

YUMMY NORTHWEST

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IT'S PLUM GOOD

Also known as Christmas pudding, plum pudding traditionally makes its appearance in December. It was made in the Middle Ages but was first called Christmas pudding in an 1858 novel. Puritan rulers in England banned it as "sinfully rich."

Traditionally, each person in the household stirs the batter and makes a wish. Another tradition is to add small silver charms to the batter so they can be found in a slice of pudding. A coin means wealth in the coming year, a ring means a wedding, and so forth.

The Clatsop County Historical Society, Astoria, Ore., continues the tradition of serving Christmas pudding at the Flavel House. Each year, beginning in September, Rae Goforth, an energetic long-time volunteer, makes 40 puddings for the event. In November, she shares her recipe in a public demonstration at the museum.

If you think baking is too precise and difficult, take a lesson from Rae. She mixes pudding ingredients with joyous abandon. The result is well worth tasting.

Plum Pudding

Courtesy of Rae Goforth and the Flavel House Museum, Astoria.

You'll need a special pot called a kettle that has a snap-down lid.



pudding? Cake?

The first puddings were made with meat and boiled. Black pudding and haggis are modern examples. The word "pudding" may come from the Old French word for sausage, "boudin." By the 1800s, English puddings, though still boiled and eaten as a first course, were more like cakes. Victorians touched theirs up with brandy sauce.

An early American dessert called hasty pudding combined cornmeal, milk and molasses.

In the mid-1800s, Alfred Bird, an English chemist, produced a custard powder that replaced eggs as thickeners. This was used by Americans moving West in covered wagons, where eggs were scarce.

Soon a custard-type pudding was promoted as health food, and many American food companies were producing pudding mixes by the mid-1900s.

There are many types of pudding, each with an interesting history. Bread pudding, rice pudding, Yorkshire pudding, pease pudding, roly-poly pudding... Find out more at www.foodtimeline.org.

Nowadays, folks in Britain still eat their cake-like puddings, but if someone asks if you'd like pudding, they probably want to know if you have room for "afters," or dessert.

Cream together in a mixer:

1/2 cup margarine, 1 cup sugar, and 1 egg.

In a separate bowl, mix all the dry ingredients, breaking up clumps with your fingers:

1 cup flour, 1 cup white bread crumbs (for good flavor, buy cheap white bread, dry slices in oven at 200 degrees, and grind in blender), 1 teaspoon soda, 1/2 teaspoon cloves, 1 teaspoon nutmeg, 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon, 1 cup walnuts (don't chop; break with fingers – bigger pieces look nicer in slices of pudding) and 1 1/2 cups raisins and/or currants.



You'll need 3/4 cup warm water. Add half of this to the creamed mixture and start adding in the dry ingredients, alternating until all are mixed. Do not overbeat.



Grease the kettle well (except the lid). Add the batter, and seal the lid.



Cook for 3 hours at 250 degrees.



When you take the pudding out of the oven, loosen the lid (take off cover briefly, then snap back on), and let it stand for 10 minutes. When you turn the pan upside down, the pudding should fall out.

Freezing improves the flavor. After the pudding has cooled for about an hour, wrap in plastic wrap (any condensation is OK), then wrap in foil and place in freezer.

When ready to serve, thaw the pudding. Then you can either reheat it in the microwave a few pieces at a time. Or, if you have a lot of slices to reheat, place them on a cookie sheet, cover them with foil, and put them in a 300-degree oven for 20-30 minutes to warm.

Where are the plums?

There are two possible explanations for how the "plum" got in plum pudding.

explanation #1

In the Middle Ages, plum pudding contained flour, sugar, suet, raisins, nuts and spices. The batter was tied in a cloth and boiled until the pudding was "plum" - that is, it had swelled up to fill the cloth wrapping.

explanation #2

Long ago, raisins were called plums.



Taste for yourself

Plum pudding and tea are served at the Flavel House Museum. This event includes a self-guided tour of the house.

Cost: \$9 per person

When: 2-4 p.m. on
Dec. 14-23 and
Dec. 26-30, 2005

Where: 441 8th St.
Astoria, Ore.

More information:
(503) 325-2203

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Yummy Northwest thanks the Clatsop County Historical Society for their generous cooperation.

www.clatsophistoricalsociety.org

Rae serves hers with lemon pie filling that has been reduced with rum or hot water.



To make it more festive, add a dab of whipped cream, a cherry and a holly leaf.



Rae enjoys her well-deserved pudding slice.



About Yummy Northwest

Each monthly issue highlights an edible delight available in the Pacific Northwest.

New Web address!

Online at www.rainydayrose.com.

Contact the editor

Comments, corrections, topic ideas and submissions are all most welcome:
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