

Maple Bread Pudding

by Nancy Harmon Jenkins

An incredibly easy dessert, this does require a couple of things:

- 1) Best-quality pure Maine maple syrup, dark and aromatic
- 2) Challah or brioche or other egg-y bread, if you can find it; otherwise, a good country sort of loaf
- 3) Plenty of time, but not a lot of effort.

Makes enough for 8 servings

About 1 to 1 ¼ pounds challah, brioche, or other egg bread

8 eggs

1 cup dark maple syrup

1 ¼ to 1 ½ cups heavy cream

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Butter to grease generously a 2-quart baking or soufflé dish

1 or 2 tablespoons maple sugar (or demerara or turbinado sugar)

- Cut or tear the bread into bite-sized pieces, keeping most of the crust except for parts that are very thick and tough. You should have about 8 cups of bread cubes.
- In a bowl large enough to hold all the bread, whisk the eggs lightly with a wire whisk, then add the maple syrup, cream, and vanilla and whisk to mix it all thoroughly.
- Add the bread cubes and fold into the mixture, stirring gently to coat thoroughly. Set the bowl aside at room temperature for an hour or so to let the bread completely absorb the egg mix. Give it a stir every so often.
- When you're ready to bake the pudding, turn the oven on to 350°. Liberally butter the bottom and sides of the baking dish.
- Turn the soaked bread into the baking dish. If there's any egg mixture left in the bottom of the bowl, spoon it right over the top.
- Take a piece of foil large enough to cover the dish and butter one side of it. Cover the dish with the foil, butter side down, and transfer to the preheated oven.
- Bake for about 45 minutes, until the pudding starts to puff and turn golden, then remove the pudding from the oven, raise the temperature to 375°, discard the foil, and spoon maple sugar over the top.
- Return the pudding to the oven, uncovered this time, and bake an additional 15 minutes, until it has puffed like a soufflé and turned a darker gold. Remove from the oven and let sit 10 minutes, then serve, still warm, with a dollop of vanilla ice cream, crème fraîche, whipped cream, or yogurt.

Variation: While I was making this, I had the idea of adding two smallish apples, cored and cut into small pieces. It was a smart addition. A more typical addition would be a handful of currants or sultana raisins. Mix right in and let soak with the bread cubes and all the rest.