



Fruit Soup with Figs and Strawberry Garnish

The elegance of this soft gelled fruit soup, served with seasonal fruit belies the ease of preparation. It happens to be gluten-free, fat-free, and sugar-free.

RECIPE NOTE: The combination of aromatics used for the infusing juice is up to you and your personal taste. Here are a few options: ginger, lemongrass, rosemary, lemon thyme, kefir lime leaf, cinnamon, and/or vanilla bean. The soup can also be made with fruit juice alone. When we made this at the Ranch in July, we used strawberries fresh from the farm for the juice and skipped the aromatics. We harvested fresh figs, strawberries, and basil from the farm for the salad topping.

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS:

THE SOUP

1 quart (946ml) no-sugar-added fruit juice, more if needed to adjust consistency
* Options for infusing juice with herbs and spices: lemongrass, rosemary, thyme, citrus zest
2 Tbsp (4g) agar flakes, more if needed to adjust consistency
1-2 tablespoons of sweetener. The strawberries were deliciously sweet, so we didn't use any.

THE GARNISH

1 basket of figs or other fresh fruit- quartered
1 basket of strawberries- quartered
1 handful of basil- chopped

METHOD:

1. In a small pan, heat the fruit juice over medium heat and add the optional aromatics. Bring to a low boil.
2. Boil for 15 minutes for a mild flavor or no infusion, or a few minutes longer for more depth of flavor.
3. Pour the juice through a fine-mesh sieve back into the saucepan, discarding the aromatics.
4. Set aside to cool to room temperature or refrigerate to speed the process.
5. Once cooled, sprinkle the agar flakes on top, but do not stir or heat.
6. Set aside for 10 minutes or longer to allow the agar to soften and dissolve thoroughly.
7. Cook to a simmer over medium-low heat without stirring.
8. At the simmer, whisk, making sure to reach the bottom of the saucepan, releasing any agar that may be stuck.
9. Bring to a full boil over medium-low heat. Reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cover the saucepan loosely, and simmer 5 minutes.
10. Uncover and use a spoon to check the juice for specks of agar, examining a large spoonful. If necessary, cover and simmer longer until the agar is completely dissolved.
11. Remove from heat. Test a small amount for consistency by refrigerating a few spoonfuls for 10-15 minutes. If the gel seems lightly set, pour into a shallow container.
12. Let cool for 10 minutes, refrigerate for 20-30 minutes or until set. If it's too thick for your taste, add more juice. If it's too thin for your taste, add more agar flakes, allow to hydrate, and repeat step 3.
13. Ladle the soup into shallow bowls and refrigerate until set. This will take 20-30 minutes.
14. Garnish with the fruit salad, a few edible flower petals — even chive flowers add an unexpected savory kick.

¡Buen Provecho!