

CHRISTMAS PUDDINGS

HAVING made our Christmas cakes, both rich and not-so-rich, let us now think of the festive Christmas Pudding. Even if the weather should be hot, yet the Christmas pudding is really a necessity. I was interested to read, the other day, the reason why so many old English recipes for Christmas cakes and puddings include ale. It was because the real old English ale, which was made from barley without hops, and which was a thickish sweet drink about the consistency of barley-water, did not keep long, but soon went sour; so that the housewife usually had plenty on hand to use.

Old English puddings were always mixed in a deep earthenware crock, and left to stand for 24 hours, with the eggs and moisture already added. They were then beaten up again, and cooked for 7 or 8 hours; and after the cloth was dried, were hung up from hooks in the pantry ceiling until the day they were wanted, when they were given another 2 or 3 hours' boiling. Such rich puddings keep well, and there were always one or two saved for Easter and Whitsun holidays, and very often the stock lasted right through the year. It is quite all right to steam Christmas puddings in a basin, covered well with greased paper; and when cool, to cover with a clean dry cloth, tie up securely, and hang in a cool, dry place.

Original Christmas Pudding (No eggs)

Here is a good recipe from "Hard-Hearted Hannah"; quite inexpensive:—Six ozs. breadcrumbs, 6 ozs. flour, 8 ozs. shredded suet, 6 ozs. sugar, 4 ozs. each of sultanas, raisins and currants (or whatever fruit you can get; a pound of the cleaned, packaged cake-fruit would be splendid); 2 ozs. peel; a little salt; a large cup of milk; 1 teaspoon baking soda; 2 tablespoons golden syrup; and ¼ teaspoon each nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger (or ginger essence) and ground cloves. Boil the suet and milk for a few minutes, pour it over the sugar and breadcrumbs; leave a little while; then add the flour and stir well. Add the rest of the ingredients, the soda last. Boil or steam at least 4 hours.

Variation

A similar recipe came to me from "Bertha of Beach Haven." It uses butter instead of suet, and only 4 ozs. of everything:—Boil 4 ozs. of butter in a large cup of milk for a few minutes. Pour it over 4 ozs. breadcrumbs and 4 ozs. sugar. Leave till nearly cold, then mix in 4 ozs. flour, 4 ozs. each of currants and raisins, and peel to taste. Lastly add 1 teaspoon baking soda dissolved in a little warm milk. Steam 2½ to 3 hours. More fruit may be added if liked.

Old English Christmas Pudding (Two or three eggs)

Six ounces flour, 2 ozs. best cornflour, ¼ lb. breadcrumbs, ½ lb. shredded suet, ½ lb. dark brown sugar; 1¼ lbs. raisins, ¾ lb. each currants and sultanas, 6 ozs. mixed peel, 1¼ lb. raisins, 2 ozs. almonds (or 3 lbs. of cleaned cake-fruit mixture bought in pound packets), the grated rind and juice of 1 lemon, a level teaspoon of mixed spice, a little nutmeg, 2 or 3 eggs, and enough milk to make

a not too stiff mixture. Mix all the dry ingredients well; beat the eggs well and then mix in a little milk and add this to the dry ingredients. Then add the lemon juice and more milk as required. Stir very thoroughly, and leave to stand for 24 hours. Beat up again, put into well-greased basin, cover with greased paper, and steam for 6 to 7 hours. When cool, tie down with dry cloth, and hang in a dry, cool place.

Wee Wyn's Christmas Pudding (With butter)

One and a half pounds flour, 1 cup breadcrumbs, 6 ozs. each of raisins, and currants, 8 ozs. sugar, ½ lb. butter, ½ teaspoon spice, 1 tablespoon golden syrup, 2 teaspoons baking powder, 2 eggs, a little lemon peel, milk to mix. A little brandy is optional. Rub the butter into the flour, then add fruit, spice etc. Lastly, add beaten eggs with golden syrup. Add milk as required. Boil 4 to 5 hours.

FROM THE MAIL BAG

Christmas Cake Steamed

Dear Aunt Daisy,

I wonder if our Daisy Chain would like my steamed Christmas Cake—a very old idea. I've never known this recipe to fail, and the flavour is beautiful, so fruity, and different from the usual baked cake. The mixture is cooked in a round tin, not more than two-thirds full, with a greased paper placed over the top and tied tightly round the sides to prevent steam or water getting in. Place this in the steamer and shut lid down very tightly. Keep the water boiling briskly the whole time, adding more if it boils away. Steam the cake for 3½ hours, and then bake in a moderate oven for half an hour.

Here is the mixture: ½ lb. each of flour, brown sugar, butter, raisins, sultanas and dates; ¼ lb. almonds, 2 ozs. lemon peel; ½ teaspoon mixed spice; ½ teaspoon nutmeg, 1 heaped teaspoon baking powder, 5 eggs, and (if desired) ¼ cup brandy. Mince the fruit. Cream the butter first, then beat in the sugar; then add the well beaten yolks. Now add the fruit, peel, spice and almonds; then the sifted flour and baking powder. As each ingredient is added, mix very well. Lastly fold in lightly the beaten whites, and add the brandy if desired. Cook as I have already described. Best wishes from

—M.E.C., Kilbirnie.

Two Hints

Dear Aunt Daisy,

Did you know that glycerine added to cake mixtures keeps them moist and makes them lighter? I add about a dessertspoonful to all my fruit cakes and even to Madeiras; but not to sponges.

Also, when making Parsley Sauce, I soak the parsley in the milk for an hour before cooking. The flavour is greatly improved.—"Jean," Christchurch.

Another good hint is to put about a teaspoon of curry powder into a pound cake mixture. It brings out the flavour.

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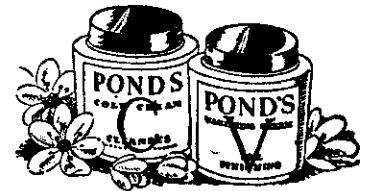
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