

Cheesy Bakehouse Pudding

INGREDIENTS:

100g finely sliced leek
50g butter
175 g grated hard cheese
4 slices stale bread
2 – 3 teaspoons of mild mustard
3 eggs
300 ml milk
¼ tsp salt
A good pinch of pepper
2 tsp currants or raisins

COMMENTS:

If I don't have leek I use a small mild onion
Or oil or margarine to grease your dish

Dijon, English or seeded, whatever you prefer

I use salt & pepper to taste and I like to add a generous pinch of nutmeg too

I usually use mixed dried fruit or sultanas or whatever I have.
I also always add a sprinkle of brown or raw sugar, which adds a nice crust to the dish

METHOD:

1. Clean sliced leek under running water, shake dry and pan fry in 1 Tbsp of the butter (or oil) till translucent, approx 5 mins.
2. Grease your pie dish and spread half the leek on the bottom and sprinkle with a small handful of the cheese.
3. Spread any remaining butter on the bread, then spread thinly with mustard. Cut into quarters.
4. Put half the bread into the pie dish, peaks up. Then add the remaining leek and sprinkle with more cheese. Add the rest of the bread and the remaining cheese.
5. In a separate bowl whisk up the eggs and milk, salt & pepper and nutmeg, if using. Pour on slowly to allow the custard to thoroughly soak the bread.
6. Sprinkle dried fruit and sugar on top.
7. Bake in a pre-heated, moderately hot oven (190°C, Gas Mark 5) for 35 minutes, or until golden brown on top and beautifully puffed up. (If you double the recipe you will need to cook it for 45 to 50 minutes.)

COOK'S NOTES:

I usually make the double the amount (6 eggs and about 500 ml milk, say 2 cups) and I rarely measure. This is one of those European 'getting to the end of winter' recipes, similar to fondue, which uses up stale bread and the hard, dried end of the wheel of cheese, and any wizened up old onions or leeks left hanging in the cellar to make a rich, sustaining meal. I save the ends of the loaves of bread in the freezer and while I buy grated cheese, I also add in any left over block cheese or parmesan, so long as its good and tasty. If I have soft cheese I'll mix it with the mustard and spread it on the bread. I think the sugar and nutmeg that I've added to the original recipe is yummy as it adds a nice crust to this souffle like dish. If you wanted you could sprinkle some pine nuts on top or chop some ham or cabana or even tuna through the dish to vary it a bit. When I take it to a pot-luck feast, I always get asked for the recipe.

When I have it as a modern meal, I team it with a salad and a crisp white wine, Mmmm! Delish!

REFERENCE:

Ellis, A. (1977). *The Magpie History of Food: Cooking and eating through the ages*. (Chapter 4. Tudor Britons). London: Severn House.