

PUMPKIN GINGERSNAP BREAD PUDDING

By: the shortlists

I decided to measure out my ingredients for the sake of this here blog, but they are approximate and you should eyeball it. I usually use a weak, store-bought, pre-sliced bread for bread pudding, but I figured that the pumpkin and bitey ginger cookies could handle a stronger, crustier loaf.

If you don't have exactly enough of this, that or the other thing, don't worry. There are only a few important things to remember about bread pudding, such as making sure there's enough liquid, but, in general, it's really forgiving. Especially with ice, mascarpone or whipped cream on top.

Serves 8 - 10

8 cups stale bread, cubed
2/3 packet ginger nut biscuits (ginger snaps), roughly broken
3 cups (or more) milk (this can be a combination of milk and cream)
3 eggs
1 cup pumpkin puree (ok, ok, it was butternut squash)
1/2 - 3/4 cup sugar (depending on taste)
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp cloves
1/4 cup bourbon (optional but recommended)

Rub butter on the bottom and sides of a large baking dish. Cut the bread into small, 1/2" cubes, removing crusts if desired. Break each cookie into 4 or 5 pieces.

In a very large bowl, beat the eggs then add all the other ingredients (besides the bread and cookies) until smooth. Mix in the bread cubes and cookie chunks, and stir to coat. Let the mixture sit, stirring often, for about 30 minutes while you preheat the oven to 325°F/160°C.

To check if there's enough liquid, press on the bread with the back of a spoon. If the spoon does not get covered by liquid, add some more milk or cream until and mix well. It's better to add more liquid (and then bake it for longer) than not have enough.

When the oven is preheated, pour the very soggy bread mixture into the prepared dish. You can dot the top with butter if you want.

Bake for 40 minutes to an hour, or until a knife inserted in the middle comes out clean. If it's still crumbly, add 10 minutes baking time and check again.

Bread pudding can be made a few days ahead and stored in the fridge.

Serve warm with caramel sauce (if desired) and topped with mascarpone cream.