

# Sweet Variations on Simple Sabayon

With just eggs, sugar, and wine, you can create an elegant, pudding-like dessert in five minutes



*An elegant make-ahead dessert. Serve chilled lemon sabayon sandwiched between shortbread cookies and paired with blueberry sauce.*

BY BERNICE FEHRINGER

**L**earning to make sabayon means never having to say you're sorry about having no dessert to offer your guests. To make this warm, rich, pudding-like dessert, you need just three ingredients and about five minutes. Best of all, the ingredients—eggs, sugar, and wine—are almost always on hand.

Sabayon originated in northern Italy, where it's called *zabaglione* and is traditionally made with Marsala wine. But sabayon, the French name for the dessert, can be prepared with a variety of wines or other liquids, making it quite versatile. There's just one caveat: to get the right texture—thick but light and frothy—you must cook sabayon carefully.

The classic sabayon is prepared at the last minute. At some restaurants, a well-trained staff member prepares it tableside, whisking the ingredients together in a copper pan over a small flame. Though you don't need the fanfare, you do need to serve your sabayon immediately after cooking it because it won't hold long. If this immediacy intimidates, you can prepare a chilled sabayon that will hold for hours in the refrigerator. But to make a chilled sabayon, you must first make the classic warm one. (Follow the methods on pp. 76–77.)

**The equipment needed to make sabayon is minimal.** I prefer to use a light whisk with many wires; the wires help incorporate the air into the sabayon, and the light weight lets me lift the whisk out of the bowl—another way to bring in air—without getting tired.

An unlined copper bowl is traditionally used because it heats evenly, but I've always used a stainless-steel bowl, and it works just fine. You'll set the bowl over a saucepan of simmering water, so choose a bowl and saucepan that fit together well. You want the most surface area of the bowl exposed to the water below, but the bowl shouldn't actually touch the water. If your bowl moves around too much, put a thin, wet towel between the saucepan and the bowl to help keep the bowl in place.

#### VARIATIONS ON A SABAYON THEME

I learned to appreciate sabayon's versatility during my stint as a pastry chef at Arrows restaurant in Ogunquit, Maine, where the desserts change daily. Here are some ideas for variations.

**Change the liquid, change the flavor.** Replace the Marsala with Champagne or Grand Marnier and you get a completely different dessert. Use less liquid if it has a strong flavor. If you're using an especially sweet liquid, such as port, cut back a little on the sugar.

You can also try citrus juices instead of alcohol. I especially like fresh lemon juice. To mellow its



*Champagne retains its sparkle in a sweet sabayon. Spoon chilled Champagne sabayon over fresh berries for a dramatic and refreshing combination.*

tartness, I whisk in some butter as a final step (see recipe on p. 76).

**Chilled sabayon lasts longer and tastes lighter.** Though sabayon is easy to make, there are times when you don't want to leave anything to chance. That's where chilled sabayon comes in. Simply cool the sabayon over a bowl filled with ice and fold in whipped cream (see method on p. 77).

**Chilled is cool, but so is hot.** Sabayon gratinée was always a hit at Arrows. Layer warm sabayon over fresh fruit—berries work especially well—and toasted nuts, if you like. Sprinkle the sabayon with a little sugar and heat under a broiler until the sugar begins to brown. The sugar forms a thin, crisp layer over the sabayon. For an even richer dessert, try my Baked Chocolate Sabayon (recipe on p. 77), which looks like a soufflé. You can top it with ice cream, whipped cream—or perhaps a chilled sabayon.

# Making the classic sabayon



**1 Sabayon begins with egg yolks.** Pour the yolks into a stainless-steel or copper bowl that's been cleaned of any green oxide. Add the sugar, a little at a time. Whisk the yolks and sugar until the mixture is light in color and air has been incorporated. Add the wine.



**2 A double boiler beats the heat.** Bring some water to a simmer in a saucepan. Set the bowl over the water, but make sure it doesn't touch the water or you'll end up with scrambled eggs. To ensure a smooth, light texture, whisk continuously throughout the cooking process.



**3 Strive for ribbons, avoid lumps.** Whisk until the sabayon becomes frothy and thick, scraping the sides and bottom of the bowl. Remove the sabayon from the heat just as ribbons start to trail off the whisk. Continue to whisk for another minute to help set the sabayon. Serve immediately.

