



## PRICKLY PEAR PAVLOVA WITH ROSE PETALS AND POMEGRANATE SYRUP

Prickly pears were very much a part of my childhood, as most farm houses had a cactus in the garden somewhere, like a pile of green dinner plates balanced on top of each other with the pears around the edges.

Serves 8

Wine pairing: Gabriel Boudier crème de Cassis

- \* 4 extra-large or jumbo free-range egg whites
- \* A pinch of fine salt
- \* 1 ml cream of tartar
- \* 250 g castor sugar, plus extra for sweetening the cream
- \* 15 ml corn flour
- \* 15 ml white wine vinegar
- \* 750 ml fresh cream
- \* 5 ml vanilla extract
- \* 6 ripe prickly pears (these come in white, yellow or red)
- \* Pomegranate syrup
- \* 2 large open roses (use yellow roses for white prickly pears, orange roses for yellow prickly pears and pink roses for red prickly pears)

**P**reheat the oven to 160 °C. Prepare two baking trays by lining them with non-stick baking paper. Mark out a rectangle on each with a pencil, about 22 cm x 8 cm.

**Y**ou will need an electric mixer for this recipe. Also, weigh the mixer's bowl – you will need this for later.

**T**ip the egg whites into the bowl of your mixer. Add the salt and cream of tartar. Start whisking and continue until you have soft peaks. Now add the castor sugar in 50 g increments and continue to whisk well after each addition. When you have added all the sugar, beat well for a while to ensure that all the sugar has dissolved. Add the corn flour and the vinegar and give it a good whisk again. The meringue will now stand up in stiff peaks when you lift out the beater.

**N**ow, having weighed your mixing bowl, you can weigh again so that you have the weight of your mixture which you then divide in two, each portion going on one of the prepared baking trays. Using a spatula, spread the mixture to the edges of your marked-out rectangle, ensuring even thickness throughout.

**P**lace the trays in the oven and turn down the temperature to 140 °C. Bake for 40 minutes, plus another 5 minutes if you feel it necessary. The interior of the meringue will still be soft. Switch off the oven, and wedge open the door using a wooden spoon.

**W**hen cold, the two meringues can be kept, wrapped in aluminium foil, until required.

**W**hip the cream for the filling, sweeten it slightly with castor sugar and add the vanilla extract. Keep half in a separate bowl for the top of the dessert.

**P**lace the one meringue layer on your serving dish of choice. Chop half the prickly pears into chunks and add them to one half of the cream and spread onto the meringue layer. Place the other meringue layer on top and decorate with the remaining cream (to the edges) and the remainder of the prickly pears cut into slices. Dribble over pomegranate syrup and sprinkle over the rose petals, then serve.