

Maggie's Christmas

AUTHOR: MAGGIE BEER

Christmas Pudding With Cumquat Brandy Butter

FREE RECIPE FROM *MAGGIE'S CHRISTMAS* BY MAGGIE BEER,
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Serves 20

Our family never manages to eat the Christmas pudding on Christmas Day. What tends to happen is that it's covered well and put back into the fridge. In the evenings that follow, it is taken out a slice at a time and warmed a little, to enjoy with a cup of tea after dinner. Traditionally, Christmas pudding is made in advance to allow time for it to mature – **I make ours in October**. The pudding will keep for a long time, as will the brandy butter – that is, if you don't eat it by the spoonful when you pass the fridge like I do, butter fiend that I am. It would be much better for me if I didn't make the brandy butter at all, but then it wouldn't be Christmas!



365 g dehydrated cumquats (available from tolleysnurseries.com.au), or any mixed peel if not available
225 g currants
225 g seedless raisins
225 g sultanas
1 cup (250 ml) cumquat brandy or regular brandy
115 g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
good pinch of ground cinnamon
good pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
good pinch of ground ginger
good pinch of ground mace
sea salt

225 g chilled unsalted butter
225 g fresh breadcrumbs
finely grated zest of 2 lemons
2 granny smith apples, peeled and grated
75 g flaked almonds
3 free-range eggs

CUMQUAT BRANDY BUTTER

175 g icing sugar
175 g unsalted butter, softened
1/2 cup (125 ml) cumquat brandy or regular brandy

1. Combine the cumquats, currants, raisins, sultanas and brandy in a large non-reactive bowl and mix thoroughly. Cover with plastic film and leave at room temperature for 24 hours, stirring several times.
2. Sift the flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, mace and 1 teaspoon salt into a large bowl, then coarsely grate in the butter. Stir in the breadcrumbs and add the lemon zest, apple, almonds and fruit mixture. Whisk the eggs until light and frothy and stir through the pudding mixture until well combined.
3. For one large pudding, dust a 60 cm square of calico with a little extra flour, then spoon the pudding mixture into the middle. Gather up the cloth and tie it securely with kitchen string at the top to enclose the pudding. Steam the pudding in a large double steamer over boiling water or boil in a large saucepan for 6 hours, replenishing the water every 30 minutes or as necessary. (To make two puddings, divide the mixture in half and wrap each in a 40 cm square of dusted calico, then steam or boil as above in separate pans for 4 hours.)
4. Suspend the boiled pudding in a cool, airy place to mature before serving. (Christmas puddings certainly mature with standing, but the main issues are having the right balance of flavours in the first place and ensuring a long cooking time. Puddings can become mouldy in humid weather or if several are hung too close together, so if you don't have time to mature your pudding, or the weather is against you, don't fret; as long as the flavour balance is fine, it will still be fabulous.)
5. Make the cumquat brandy butter on Christmas morning (it can be made the day before, but it needs to be wrapped really well to avoid it becoming tainted in the refrigerator). Cream the icing sugar and butter in an electric mixer until white, thick and fluffy and the sugar has dissolved; this takes some time, so be patient. Slowly beat in the brandy, a teaspoonful at a time, tasting as you go. Cover with plastic film and refrigerate until required.
6. To serve, steam the pudding in its cloth in the top of a steamer or double saucepan over simmering water for 1 hour or until heated through, checking and topping up the water if necessary. (Having said all that, you can also warm the pudding in a microwave on defrost setting, as long as it is well covered.) Meanwhile, let the brandy butter stand at room temperature for 20 minutes, then transfer to 2 serving bowls.
7. Serve the pudding with the brandy butter.