

Classic French Peach Melba

If you have never enjoyed the internationally famous and beloved Peach Melba, you need to try it. Peaches are not in season right now, but frozen peaches will produce good results. Make it again in the summer with fresh, ripe peaches for the best results. You can also substitute frozen raspberries instead of fresh ones if necessary.

The Peach Melba is creamy and cool, prepared simply with vanilla ice cream, sugared peaches, and raspberry sauce. The dessert was created by the famous French chef Auguste Escoffier and named after his friend, famous Australian opera singer Nellie Melba. Escoffier was known to offer lavish feasts that often included 11 courses and was even more famous for naming his creations after celebrities.

The story of the invention of the Peach Melba is that it was created for Nellie Melba while she was staying at the Savoy Hotel, where Escoffier was the chef. Nellie gave him tickets to her opera performance, which featured a boat in the shape of a beautiful swan. The next night, Escoffier served Nellie his new creation, a silver dish filled with vanilla ice cream and covered with fresh peaches sitting on an eye-catching swan ice sculpture. He originally named the dessert *Pêche au Cygne*, which means “peach with a swan.” But later, Chef Escoffier recreated the dish while he was working at the Ritz Carlton in London but changed it slightly by removing the swan ice sculpture and topping the peaches with a sweet raspberry purée. This dish was renamed *Pêche Melba*, which means Peach Melba.

Peach Melba can be prepared with endless combinations. You could mix up various ice cream flavors, fruit varieties, and sauces to suit your palate! Other versions substitute pears, apricots, or strawberries instead of peaches or use other sauces or melted red currant jelly instead of raspberry purée. Escoffier is quoted as saying, “Any variation on this recipe ruins the delicate balance of its taste.” Here is Escoffier’s original recipe for the Peach Melba, translated to English from his own words and broken down into simple steps from his autobiography, *Memories of My Life*.

Original Recipe for La Pêche Melba

(for 6)

Chose 6 tender and perfectly ripe peaches. The Montreuil peach, for example, is perfect for this dessert. Blanch the peaches for 2 seconds in boiling water, remove them immediately with a slotted spoon, and place them in iced water for a few seconds. Peel them and place them on a plate, sprinkle them with a little sugar, and refrigerate them. Prepare a liter of very creamy vanilla ice cream and a purée of 250 grams of very fresh ripe raspberries crushed through a fine sieve and mixed with 150 grams of powdered sugar. Refrigerate.

To serve: Fill a silver timbale with the vanilla ice cream. Delicately place the peaches on top of the ice cream and cover with the raspberry purée. Optionally, during the almond season, one can add a few slivers of fresh almonds on top, but never use dried almonds.

This is a dessert you don't often see on restaurant menus. Luckily, it's very easy to make at home!

The Peach Melba is one of the most famous desserts in the world. January 13 is National Peach Melba Day. This simple, sweet combination of peaches and ice cream doesn't fail to please the young and the old! If you haven't tasted this dessert before, today is the perfect day to sample this classic!

(Sources: toriavey.com; United States Department of Agriculture, www.britannica.com; www.cooksinfo.com)

<https://toriavey.com/toris-kitchen/opera-escoffier-and-peaches-the-story-behind-the-peach-melba/>