

Steamed Christmas Pudding

This is the recipe I have adapted and have been using for many years with great results. The ingredient quantities have been converted from metric, but remember, this is not a cake that is to be baked, where accurate measurements are essential. Rather this is a combination of flavors and textures that will result in a steamed or cooked dessert. Basically, the eggs and the flour are what hold the final pudding together. If there is a fruit or spice you don't care for, simply leave it out. Or, if you and your family really like another dried fruit, spice or flavor, feel free to add more.

This recipe will yield enough batter for one large pudding basin, or heat-proof bowl with a capacity of about 2 quarts.

Metric:	American:
200g raisins	1 ½ cups
150g golden raisins	1 cup
150g currants	1 cup
50g orange peel, chopped	1 Tablespoon
50g candied ginger, chopped	1 Tablespoon
100 ml ale, or beer (see note below)	½ cup
25 ml Grand Marnier	2 Tablespoons
115g ground almonds	1 ¼ cups
1 carrot, grated	1
1 Bramley apple, grated	1
3 whole eggs, beaten lightly	3
1 Tablespoon black Treacle (or molasses)	1 Tablespoon
115g brown sugar, packed	½ cup
115g suet (see note below)	4 ounces
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon	1 teaspoon
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg	1 teaspoon
½ teaspoon ground cloves	½ teaspoon
115g all-purpose flour	1 cup

Note: During the steaming, the alcohol cooks out, just leaving the flavor. But if you would prefer not to use it substitute the same amount with apple cider, apple juice, orange juice or a combination.

Suet may be difficult to find in America and you may substitute the same amount of good quality unsalted butter at room temperature instead.

A food processor fitted with a grating blade will make fast work of grating the carrot and apple.

The day before:

Combine the ale or beer, Grand Marnier along with the dried fruit in a small bowl, stirring well to combine. Cover bowl and allow to marinate overnight. (This may be done several days in advance, if desired.)

The day of:

Trace the top and bottom of the pudding bowl on parchment paper and cut out each circle. Butter the inside of the bowl generously and place the parchment round in the bottom of the bowl and butter the circle as well.

In a very large mixing bowl, add the dried fruit/liquor mixture.

Add the almonds, carrot and apple, stirring well.

Add the eggs, treacle, brown sugar and suet and spices and mix well.

Sift the flour over the wet mixture and stir well.

Spoon the mixture into the prepared bowl, place the buttered parchment round on top, cover with a double-piece of aluminum foil and secure to the bowl with kitchen string.

Using a stock pot large enough to accommodate the pudding bowl and allowing room on the sides and top, place a rack in the bottom of the stock pot that is raised at least two-inches from the bottom. Use small metal portion cups, small ceramic ramekins or balls of aluminum foil to accomplish this. Fill the stock pot with boiling water, using enough water that it comes up to the bottom of the pudding bowl. Cover with a tight fitting lid and turn heat to low and allow water to boil just at the simmer. You do not want a rolling boil, just a simmer.

Keep a watch on the pudding, assuring that the pot does not boil dry. Add additional water as needed. Allow to simmer and steam for 5 to 8 hours.

At the end of the steaming time, turn off heat, remove lid and allow pudding to cool enough to easily handle. Remove from stock pot and dry off the sides and top of the pudding. Remove the foil and replace with fresh, new foil and store in a cool, dark place. (In England they store the Christmas pudding under the bed in an unheated bedroom.)

On the day to be served, return the pudding to the steaming stock pot, set up as before, and steam for at least 3 hours prior to serving. Allow to cool enough to be handled easily. Dry off the sides and top of the pudding and remove foil and parchment. Use a thin, flexible knife and run it along the inside of the bowl to help loosen the pudding.

Invert onto prepared heat-proof platter and unmold. Proceed with flaming and serving as outlined earlier in the article.

You are now about to share and enjoy a Christmas tradition that is truly older than the celebrated Christmas holiday as we know it today. I hope you, your family and friends will enjoy this centuries old tradition as much as I have, since I was introduced to it many years ago by my English born partner Nicholas Lodge.

Merry Christmas!

--Scott Ewing