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ABOUT DRIED FIGS

THERE is a wealth of Dried Fruits in the grocers now, and the housewife is thankfully employing them in her perennial problem of supplying the family with puddings. There are figs, dates, prunes, apricots, peaches, pears, besides raisins, currants and sultanas. If you have any new ideas for using these fruits, please do pass them on for us all to try. We will begin with figs.

Figs for Breakfast

Figs are excellent if done in a covered casserole in the oven, and served cold, or hot, with or without a little cream. Just cover with luke-warm water, and put in some strips of fresh lemon peel for flavouring. Cook slowly, so that they plump up nicely. Some people like to thicken the juice slightly with arrowroot. Figs done this way make a good pudding, accompanied by a rich bread custard, or a blancmange.

Luxury Fig Pudding

Cook ¾ lb. chopped dried figs in 1½ cups milk in a double boiler for 20 minutes. In a big mixing bowl combine 1 1-3rd cups shredded suet, 1½ cups soft breadcrumbs, and 3 well beaten eggs. Into this mixture sift 1½ cups flour, 2¼ teaspoons baking powder, 1 teaspoon nutmeg, ¾ teaspoon salt, and 1 cup sugar. Add figs and milk, and 3 tablespoons grated orange-rind. Mix very thoroughly. Steam in greased basin at least 2 hours—longer if possible. Serve with orange sauce or sterling sauce.

Orange Sauce

Three tablespoons cornflour, ½ cup sugar, ¼ teaspoon salt, 1½ cups boiling water, ¼ cup butter, 1 tablespoon grated orange rind, a dash of nutmeg or cloves, ½ cup orange juice and 2 tablespoons lemon juice. Combine sugar, cornflour, grated rind and salt in saucepan, and slowly add boiling water, stirring constantly to avoid lumps. Simmer, while stirring about 5 minutes or until clear and thickened. Remove: stir in rest of ingredients. Serve hot with fig pudding.

Sterling Sauce

Half cup butter and 1 cup brown sugar, firmly packed. Work butter with spoon or beater till light and creamy, then add sugar gradually, continuing to work until light and fluffy. Add next ¼ cup top milk, very slowly, blending carefully. A little rum may also be added.

Family Fig Pudding

This is one for everyday use. Four ounces each of flour, shredded suet, breadcrumbs and sugar, ¾ lb. figs, 1 large apple, 1 teaspoon baking powder and milk to mix. Chop figs and apple small. Mix as usual, and moisten with milk. Steam 2½ hours.

Fig Tart

Stew gently enough coarsely chopped figs to make 2½ cupfuls. Do not use much water, just enough to plump them up nicely. Line a deep plate with rich pie-crust. Fry lightly 4 tablespoons soft breadcrumbs in a tablespoon of butter and sprinkle these over the pastry-lined

plate, to absorb excess juice. Spread in the figs mixed with juice of ½ lemon, 1-3 cup sugar and pinch of salt. Moisten edges of crust and fit on criss-cross strips of pastry about ½ inch wide, lattice fashion. Bake about ½ hour or until pastry well cooked.

Fig and Raisin Pasties

One pound each figs and raisins, ¾ lb. brown sugar, 1 lemon (juice and pulp only), 1 tablespoon cornflour and 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon. Soak figs until plump. Cut them in small pieces and put into saucepan with raisins, sugar and lemon. Cover with water and stew till tender. Mix cornflour and cinnamon with a little water, add to mixture and cook another 10 minutes. The result should be of jam consistency and may be potted. To use, roll out short pastry the size of a dinner plate, spread half with fig and raisin mixture, moisten edges and turn plain half over. Pinch edges together and prick holes down centre. Bake in a steady oven till pastry is cooked.

Fig Pickle

Leave 1 lb. dried figs to soak overnight, just barely covered with cold water. Next day, drain them. For the pickling mixture, boil 1 lb. brown sugar with ½ pint best vinegar till thick. Then add 1 dessertspoon each of ground cloves and cinnamon, and a teaspoon each of ground mace and allspice. Simmer for a minute or two, then add figs, and cook all together very gently for an hour. Put into jars and cover. It is delicious with pork, cold meat, or cold boiled bacon.

Fig and Orange Jam

Put 6 oranges into pan with quart of water and boil till tender. Remove oranges, saving the water. Cut them into halves and scoop out the pulp, slice peel very thinly and remove pith and pips. Cut up and wash 1 lb. figs and put all into pan—figs, orange pulp, sliced peel and water, with 2½ lb. sugar. Heat gently and gradually, stirring constantly till sugar dissolved. Then boil fast till jam will set when tested.

Fig Filling

This a delicious and unusual filling. Spread it between the layers of sponge cake while hot, but the cake must be cool. Take ¾ cup chopped figs, ½ cup chopped dates, ¼ cup chopped raisins, ½ cup sugar, ½ cup boiling water and 3 tablespoons lemon juice. Mix all and cook in double saucepan until thick.

FROM THE MAILBAG

N.Z. and France Agree

Dear Aunt Daisy,

A good friend once gave me a book of French home recipes which I find particularly well adapted to use in New Zealand because so many of the ingredients are our everyday foods, too. Here are a few of my favourites. All are quite simple, just a few "twists of the wrist" but what a difference they make!

LEEK AND POTATO SOUP: Two leeks (white part) minced, 1 onion finely

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 12, 1949