



The Proof is in the Pudding...

A good Christmas Pudding matures over time, so October is the best time you would want to start as it should lie down for at least a month, better if two.

For one pudding that will serve 6 - 8 people:

Don't use up all the old dried fruit at the back of the cupboard - go buy the freshest and best quality you can afford. Before you do start, remember - the orange and lemon should be at room temperature,

230g (8oz) raisins

50g (1 3/4oz) currants

75g (2 1/2 oz) sultanas

50g (1 3/4oz) glacé cherries

15g (1/2oz) flaked almonds

100ml (3 1/2fl oz) brandy

Zest of 1 orange and 1 lemon

Freshly squeezed juice of 1/2 orange and 1/2 lemon

50g (1 3/4 oz) vegetable suet

30g (1oz) wholemeal breadcrumbs

50g (1 3/4oz) plain white flour

90g (3oz) light brown sugar

1/2 tsp mixed spice

1/4 tsp each of ground nutmeg, ground cinnamon, ground cloves

1 tsp salt

2 medium eggs beaten

this gives twice as much juice. Likewise the eggs should be at room temperature to stop them from curdling. Start the day before by placing all the dried fruits and flaked almonds in a bowl. Pour over the brandy and add the lemon and orange zest and juice. Cover and leave overnight.

Put all the ingredients along with the pre-soaked fruit in a large mixing bowl and gently mix together with a wooden spoon so as not to break up the fruit.

Place a small disc of greaseproof paper in the base of a 1 1/2 pint pudding basin and fill it with the mixture. Place another disc of paper on top and cover with foil. Seal tight with string.

Stand the bowl on a trivet in a deep sided pan and pour in hot water up to the half way mark of the pudding basin. Place a lid on the pan and bring to the boil. Lower the heat to a steady simmer and steam the pudding for 5 hours. Check the water level regularly and top up if required.

Remove the pudding from the pan and let it cool completely. Remove the foil then wrap the pudding basin in a piece of greaseproof paper and then in foil. Store in a cool dark place and forget about it until Christmas - longer the better!

On Christmas Day, steam the pudding again for 2 hours in a pan of water as before. Warm some brandy in a ladle until it ignites and pour over the pudding to flambé

Enjoy!!

Debbie