

# An Attempt to Eat Locally

by Katy Woods - August 13, 2012

Today, we take for granted the varieties of foods we can buy anytime of the year at our local supermarket. We can buy Madagascar vanilla in Virginia. Bananas, once exotic, are now seen as an everyday fruit on the breakfast table. It seems like we have no limit to what food we can purchase whenever we want it. But what would happen if we had to eat locally? Meals especially desserts would take much more time.



Now let's travel back in time to July 30, 1794: A mild, but foggy day with a temperature around 71°F. On a summer day, perhaps Adrien Petit would have considered making homemade ice cream for Jefferson and his family. Who was Adrien Petit? From 1785 to 1794, a French maître d'hôtel was administrator of the entire household staff and was responsible for the purchase of food and supplies for the household. Because he selected the provisions at market and oversaw the dessert course, he was also expected to have culinary talents (Jefferson once wrote that "indispensable qualifications" for a maître d'hôtel were "honesty and skill in making the dessert.") Petit's recipes for coffee and ice cream, for instance, were preserved. Petit made his ice cream using three basic ingredients: eggs, cream, and sugar. The eggs and cream he could have gathered from the farm animals, but Petit would have to buy the sugar and vanilla. At around 6 pm, Jefferson might enjoy his ice cream with a cup of Indonesian coffee or tea. Jefferson may also have enjoyed fruits such as figs at this time of the year. In a 1794 letter to George Wythe, Jefferson wrote:

“...I ever wish to have opportunity of enjoying your society, knowing your fondness for figs, I have daily wished you could have partaken of ours this year. I never saw so great a crop, & they are still abundant of three kinds which I brought from France...”



Today at Monticello, the gardens are home to a variety of fig trees including the Brown Turkey fig, which has a bright pink center and light brown skin. A bite into these sweet fruits will have you asking for more.

Inspired by Jefferson, I created a dessert comprised of a chocolate coffee sauce, a modern version of Adrien Petit's ice cream recipe, and figs from Monticello's gardens. The chocolate coffee sauce has a delicate and sweet taste. It is light paired with Jefferson's ice cream recipe, which is much thicker than what we think of ice cream today. It is comparable to custard. I will admit I bought the cream, eggs, sugar, coffee, and chocolate from the grocery store since I do not know how to milk a cow nor do I own chickens or a large plantation to grow such ingredients. I snuck in some vanilla because unlike in Jefferson's times, I have easy access to vanilla. As I already mentioned, the figs did come from Monticello. Can you see though how hard it is already for me to eat completely local or using ingredients I grow myself?



Even though it is near impossible in our day and age to eat completely local, we can try to and support our local farmers by eating their food. The Heritage Harvest Festival at Monticello celebrates those local farmers and wishes to pass on the knowledge of modern homesteading.

On September 14th and 15th's Heritage Harvest Festival, there will be more than 60 premium workshops and 25 free workshops. Visitors will be able to taste apples, learn how to make sourdough bread, listen to a chicken whisperer, or watch chefs cook on the West Lawn of Monticello. Whatever you may be interested in; there is something here for you. Following in Jefferson's footsteps, the festival emphasizes the importance of healthy, local food. If you would like to sign up for any of these workshops, please visit the Heritage Harvest Festival's website.

## **Roasted Fig and Vanilla Ice Cream with Chocolate Coffee Sauce**

*Adrien Petit's Modern Vanilla Ice Cream*

6 egg yolks

1 cup sugar

Pinch of salt

1 quart heavy cream

2 teaspoons vanilla



1. In a large heat proof bowl, beat egg yolks until thick and lemon colored. Gradually add 1 cup sugar and a pinch of salt. Set aside.
2. Over medium heat, bring to a boil 1 quart of cream, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to medium-low. Add egg mixture. Continue to cook until mixture thickens.
3. Once mixture has thickened, remove from heat and strain through a fine sieve in a bowl. Let cool completely. Once cool, add 2 teaspoons vanilla. Place in electric ice cream maker and follow manufacturer's directions.

*Chocolate Coffee Sauce*

¾ cup sugar

1 ½ cups brewed coffee

½ cup heavy cream

3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa

1. Over medium heat, bring sugar and coffee to a boil, stirring constantly until sugar is dissolved. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until mixture has reduced to 1/3 cup.
2. Remove from heat and cool briefly. Stir in heavy cream. Place over low heat; bring to a simmer, stirring constantly. Stir in cocoa. Let cool before serving.

### *Roasted Figs*

10-12 Brown Turkey figs, stems removed and halved lengthwise

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

½ teaspoon sugar

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. In a small bowl, melt the butter. Stir in sugar and vanilla until the sugar dissolves.

2. Place the figs in a single layer in a baking dish. Pour butter mixture over figs. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes.

On a dessert plate, arrange figs into a star or any arrangement you prefer. Scoop two dollops of ice cream onto plate. Drizzle coffee sauce and remaining butter mixture from fig dish onto dessert.

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### ADDRESS:

931 Thomas Jefferson Parkway

Charlottesville, VA 22902

### GENERAL INFORMATION:

(434) 984-9800