

Heritage Recipes

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Baked Pumpkin Pudding

From Rod

I met Laura B., an 80-year-old widow and close neighbor, 35 years ago when she was standing on a rickety ladder in her back yard sawing a large tree limb. Her constant companion, Prissy, an overweight and elderly English Setter, announced my arrival with one muffled "Woof!". We three soon became friends and I enjoyed many visits in her modest home where she often baked her own bread and constantly pampered Prissy.

During one of our earlier visits, I had inquired delicately about the health of her dog, but muffled my pronunciation of her dog's name - I forgot the "r". Being the gracious host always, Laura ignored my faux pas and explained that Prissy was a bit overweight, but otherwise healthy ... and then Laura offered Prissy another slice of fried ham. During later visits, I enjoyed my own servings of fried ham and home-baked bread which was pan-toasted in the same cast iron skillet used for the ham.

I learned from my visits with Laura that age is relative - she often referred to a younger 60-year-old neighbor as "that old woman". Perhaps not an old woman, but I knew that this neighbor could not saw tree limbs as well as Laura ... and probably bought bread from a grocery store.

This Baked Pumpkin Pudding recipe is my recollection - 35 years later - of her recipe. As I recall, the recipe was simple, easy to prepare and evoked memories of her life as a wife devoted to her hard-working husband, Levi, who frequently hunted quail in north Texas when he was not working at the local steel mill. Laura usually joined her husband, Prissy and two other Setters named Gal and Mitsy for these weekend hunts. Laura usually stayed stayed close to the campsite to prepare meals and attend to chores.

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Baked Pumpkin Pudding

Ingredients:

2 15-oz.cans canned pumpkin
1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed*
1 1/2 tsp pumpkin pie spice
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1/4 tsp salt
3 large egg whites
2 large eggs
2/3 cup half & half
3/4 cup low-fat milk
1/2 tsp vanilla

* Decrease brown sugar to 1/3 cup for less sweetness.

Directions: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, combine pumpkin, brown sugar, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon, and salt. Stir well to combine. In a medium bowl, beat eggs then add half & half, milk and vanilla; whisk to combine.

Pour egg mixture into pumpkin mixture and stir to combine, then whisk thoroughly. Pour pumpkin mixture into 2 1/2 quart casserole, reduce oven to 325 degrees and bake uncovered 1 hr. 20 min. (or until center is slightly firm – another 10-20 min.). Allow to cool, then serve warm with whipped cream and chopped walnuts.

Notes:

- 1) Dark raisins may be included: soak in very hot water for 10 min., then drain well and stir into the prepared batter just before baking.
- 2) For an "adult" dessert, soak raisins overnight in bourbon, rum or a liqueur (try Drambuie), drain well and fold into the prepared batter ... or fold into the baked pudding just before serving. Soaked raisins, including the liquid, may also be served as a topping.

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