

The recipe below is from our special Christmas page at www.barossanewsonline.com/christmas.html

Mini steamed Christmas pudding



Serves 12

Preparation time: 40 minutes, plus 'standing time' (see below)

Cooking time: 2 hours, steaming

The puddings can be made up to 3 months in advance (keep them by refrigerating) - or up to a year advance, if you freeze them.

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups (250 g) of raisins
1 1/2 (250 g) sultanas
1 2/3 cups (250 g) currants
2 tablespoons of sweet sherry
1 medium sized apple (170 g) (granny smith)
1 medium carrot (120 g) peeled and grated
half cup (60 g) ground almonds (almond meal)
1 1/2 cup (300 g) firmly packed dark brown sugar
250 g butter, grated
4 cups (280 g) stale bread crumbs
1/2 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon of salt
1 cup (150 g) plain flour
4 eggs
2 teaspoons of finely grated orange rind
2 tablespoons fresh orange juice

Method:

Combine the raisins, sultanas and currants with sherry in a large bowl. Mix well.

Cover and stand overnight or for several days, stirring occasionally. This 'marinates' the dry mix with the sherry to infuse flavour.

After this, you're ready to add the rest of the ingredients, but first, prepare the mini moulds. We used Dariole moulds (which you can get from any reputable kitchenware shop. Alternatively you can use heat-proof dishes (3/4 cup, or 180 ml capacity). The ingredients above will fill 12 moulds.

Grease your moulds, and put to one side.

Now prepare the covers which must go over the moulds prior to baking. Cut 12 pieces of baking paper and 12 pieces of aluminium foil each approximately 12 centimetres square.

Pleat the baking paper by folding the paper in on itself a number of times. You pleat the baking paper to allow for the expansion of steam as the puddings cook.

You'll also need cooking twine to secure the baking paper and foil to each mould.

Take out the mixture you've let stand and....

Add the apple, carrot, almonds, sugar, butter, breadcrumbs, nutmeg, cinnamon, salt and flour - and mix well.

Beat the eggs with the rind and orange juice in a separate bowl, and stir into the mixture.

Divide the mixture among the moulds and cover each mould with a piece of pleated baking paper and cover that with the foil and tie that down with the cooking twine on each mould.

Place the moulds in a shallow frying pan - or an electric frying pan with enough boiling water to come half-way up the sides of the moulds.

Cover the pan with a tight-fitting lid and boil for 2 hours. Check the water every 15/20 minutes and replenish it with boiling water as needed to maintain the water level.

After the 2 hours is up, take the moulds out and leave until they cool down.

Take the now-cooked puddings out of the moulds and wrap thoroughly in plastic wrap, then place them in an air-tight container or individual freezer bags.

You're done!

You can refrigerate the puddings for up to three months - or you can freeze them for up to a year. Ideal if you intend having a mid-year Christmas party!

When you want to use your puddings, simply place them in the microwave (in a microwave-safe container) and heat. To cook 4 puddings at time in the microwave, heat for 3 minutes for example.

Now to make a to-die-for custard for your christmas pudding:

Serves 6 - Preparation time: 10 minutes - Cooking time: 10 minutes

This recipe can be made 2 days in advance. Note this can't be cooked in a microwave. This is custard the way it's meant to be made - on the stove.

Ingredients:

5 egg yolks
1/4 cup (55 g) of castor sugar
half of a vanilla bean
1 1/2 cups (375 ml) of full-cream milk
3/4 cup (180 ml) cream
2 tablespoons of liqueur (Grand Marnier, Irish Cream, Kahlua, Brandy or Sherry)

Method:

Beat egg yolks and sugar with an electric mixer until thick and creamy

Split the vanilla bean in half lengthways, scrape out seeds and put them to one side.

Combine the milk, cream, vanilla bean and seeds in a medium saucepan. Bring to the boil, stirring as you go. Remove this from the heat, then gradually add this mixture into the egg mixture.

Return this now-combined mixture to the saucepan and stir over a low heat without boiling it, until the custard coats the back of a metal spoon. This takes about 10 minutes. Take out the vanilla bean, and stir in the liqueur.

You're done! Pour the custard over your mini puddings and stand by for rave reviews!

This is based on a 2001 recipe from Australian Women's Weekly