



Eat Drink Play: Try these scrumptious holiday cookies from new cookbooks by Martha Stewart and Tiffany Dahle. F1

BUILD A BETTER

Make your own beignets with help from a chef

By Amber Turpin
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The Harvest Inn is a garden oasis in St. Helena, tucked away and unassuming — a hidden treasure, despite its location on Napa Valley's busy Highway 128.

The on-site restaurant, Harvest Table, makes it easy to never venture off the property. You can taste all that Napa wine right here, and enjoy these must-have beignets, served with seasonal dipping sauces — in this case, an autumnal creme anglaise. Executive chef Chris Kurth puts these treats on the dessert menu, as well as the breakfast and bar menus.

Kurth has a few tricks up his sleeve. Among them: You can make the batter a day ahead. Sealed tightly and refrigerated, "The batter will hold in the fridge for a day, two at the most."

If you have a tabletop fryer, set it to 325 degrees. But a heavy-bot-

tomed cast-iron pot works perfectly well. "I use a 5-quart Le Creuset Dutch oven at home, with the lid off," Kurth says. "You'll have to work in batches as the oil temperature will drop as you add the cool batter, so just do a few at a time."

Like many professional cooks, Kurth uses metric measurements and weighs his ingredients for accuracy. While 320 grams of flour is about 2½ cups and 68 grams of sugar is about 1/3 cup — you can use a conversion tool like www.calculateme.com — you'll get a more accurate measurement if you use a scale.

Beignets

Makes about 2 quarts of batter, enough to create 24 or more beignets

INGREDIENTS

320g all-purpose flour
68g sugar



HARVEST TABLE

Served with an autumnal spiced creme anglaise, these beignets are a specialty at St. Helena's Harvest Table restaurant.

19g baking powder
18g kosher salt
250g buttermilk
67g heavy cream
1 egg
Neutral oil for frying
Powdered sugar

DIRECTIONS

Mix the dry ingredients in a bowl. Mix the wet ingredients in a separate bowl, then add to the dry ingredients and combine until homogenous. Let the batter sit for about 20 minutes.

Fill a heavy-bottomed cast-iron pot with about 2 inches of oil and heat it to 325 degrees. Scoop batter with an ice cream scooper, keeping the scoops golf ball sized, and drop them into the hot oil. They should float in the hot oil.

Move them around to ensure even cooking. Cook until golden brown, watching carefully to prevent burning. Remove from oil with a slotted spoon and set on a drying rack or a paper towel to drain.

To serve, toss beignets in a bowl with a generous amount of powdered sugar and serve with a small bowl of creme anglaise on the side for dipping.

Creme Anglaise

INGREDIENTS

400g milk
2 vanilla beans
150g sugar
200g egg yolks
2g salt
Ground cinnamon, allspice and nutmeg, to taste

DIRECTIONS

Warm the milk in a medium saucepan. Split the vanilla beans and scrape the seeds into the milk, then bring to a light simmer.

In a medium bowl, combine the sugar, egg yolks and salt. Gradually whisk hot milk mixture into the egg yolk mixture, then return the custard to the saucepan and continue to cook until the mixture reaches 180 degrees, stirring constantly. Season with spices, then strain into a glass container and chill.

— Chef Chris Kurth, Harvest Table