

Chef Doug Weinstein's Savory Mushroom Bread Pudding Recipe

YIELD: Four servings

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups heaped with 1/2-inch challah bread cubes (about 6 ounces)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon butter, plus more for the baking dish
- 1 cup chopped white or yellow onion
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced
- 8 ounces Baby Bella mushrooms, or brown button mushrooms*, cut into pieces about the same size as the bread cubes
- 1 splash white vermouth, about 2 tablespoons
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh marjoram leaves
- 2 large eggs
- 3/4 cup heavy cream, half-and-half, or whole milk
- 1/2 cup chicken or turkey stock, preferable homemade
- 3/4 cup shredded, aged, white cheddar cheese, divided
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place the cubed bread on a sheet pan and toast in a 350° F oven until somewhat dried, but not brown. Alternately, you can leave the bread out to dry overnight. It will lose some of its volume, but that's okay. Set aside.
2. Set a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat and add the olive oil and butter to the pan. When the butter has melted add the chopped onion and a good pinch of salt. Cook until the onion begins to soften and brown a little at the edges. Add the minced garlic and stir until it is fragrant, then add the chopped mushrooms. Cook and stir until the mushrooms brown and give off some liquid. Add the vermouth and cook until the liquid reduces to a glaze. Stir in the marjoram and check the mixture for seasoning, adding more salt (if necessary) and some pepper. Remove from the heat and set aside.
3. Butter a 1 1/2-quart casserole or gratin dish. In a medium bowl, beat the eggs together with the cream and chicken stock. Add 1/2 cup of the shredded cheese and 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Taste the custard mixture and adjust the seasoning to your liking with additional salt and freshly ground black pepper. Fold the dried bread cubes and the mushroom mixture into the custard, pressing the bread down into the liquid. Let stand while you preheat the oven.
4. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Place a rack in the lower third of the oven. When the oven is heated, transfer the bread and vegetable mixture to the prepared baking dish. Press the bread down into the custard and smooth the top surface a little; sprinkle on the remaining 1/4 cup shredded cheese.
5. Place in the oven and bake for 30 to 45 minutes, or until the top is handsomely golden brown and the custard is set. The baking time will depend on the depth of the baking dish you have chosen. Serve hot and make sure every diner gets a portion of the crusty top. Leftovers can be refrigerated, tightly covered for 2 to 3 days.
6. *If you have wild mushrooms available, you can substitute them for part of the total weight of the mushrooms.