Sauces / Italy

Agrodolce

Sicily's sweet-sour reduction — red wine vinegar and sugar cooked together until they thicken to a syrup, then sharpened with pine nuts and raisins or aromatics. It glazes game birds and pork with a mahogany lacquer and a flavor that swings between caramel and acid before settling into something ancient and complex.

Time 25 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- [ ] 3 parts Granulated sugar
- [ ] 3 parts Red wine vinegar
- [ ] 1 part Extra-virgin olive oil
- [ ] 2 parts Shallots or red onion, thinly sliced
- [ ] 1 part Raisins (golden or dark)
- [ ] 0.5 part Pine nuts, lightly toasted
- [ ] 2 parts Dry white wine
- [ ] 1 sprig Fresh rosemary sprig
- [ ] 1 to taste Fine salt and black pepper

Let's make it.

01 Warm the olive oil in a wide saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the sliced shallots and the rosemary sprig. Cook gently, stirring occasionally, for 6-8 minutes until the shallots are completely soft, translucent, and just beginning to take on a light golden color. They must not brown — agrodolce's sweetness comes from the sugar, not caramelized onion.

02 Pour in the white wine and let it bubble and reduce by half over medium heat, 3-4 minutes. Add the raisins. Continue simmering until the wine is nearly evaporated and the raisins have plumped in the liquid. The pan will look jammy and slightly reduced.

03 Add the sugar to the pan and stir for 30 seconds until it begins to dissolve in the heat of the base. Pour in the red wine vinegar all at once — it will bubble sharply. Stir to combine and simmer over medium heat for 8-10 minutes until the sauce reduces to a syrupy consistency that coats a spoon. Taste throughout: the ratio of sweet to sour should feel balanced, not one-sided.

04 Off the heat, fold in the toasted pine nuts and season with salt and black pepper. The salt will sharpen the sweet-sour contrast dramatically — taste after each pinch. Remove the rosemary sprig. Serve warm over duck, pork tenderloin, pan-roasted chicken thighs, or roasted winter squash.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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