

Auntie Maureen's Plum Pudding

In my opinion, no one makes Christmas pudding as good as my Auntie Maureen! Its flavour only improves as time goes on, so it's best to make it a month before you plan to eat it. Serve warm or cold with lashings of custard or whipped cream and brandy butter.

MAKES 2 X 1.2 LITRE (2 PINT) PUDDINGS

50g (2oz) plain flour
½ tsp ground mixed spice
½ tsp ground cloves
¼ tsp ground nutmeg
225g (8oz) sultanas
175g (6oz) butter, melted, plus extra for greasing
175g (6oz) fresh white breadcrumbs
175g (6oz) light brown sugar
175g (6oz) raisins
50g (2oz) currants
50g (2oz) candied mixed peel
50g (2oz) blanched almonds, chopped
½ apple, peeled, cored and diced
½ small carrot, grated
finely grated rind and juice of 1 lemon
2 eggs, lightly beaten
300ml (½ pint) stout
icing sugar, to decorate (optional)
custard or whipped cream, to serve
brandy butter, to serve



1. Sift together the flour, mixed spice, cloves and nutmeg in a large bowl. Add the sultanas, melted butter, breadcrumbs, sugar, raisins, currants, mixed peel, almonds, apple, carrot and the lemon rind and juice and mix until well combined. Gradually add the beaten eggs, stirring constantly, followed by the stout. Mix everything thoroughly and cover with a clean tea towel, then leave in a cool place overnight.

2. Use the fruit mixture to fill 2 x 1.2 litre (2 pint) greased pudding bowls. Cover with a double thickness of greaseproof paper and tin foil, then tie tightly under the rim with string.
3. To cook, preheat the oven to 150°C (300°F/gas mark 2).
4. Stand each pudding basin in a large cake tin three-quarters full of boiling water, then cook in the oven for 6–8 hours (or you can steam them for 6 hours in the usual way). Cool and re-cover with clean greaseproof paper. Once cooked, the plum pudding can be stored in a cool, dry place for up to two months.
5. On Christmas Day, re-cover with greaseproof paper and foil. Steam for 2–3 hours, until completely cooked through and tender. Decorate with a light dusting of icing sugar, if liked.
6. To serve, cut the plum pudding into slices and arrange on serving plates. Have a separate jug of the custard or a dish of whipped cream and another of brandy butter so that everyone can help themselves.