

## **Bananas Foster Showtime!**

Even if you work in a professional kitchen and wear a chef's coat you are capable of some pretty idiotic stunts and there are moments that are best kept behind the scenes. Every restaurant experiences them even if they won't admit it. I'm speaking of embarrassments...sometimes big ones.

One of mine came making Bananas Foster when I ignited the fumes from vaporized 151 rum. I got a great flame. I mean to tell you, those responsible for the great Chicago fire of 1871 would have been proud of me. Fortunately no one in the kitchen panicked or screamed. After we put out the fire in the paper towel dispenser on the wall things preceded relatively well with the rest of the dessert prep.

What was the punch line on the old joke? How do I get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, kid...practice. The same applies to new cooking techniques and I found that out the hard way. If you are going to prepare any new dish, take it from a guy who learns most things by experience, don't prepare it for the first time under pressure. You'll appreciate the confidence you gain from having made the dish prior to the big dinner party.

Bananas Foster was first prepared at Brennan's Restaurant in New Orleans by Chef Paul Blangé in 1951. The recipe was to honor his friend Richard Foster, owner of Crescent City's Foster Awning Company. It has become one of those classic desserts over the years made in a variety of ways but this recipe is touted as the one that started it all. The dessert is not only really delicious but it offers you an opportunity to put on quite a show for those you are preparing it for.

### **Bananas Foster**

(Serves 4)

Assemble before you start:

1 cup dark brown sugar

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

4 tablespoons crème de banana liqueur

4 bananas, peeled and halved lengthwise, then crosswise

4 tablespoons white rum; Bacardi 151 works very well.

Vanilla bean ice cream; use a really good one!

This recipe can be prepared at your stove to completion or on a portable gas burner system if you want to do so at the table for your diners' entertainment. These systems are available anywhere that supplies caterers such as GFS Stores.

1. Put sugar, butter, and cinnamon into a medium sized, heavy-bottomed skillet and heat over medium-low heat, stirring often with a wooden spoon, until sugar and

butter melt and sauce becomes smooth, 3 or 4 minutes. Add banana liqueur and stir well.

2. Add bananas, cut side down, to skillet and cook, spooning sauce over them frequently, until bananas begin to soften and their edges begin to brown, about 10 minutes. Gently turn bananas and cook on second side for 1 minute more. Add rum and heat for 5 to 10 seconds at medium-high, then carefully ignite sauce with a kitchen match. When flames die out, remove skillet from the heat.



3. Divide bananas between 2 wide dessert dishes; add a scoop of ice cream to each dish, and spoon sauce over ice cream and bananas.

This dessert has always been a great favorite for dinner parties and there's a festive nature to the whole thing, which your guests will love. I've also served this dish to children by substituting real vanilla extract (2 tablespoons for 4 servings) for the banana liqueur and skipping the rum flambé. There will be some obvious differences in the flavor and appearance, however I've never seen anything but smiling faces as they dig in.

This past week was a really good one for discovering new wines for the holiday season and I've got to tell you about a tasting that set a new high water mark a few days ago. One of our wine contacts, Rob, dropped in with a stunning collection of Spanish wines that made even a crusty old wine taster like me excited.

I've always loved wines made with the Grenache grape for their lush fruit character and brilliant opulence but the **2003 Borsao Tres Picos Garnacha** provided me a taste experience that was amazing. This luscious red boasts a deep ruby/purple color, full body, and wonderful kirsch liqueur and plum aromas and flavors. The berry is interwoven with hints of licorice as well as a beautiful peppery finish.

The winemaker at Bodegas Borsao nailed it with this red and it is priced to sell in case quantities for serious wine drinkers who love a spectacular red. Snarf this one up and you will be able to easily enjoy it over the next 2 to 3 years.

While I was still reeling from the great red wines in the tasting Ray pulled out the finest Spanish sherry I've had the pleasure to taste in 27 years in the wine business. The Alvear 1927 Pedro Ximenez Solera possesses a dark, rich amber tint as well as an intoxicating bouquet of toasty crème brûlée. You'll also note hints of roasted almonds, marmalade, and real maple syrup. Don't miss read what I'm describing as this wine is not cloyingly sweet by any means.

I would have expected something this rich and flavorful to be overly sweet and heavy, but it is not. Someone who enjoys mostly dry wines would easily enjoy this one and if you prefer sippers after a meal with a sweeter character, you'll positively "blast off" when you taste this magnificent creation. I know I may sound like I'm a bit over-the-top on this sherry but it really is that good.

Please let us know if you have any questions at 888-288-0668 or visit us on the web at [www.winedog.com](http://www.winedog.com). Have a scary weekend and cheers!