

## **CHRISTMAS PEAR & BUTTERSCOTCH MERINGUE TREE**

Gluten Free, Dairy containing  
Low Salicylate & Low Amine

**Serves ~ 30**

### **Ingredients:**

#### **Meringue:**

7 egg whites, room temperature  
1 tsp cream of tartar  
2 cups castor sugar (superfine)

#### **Poached Pear:**

4 large soft pears (or 900g canned)  
3 cups water  
1 vanilla bean

#### **Mascarpone cream:**

500g mascarpone  
2 tblsp thickened cream  
1 tsp vanilla extract

#### **Butterscotch sauce:**

1 cup thickened cream  
60g butter  
2/3 cup brown sugar  
1 tsp vanilla extract

#### **Cashew Praline:**

½ cup castor sugar  
2 tblsp cold water  
¼ cup chopped raw cashews

### **Method:**

Preheat oven to 110°C (220°F)

On baking paper that covers 2 trays, trace out your circles. I used the outline of a nest of mixing bowls. The diameters 26cm, 23cm, 20cm, 17cm, 12 cm, 8cm. Grease the trays and invert the sheets of paper, so the lines show through.

#### **Meringue:**

Beat the 7 egg whites with the cream of tartar until stiff. Gradually add the sugar a half cup at a time, beat for 1-2 minutes between each addition, beat until stiff peaks form. Place the mixture in a piping bag with a plain round nozzle just over 1cm or about a half inch wide. Start in the centre of the circle and pipe a coil from the centre to the edge. Gently spread meringue to cover slight holes. Pipe a small round for the top. Bake in the oven 2 ½ -3 hours until it is dry and the paper peels away easily from the base. When all the meringues are cold, store them in an air-tight container with clean baking paper between each layer.



#### Poached Pear:

Peel the pears and slice them finely. Place the water and split, scraped vanilla bean pod into a saucepan on medium heat and bring to a simmer. Add the pear and simmer with a lid partially covering the pot for 15 minutes. Cool and store pears in the vanilla liquid, in the fridge, until serving time.

#### Butterscotch sauce:

Combine all the ingredients in a saucepan and stir over a medium heat until the mixture is just below the boiling point. Reduce the heat and continue to stir for 5-7 minutes until the sugar is dissolved and it thickens a little bit. Cool and store in the fridge until assembly.

#### Cashew Praline:

Line a flat tray with baking paper. In a saucepan combine the sugar and water and stir over a low heat for 5 minutes, or until the sugar has dissolved. Increase the heat and bring it to the boil. Boil without stirring for 5-7 minutes or until the mixture turns a golden colour. Quickly remove from the stove and stir in the cashews. Pour onto the prepared tray spreading the cashews evenly as you go. Cool completely then break the praline into shards. Store it in an airtight container with baking paper between the layers. Can be stored for up to 3 days, but the closer it is made to serving the less sticky it is.

#### Mascarpone cream:

Place the mascarpone, cream and vanilla into a bowl and whisk until all is combined and smooth.

#### Assembly:

- Assemble this just before serving the Christmas dessert.
- Assemble it on the serving dish.
- Drain the pears in a colander as you don't want too much liquid on the meringues.
- To ensure you have enough mascarpone for each layer, cover each meringue with mascarpone while it sits flat on the baking paper on the bench. Save a little for the top meringue ball.
- Place the largest meringue circle with mascarpone cream on the serving platter. Arrange some of the pears over the base. Drizzle butterscotch sauce over the pears.
- Continue to layer the meringue tree with decreasing sized meringues, mascarpone, pear and butterscotch sauce. Place some mascarpone cream under your top meringue ball and position at the top of the tree. Serve excess butterscotch sauce at the table.
- Take the praline shards and decorate your tree.
- Serve straight away



**Tip when serving:** Take each layer off the tree and cut it up on a spare plate/board before placing it in your guests' bowl.