Lemon Posset with Shortbread

Make-ahead · Serves a crowd · Serves 4–6

Ken's note: TBD

A traditional English dessert: lemon cream set in small glasses, silky as a custard with no eggs or gelatin, served with buttery shortbread. The acid in the lemon juice sets the hot cream. Make both a day or two ahead.

Ingredients

Lemon posset

- 2 cups heavy cream
- ⅔ cup sugar
- Zest of 2 large lemons
- ⅓ cup fresh lemon juice (2–3 lemons)
- Berries, a mint leaf, or a dollop of whipped cream, to serve (optional)

Classic shortbread (makes 12–16)

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- ⅓ cup sugar, plus more for sprinkling
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ tsp fine sea salt

Method

1. For the posset, set out 4–6 small glasses or ramekins (4–6 oz each). Combine the cream, sugar, and lemon zest in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Boil exactly 3 minutes, stirring often so it doesn't scorch. Remove from the heat, stir in the lemon juice, and let stand 10–15 minutes. Strain into a pitcher, divide among the glasses, and refrigerate at least 4 hours or overnight, until set to a thick, spoonable custard. Serve cold, with shortbread.
2. For the shortbread, heat the oven to 325°F and line a baking sheet with parchment (or use an 8- or 9-inch square pan). Beat the butter and sugar until light and fluffy, 2–3 minutes. Add the flour and salt and mix just until the dough comes together; it will be slightly crumbly but should hold when pressed.
3. For cookies, roll the dough ½ inch thick, cut into rounds or rectangles, and set 1 inch apart on the sheet. For slab shortbread, press it evenly into the pan, prick with a fork, and score into squares. Chill 15–20 minutes, sprinkle with sugar, and bake 20–25 minutes for cookies or 25–30 minutes for the slab, until the edges are barely golden and the centers are pale. Cool cookies on the sheet for 5 minutes before moving to a rack; recut the slab along the score lines while warm. Stored airtight, shortbread keeps a week or more. Lemon zest or finely chopped nuts are good in the dough.