

Title:

Recipe - Just Desserts, Puddings Galore

Word Count:

776

Summary:

A family tradition of puddings culminates in a fine recipe for Summer Pudding - a delicious berry and bread dessert.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

We are a pudding family. There is something satisfying about the word pudding. It brings connotations of comfort, of tastebud-tantalising things, rich and luscious. Dessert suggests something elegant, delicate, restrained - a sweet mouthful to finish off a meal. Dessert just doesn't do it for me.

Our family goes in for puddings for special occasions and Sunday lunches. We don't have them every day, so when we do, we want it all: comforting over-indulgence at its best - no refined twiddles of patisserie here, though we don't do the steamed, stodgy stuff either. We have a number of recipes that are firm family favourites and have to be considered and a waiting list of recipes from cookbooks to try - so puddings oust the main course as the focus of debate and decision-making.

The occasion dictates the main course - roast lamb for Easter, turkey and gammon for Christmas, no dilemmas there. Selecting just a few puddings from the family repertoire, though, is an agonising process. Christmas and New Year close together eases the dilemma...what we don't have for Christmas, we can do for New Year's Eve, but on other occasions leaving out a particular favourite recipe is too hard. We often end up with a selection of four puddings (though, before you are too horrified, we are usually feeding twelve or more people) and as a result feel stuffed to the gills afterwards, as greed inevitably overcomes caution and all four have to be sampled.

Two of our family staple recipes come from my mother-in-law, who as a mother of six on a limited budget had to use a lot of invention to feed her family. Guava fool (pureed guava mixed with condensed milk and cream) is one of her recipes that rates high on the must-have list through winter when guavas are in season.

Choccie pudding is a year round imperative, a chocolate custard poured over boudoir biscuits which soak it up and soften delectably into a velvety gloop.

I have proudly managed to add one of my family pudding recipes to the indispensable list - Summer Pudding. My mother still makes it, often with blackberries culled from the hedgerows, as well as the more traditional redcurrants and raspberries. Here in South Africa we have a different palette of berries to work with and most often use youngberries, mulberries with a few strawberries (strawberries on their own don't work, you need the tartness of some of the darker berries). Here is the recipe:

### Summer Pudding

1 loaf of slightly stale white bread

About 1kg of mixed berries: blackberries, raspberries, youngberries, mulberries, redcurrants the choice is yours. Apple can be added if you are short of berries. Sugar

Put the fruit with a liberal sprinkling of sugar into a pan and gradually bring to boiling point. (You can cook them straight from frozen over a low heat). Softer fruits are done at this point, so check, apples would need longer to soften. The amount of sugar depends on how sweet the fruit is - you are after a slightly tart fruit with sweet juice but not too sickly. Cut the bread into thick slices, take off the crusts and line a pudding basin with it. It needs to fit tightly but don't squash it. You can do a patchwork of funny shaped bits, the important thing is that no holes are left. Keep three slices for the lid. When the fruit has stewed, use a slotted spoon to transfer the fruit into the bread-lined bowl. Most of the juice gets left behind but keep it to pour over the pudding later. Fill the bowl with the fruit and top with a tight layer of bread. Place a plate or saucer on top and weight it, so the fruit compresses and the juice soaks into the bread. Leave in the fridge for at least a few hours, better overnight. Turn it onto a plate to serve, with the extra juice poured over any white bits of bread still showing. Eat with plenty of cream.

Now our main preoccupation on our smallholding is establishing enough fruit trees and berry plants to ensure a year round supply of pudding potential in our freezers, but maybe that would make them less special. The seasonal aspect of guavas and berries mean excitement when they come back into season, gluttony for a few weeks until common sense sets in. Then we put a supply away in the freezer for a few special treats later in the year, the season ends and is followed by the next thing. A pudding for each season, a season for each pudding.

