

Dessert



KUDZU SORBET

Serves 4

- 2 cups dry white wine
- 2 cups water
- 1³/₄ cups sugar
- 2 cups kudzu blossoms
- 1 ounce licorice root, minced
- 1 pinch cayenne pepper

Place the wine, water, and sugar in a saucepan and bring to a boil. When this is boiling, add the kudzu blossoms, licorice root, and cayenne pepper and boil for only 1 minute more. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool. Cover the pan with plastic wrap and leave overnight to infuse the flavors. The next day, strain the mixture, place it in an ice cream maker, and process according to the manufacturer's directions.

For those without an ice cream maker: Transfer the strained mixture to a glass baking dish. Freeze the mixture until firm, stirring occasionally, for about five hours. Break the sorbet into large pieces and purée it in a food processor until smooth and creamy. Cover and freeze until firm. Let the sorbet stand at room temperature for 5 minutes before serving. (Recipe courtesy of José Gutiérrez, formerly at Chez Philippe in Memphis, Tennessee)



Photo by © Ben Fink

Kudzu (*Pueraria montana*) was first brought to the U.S. from Japan for an ornamental plant display at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The plant caught on with gardeners and was also planted for erosion control during the 1930s. Kudzu grows at an alarming pace in the warm, wet climate of the southeastern U.S., smothering any shrubs or trees in its path.