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One of the best ways to make a house into a home is to invite some friends over for a meal. If you try this recipe, let me know how it turns out for you. And if you have a favorite recipe of your own, send it my way.

Baked Pears with Almond Crunch

We haven't done dessert in a while, so here's something to tempt your sweet tooth. This comes from a neat cookbook Jill picked up recently, *The Smart Diet* from Better Homes & Gardens. It's got all kinds of flavorful and healthy recipes.

2 medium-sized pears, ripe but firm,
peeled, halved, and cored
1/2 cup sweet wine
1/2 cup crushed amaretti cookies
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1. Place the pear halves, cut side up, in a 2-quart square baking dish. Pour wine over pears.
2. In a sealable plastic bag, combine the cookies, brown sugar and cinnamon. Crush the cookies with your hands and shake to mix in the spices. Sprinkle over the pears.
3. Bake uncovered for 20 minutes at 350 or until pears are tender.
4. Place in serving dishes and top with vanilla ice cream if desired.

This is a very simple recipe, but here are a few tips to make it even smoother for you:

- If the pears at the store are a bit too firm, keep them on the counter in a paper bag for a day or two to ripen.
- If you can't find amaretti, you can use a less exotic cookies like Almond Windmills.
- Use a sweet wine like Madeira, Sherry, or Riesling. I especially like using Port for the rich deep color & flavor. And it's quite alright to use the cheap stuff!
- Feel free to add a little extra brown sugar or cinnamon. The best part is when the crushed cookie mix and the wine mix into a thickened sauce.



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