

A Recipe from KNOPF

BREAD PUDDING



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At a country inn in Wales, I had one of those taste-memory moments that made me realize how a simple pudding of eggs, bread, and milk could in a flash call up a flood of memory so acute that for an instant I was right back in childhood. The baked dish was brought in, wrapped in a white linen napkin, the way Edie would have served it, and as it was spooned onto the plate I had my first whiff. Then, when I took a taste, the hot raisins bursting in my mouth, the sensation was so powerful that the tears rolled down my cheeks (adding a little salty flavor).

NOTE: I discovered from Edna Lewis how much better crushed sugar cubes are than plain granulated sugar as a topping. They're particularly good if you've stored them in a jar with a vanilla bean. Bread pudding is best warm, but it can be very good cold, too. I've even had it for breakfast straight from the fridge.

INGREDIENTS

2 ½ cups milk
2 tablespoons butter, plus a little to butter the dish
3 slices homemade-type bread, crusts removed,
crumbled to make 1 ½ cups
½ cup raisins
Grated rind of ½ lemon
½ teaspoon lemon juice
3 large eggs

3 tablespoons sugar
About 4 gratings of nutmeg (about 1/8 tsp.)

For topping:

Crushed sugar cubes, to make about 2 tbsp.

For serving:

Heavy cream

Heat the milk with the butter, stirring until melted.

Remove from the heat, stir in the crumbled bread, the raisins, grated lemon rind, and lemon juice, and let cool to lukewarm.

Separate the eggs, and beat the yolks into the milk and butter along with the sugar.

Beat the whites in a clean bowl until they form soft peaks, and fold them into the pudding mixture.

Season the mixture with nutmeg, and turn into a lightly buttered shallow baking dish. Sprinkle the crushed sugar cubes on top.

Set the dish in a pan of simmering water, and bake in a preheated 325-degree oven for 1 hour. Serve warm with a pitcher of heavy cream.

SERVES 4 to 6

