

English Plum Pudding aka Christmas Pudding

Adapted from a recipe by Julia Child



CAKE

- 3 cups packed coarse fresh breadcrumbs from white bread (aka 1/2 lb. loaf, crusts on). I use Pepperidge Farm.
- 1 cup dark raisins
- 1 cup golden raisins
- 1 cup currants
- 1 1/3 cup sugar (aka 1/2 lb)
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon mace
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
- 1/2 lb (2 sticks) melted unsalted butter, plus more for greasing
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 4 large eggs
- a few drops of almond extract
- 1/2 cup bitter orange marmalade
- 1/2 cup bourbon or dark rum

HARD SAUCE

- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 10 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 tablespoons brandy or cognac

THE BIG FINALE

- 1 cup rum (or brandy) to flambé

SPECIALTY EQUIPMENT: 8-cup capacity steamed pudding mold (or small bowl) & small rack that fits into a tall stockpot, or some way to keep the mold off the bottom of the pot.

Tear bread into pieces and place in the bowl of a food processor. Pulse to form rough crumbs. Empty the crumbs into very large bowl. Add the raisins and currants to the food processor and process until finely chopped, but not turned into a paste (that's too much). Turn the fruit out into the bowl with the bread. Put all of the other ingredients into the food processor and pulse to mix. Pour all that over the bread and fruit. Stir to thoroughly mix.

Butter an 8-cup capacity steamed pudding mold (or medium-size bowl). Pack pudding into mold and top with a parchment round on surface. Cover tightly.

Place on rack in a deep stockpot or use other solution to keep the mold off the bottom of the pot. Pour water into the stockpot to come 1/3 of the depth of the mold (not in the mold, you understand, but surrounding it). Bring water to a simmer. Cover tightly and steam for 6 hours. Check to make sure that your water has not evaporated from time to time and add more if it does.

When done, remove the mold to a rack and bring it to room temperature. Cover tightly and store in the refrigerator for a week, or even better, a month...or dare I say...longer. It keeps.

When you are ready to serve, make the hard sauce. It's basically a boozy buttercream. Just beat the powdered sugar and soft butter together until fluffy. Then beat in the salt and booze. Transfer to serving bowl and chill.

Plum Pudding should be served warm. To unmold it, bring it to room temperature again and warm the mold slightly. In fact you can reheat it completely in simmering water in the mold OR perhaps even easier, turn the pudding out onto a deep plate. Cover the pudding with vented plastic wrap and reheat it in the microwave until very warm.

For the big finale, you set it on fire. The fancy term for this is flambe.

Here's how to do it. Heat 1/2-1 cup of hot brandy or rum in a saucepan. Light the alcohol on fire and then **carefully** pour the flaming liquid over the cake. NOTE: Make sure that both the cake and the booze are pretty warm/hot or the flambe might not flambe.

Serve with the hard sauce. Ta da!