

# WOODFIRED LIFE

## SMOKER



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To continue improving my skills, I will be taking a BBQ class this summer which includes smoking. I'm hoping to pick up some insider tips and tricks—and of course, I'll be sharing plenty of photos and lessons learned. One of the most exciting parts of the course? We'll be barbecuing a whole hog. Don't be surprised if you see a 4-foot-deep, 4-foot-high, 5-foot-long structure pop up in my backyard soon!

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This vertical smoker is my newest wood-fired acquisition—and an exciting addition to my outdoor kitchen. I didn't grow up smoking meats, nor do I have family members who passed down their secrets. Still, I felt compelled to dive into the world of smoking and make it part of my cooking repertoire.

We bought the smoker used, and it needed some TLC. I spent countless hours cleaning it, removing built-up grime, and repairing rusted areas until it was finally ready for action. From there, I dove headfirst into learning—reading articles, watching tutorials, and soaking up every bit of smoking wisdom I could find. I found Michael Symon's *Playing with Fire* cookbook one of the most inspirational and one I return to often.

My first cook was brisket. Managing the heat was by far the most challenging part, but I was proud to keep the temperature steady for the entire duration. The end result wasn't perfect, but it was promising—and incredibly rewarding.

I especially like this vertical smoker because of its space efficiency. It fits neatly into my wood-fired kitchen and features multiple shelves, allowing me to cook large quantities of food without taking up too much room.





# THE FLAMBADOU

## A FIERY TOOL OF CULINARY TRADITION



If I'm going to cook with fire, I'm going to use every trick in the book to make sure the food I serve is not only delicious, but elevated—something memorable and a little bit wild. That's exactly why I fell in love with the flambadou.

The flambadou was one of my very first fun wood-fired tools, a very special gift from my parents. I first heard about it while listening to Mark Goston's *Wood Fired Oven* podcast—Season 1, Episode 3, to be exact. The way he described it had me hooked. This cone-shaped iron device, glowing red-hot in the flames, lets you pour flaming fat over your food. It's like a dragon spitting fire—just take one look at it in action and you'll understand the magic.

Traditionally used in French cuisine, especially in regions like Gascony, the flambadou adds a level of drama and flavor that few tools can match. After heating it in the coals, you drop in a chunk of lard or fat, which instantly melts and ignites. Then you tilt the flambadou over your roast, and the flaming fat sears and bastes the meat, locking in flavor and adding a crispy, smoky finish.

For me, it's more than just a cool effect—it's a way to connect with fire cooking on a deeper level. Using the flambadou feels ancient and theatrical, but it also brings a burst of flavor that's modern and bold. It's a perfect example of how traditional tools can still surprise us—and why cooking over fire never gets old.





# RECIPE

## PASSION FRUIT SOUFFLÉ IN THE WOOD-FIRED OVEN

Recipe adapted for the wood-fired oven by: Vanessa Niño

When I first began using my wood-fired oven, quite a few people told me I wouldn't be able to pull off more delicate dishes—especially ones that require precision and a gentle touch. But I think I've managed to prove them wrong, particularly with my soufflé.

I don't recall exactly who first shared the recipe with me, but I've since adapted it to suit the conditions of a live-fire oven. Instead of relying on residual heat, I bake the soufflé while the fire is still burning. To protect it from the direct flames, I build a small barrier with bricks inside the oven. Surprisingly, it worked beautifully from the very first try. The top tends to caramelize a bit more than it would in a conventional oven, but I find that it adds a unique and appealing twist to the final dish.

### INGREDIENTS

Unsalted butter, softened, for ramekins  
½ cup granulated sugar (plus more for ramekins)  
½ cup whole milk  
1 Tbsp cornstarch  
1/3 cup passion fruit puree  
4 large egg whites  
¼ tsp freshly squeezed lemon juice  
Confectioner's sugar for dusting  
1 passion fruit halved, seeds and pulp removed for serving

### PREPARATION

Oven should be at least at 425°F (or 220°C)  
Butter ramekins and sprinkle with granulated sugar. Place on baking sheet, refrigerate until needed.

Bring milk to a simmer, whisk together cornstarch and 1/3 of the passion fruit puree until smooth.

While continuing to whisk, slowly pour half the hot milk over passion fruit mixture, whisk until incorporated. Return passion fruit mixture to pan, and cook, whisking constantly over medium heat until mixture thickens (1-2 minutes). Remove from heat and whisk until just combined.

With a spatula, gently fold the remaining egg white mixture until just incorporated.

Evenly divide the mixture among prepared ramekins, gently smoothing tops with the back of a spoon.

Bake until puffed and lightly golden (12-14 minutes). The surface of the soufflé should be firm with centers that are slightly runny. Remove from oven and dust tops with confectioners' sugar. Top with passion fruit seeds and pulp, serve immediately.

