let jars cool 5 minutes.

Remove jars from canner; do not retighten bands if loose. Cool 12 hours.
Test seals.
Label and store jars.

Source: Ball, <http://www.freshpreserving.com/recipes/mince>

Variation:

Instead of 2 lbs. of raisins, I like to use a combination of raisins and dried apricots. I rehydrate them with rum before adding them to the pot.

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