

Cheddar Ales Christmas Pudding Recipe

Serves 8 - 10.

Ingredients

4 oz (110 g) shredded suet
2 oz (50 g) self-raising flour, sifted
4 oz (110 g) white breadcrumbs
1 level teaspoon ground mixed spice
¼ level teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
Good pinch ground cinnamon
8 oz (225 g) soft dark brown sugar
4 oz (110 g) sultanas
4 oz (110 g) raisins
10 oz (275 g) currants
1 oz (25 g) mixed candied peel, finely chopped
1 oz (25 g) almonds, skinned and chopped
1 small cooking apple
Grated zest ½ large orange
Grated zest ½ large lemon
2 tablespoons rum
5 fl oz (150 ml) Cheddar Ales' Festive Totty
2 large eggs

You will also need a 2 pint (1.2 Litre) pudding basin, lightly greased.

Instructions

Christmas pudding is best prepared up to two months in advance to allow the flavours to fully develop.

Take your largest mixing bowl and start by putting in the suet, sifted flour and breadcrumbs, spices and sugar. Mix very thoroughly, then gradually mix in all the dried fruit, mixed peel and nuts followed by the apple and the grated orange and lemon zests.

Now in a smaller basin, measure out the rum and ale, then add the eggs and beat these thoroughly together. Next pour this over all the other ingredients, and mix very thoroughly. The mixture should have a fairly sloppy consistency – that is, it should fall instantly from the spoon when this is tapped on the side of the bowl. If you think it needs a bit more liquid add a spot more beer. Cover the bowl and leave overnight.

Next day, pack the mixture into the lightly greased basin, cover it with a double sheet of baking paper and a sheet of foil and tie it securely with string (borrow someone's finger for this!). It's also a good idea to tie a piece of string across the top to make a handle. Place the pudding in a steamer set over a saucepan of simmering water and steam the pudding for 8 hours. If you do not have a steamer, put the basins in a large pan with inverted saucers on the base and pour in boiling water to come a third of the way up the sides of the pudding bowl. Whichever method you use, make sure you keep a regular eye on the water level and top it up with boiling water from the kettle from time to time.

When the pudding is steamed let it get quite cold, then remove the steam papers and foil and

replace them with some fresh ones, again making a string handle for easier manoeuvring. Now your Christmas pudding is all ready for Christmas Day. Keep it in a cool place away from the light for up to two months.

To cook on Christmas Day, bring a saucepan of water to the boil, place a steamer on top and turn it down to a gentle simmer (or if you don't have a steamer set up a pan as described before). Put the Christmas pudding in, cover and leave to steam away for 2¼ hours. Again, you'll need to check the water from time to time and maybe top it up a bit.

To serve, remove the pudding from the steamer and take off the wrapping. Slide a palette knife all round the pudding, then turn it out on to a warmed plate. Place a suitably sized sprig of holly on top, douse with a small amount of brandy, and set light to it. When both flames and cheers have died down, serve the pudding with rum sauce, brandy butter, cream or custard.

With thanks to Delia