

Bea's Apple Crisp

From *Pure Dessert* (Artisan, 2007) by Alice Medrich

By the 1970's my mother's magnificent double-crusting Thanksgiving apple pie—perfected during my little girlhood—gave way to a series of lighter, simpler experiments. Around the turn of the twenty first century, The Pie became The Crisp. You might assume that The Crisp is best served warm or at room temperature. But I especially love it cold, even after two or three or four days in the fridge! Whipped cream on top is always nice, but not essential.

The skins left on the apples actually add flavor and body to the juices, as do the dried apricots and orange zest. If some or all of the apples are red (but crisp and at least a little on the tart side), the filling will have a beautiful rosy hue. Chunks rather than wedges are the preferred cut, because small squares of apple skin are pleasant to eat while long thin pieces only suggest that the cook was lazy instead of smart like a fox.

Ingredients for the topping:

- 1/2 cup (2.25 ounces) all-purpose unbleached flour
- 1/2 (1.85 ounces) cup rolled oats
- Scant 1 cup (3.5 ounces) coarsely chopped walnut pieces
- 1/2 cup (3.5 ounces) sugar
- 5 tablespoons (2.5 ounces) unsalted butter, melted
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

For the filling:

- Grated zest and juice of 1 bright skinned orange, preferably unsprayed or organic
- 1/2 cup (2 1/2 ounces) dried apricots, coarsely chopped
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup sugar, depending on the tartness of the apples
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 6 medium sized, crisp flavorful apples with a decent balance of sweetness and acidity (I have used all or a mixture of pippins, granny smiths, sierra beauties, and new crop jonathans)
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream, lightly sweetened and whipped, optional for serving

Equipment:

- 2 quart baking dish

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Liberally butter the baking dish.

To make the topping: Combine all of the ingredients and mix well. Set aside.

To make the filling: in a medium saucepan, combine the orange zest, juice, and chopped apricots, and bring to a simmer, and cook until the apricots are soft. Set aside.

In a large bowl, mix the sugar and cinnamon. Halve and core the apples. Lay each half cut side down and cut twice in each directly to make 9 chunks. Add the chunks to the bowl and toss apples with the sugar and cinnamon. Stir in the apricots and juice from the saucepan.

Scrape the mixture into the buttered baking dish and spread evenly. Distribute the crumbly topping evenly over the apples. Bake until the crisp is browned on top and the juices are bubbling and thickened, about 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 hours. Serve warm, cool or cold, with or without very lightly sweetened whipped cream. Serves 6-8.