## Don't overcook

*Overcooked sabayon can't be saved. Either this sabayon was cooked too long, or the heat was too high. You want to heat the yolks enough to make the eggs' proteins bond—but not into a solid mass.*



## Classic Marsala Sabayon

This sweet dessert also goes by the name *zabaglione*. Yields 4½ cups; serves six (with fruit, serves eight).

8 large egg yolks  
½ cup sugar  
½ cup Marsala wine

Bring a saucepan of water to a simmer. In a large stainless-steel or copper bowl, whisk the egg yolks and sugar

together quickly and thoroughly. Stir in the wine. Set the bowl over the simmering water. Continue to whisk briskly until the mixture is thick and frothy, about 5 min. Remove from the heat, whisk gently for 1 min., and serve.

## Chilled Champagne Sabayon

This is my favorite sabayon. You don't need expensive Champagne to get great results. Yields 6 cups; serves eight.

8 large egg yolks  
½ cup sugar  
¾ cup Champagne  
1 cup heavy cream, whipped to soft peaks

Follow the method for classic sabayon (above), and then continue with the method for chilled sabayon (at right).

## Chilled Lemon Sabayon

To enjoy this sabayon warm, serve it after the butter has been incorporated. Try the chilled version with Chilled Blueberry Sauce and Shortbread Cookies (recipes at right). Yields 5¼ cups; serves six to eight.

4 large eggs  
4 large yolks  
Juice from 4 lemons (about 1 cup)  
¾ cup sugar  
4 oz. (8 Tbs.) room-temperature butter, cut into small pieces  
½ cup heavy cream, whipped to soft peaks

Follow the method for classic sabayon (above), adding the whole eggs along with the egg yolks, sugar, and lemon juice.

After you've taken the sabayon from the heat and whisked another minute, gently whisk in the butter a little at a time until it's completely incorporated. If the butter melts immediately, stop adding it and whisk the sabayon a little longer to cool it to tepid. Continue with the method for chilled sabayon (above right).



A sabayon can stand on its own. The classic is made with Marsala wine and served warm.

## Two steps to chilled sabayon

### Chilled Blueberry Sauce

This sauce pairs well with the Chilled Lemon Sabayon, but you can use it to top any chilled version. If you use frozen blueberries, decrease the water to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup. *Yields 1½ cups.*

*2½ cups fresh blueberries (or frozen, thawed, and drained)*  
*1 Tbs. water*  
*¾ cup sugar*  
*2 tsp. lemon juice*

Combine 1 cup of the blueberries, the water, sugar, and lemon juice in small, nonaluminum saucepan. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until the sugar has dissolved and mixture is boiling, about 4 min. Remove from the heat. Stir in the remaining blueberries. Refrigerate for 3 to 24 hours. Serve well chilled.

### Shortbread Cookies

*Yields 16 cookies.*

*9 oz. (2 cups) all-purpose flour*  
*2¼ oz. (½ cup) confectioners' sugar*  
*¼ tsp. salt*  
*8 oz. (16 Tbs.) unsalted butter cut into small pieces, kept cold*

Heat the oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with foil or kitchen parchment.

In an electric mixer, combine the flour, sugar, and salt; mix 30 seconds to blend. Add the butter and blend on a slow speed until the dough just comes together, about 2 min.

Roll out the dough about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick on a lightly floured surface. (If the dough is too sticky, refrigerate it for 30 min. before continuing.) Stamp out eight cookies with a 3½-inch round cookie cutter; arrange the rounds on a baking sheet 1½ inches apart. Chill the dough scraps until ready to use for a second batch. Bake the cookies until the edges are lightly browned, about 12 to 14 min. Remove from oven; let sit 3 min., and then carefully transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Repeat with the leftover dough to make eight more cookies.

### Baked Chocolate Sabayon

You can chill the cooked sabayon for up to 1½ hours before the final baking. If you do, add 5 minutes to the baking time. *Yields 4 cups; serves eight.*

*7 large eggs*  
*3 large egg yolks*  
*¾ cup sugar*  
*2 Tbs. dark rum*  
*4 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped fine (about ⅔ cup)*

Heat oven to 375°. Follow the method for classic sabayon (at left). Take the sabayon off the heat and gently whisk in the chocolate. Divide the warm sabayon among eight 4-oz. ovenproof ramekins or molds. Bake until the sabayons are puffed and the sides are springy when lightly touched, about 12 to 14 min. (The center should still be soft; it will jiggle slightly when shaken.) Serve immediately.

