

PERSIMMONS and PEARS with BLUE CHEESE and SPICY PECANS

Serves 4

Persimmons don't seem to get the credit they deserve, and I guess that's because, at first look, they don't seem to be bringing a whole lot to the table. Not particularly sweet, there's no acid to speak of, and the texture is best described as soft. But... I love them. I love their bright orange color, their vaguely winter-squash-like flavor, and their slightly tannic skin. I love that they get along with just about every other fruit, and most of all, I love how their demure honey-like sweetness and velvety texture come out to play when blanketed in some funky, salty, creamy cheese.

1 cup pecans

2 tablespoons maple syrup

1 teaspoon Aleppo pepper

1 tablespoon olive oil, plus more for drizzling

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 Bosc pears, cored and thinly sliced 2 persimmons, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar

3 ounces firm blue cheese, such as Valdeón or Bayley Hazen Blue, thinly sliced or crumbled

1. Combine the pecans, maple syrup, and Aleppo pepper in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook, stirring constantly, until the maple syrup bubbles, reduces, and crystallizes around the pecans, 5 to 8 minutes. They will look all white and fuzzy with an even layer of crystallized sugar coating each nut—this is what you want. Add the olive oil and remove from the heat; season with salt and pepper, and let cool completely before coarsely chopping the pecans.
2. Scatter the pears and persimmons around a large serving platter or bowl and drizzle with the vinegar and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper, and finish with the pecans and blue cheese.