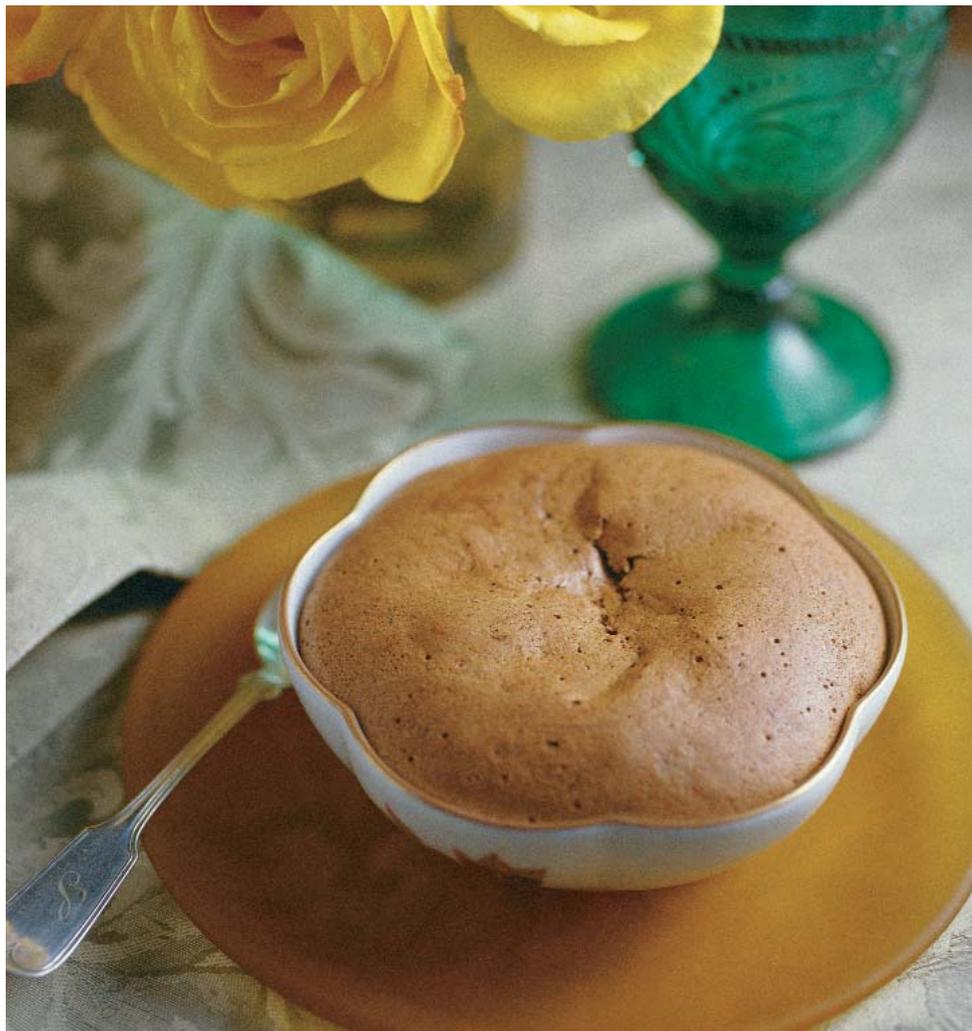
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**1** *Have a big bowl of ice ready. Set the bowl of warm sabayon on the ice. Whisk the sabayon over the ice periodically for about ten minutes. Quick cooling keeps bacteria at bay and allows you to add the whipped cream with no danger of curdling the cream.*

**2** *Whipped cream lightens the sabayon's taste and texture. Gently fold cream that has been whipped to soft peaks into the chilled sabayon. Refrigerate at least 1½ hours before serving. A chilled sabayon can hold up to 24 hours, but it's best served the same day.*



*Baked sabayon has a pudding-like middle. Top it with ice cream—or another sabayon.*