

Ghost of Christmas Puddings and Pies Past - How Two Classics Used To Be Made

Christmas is known for, alongside presents and Jesus, its food. This has been the case for hundreds of years. Today we'll be looking at a couple of examples of historic versions of classic Christmas foods and, as a little Christmas present to you all, I'll be including the recipes as well! So without further ado, let's go!

WW1 Trench Christmas Pudding

The First World War drastically reduced the availability of luxuries involved in the making of traditional Christmas puddings, like plums and brandy. However, soldiers and their families still wanted to make this Christmas staple. Therefore some nifty home economic magic was required of (sorry) the women at home. To replace the moisture brought by the brandy, and the sweetness of the plums, potatoes and carrots were added. These puddings could then be sent to the front, enjoyed alongside a brandy butter sauce if the officers in the trench were generous enough to share their ration of brandy.

Recipe:

- 120g Suet
 - 170g Raisins and Currants (the proportion is up to you)
 - 120g Flour
 - 120g Breadcrumbs
 - 120g Brown Sugar
 - 120g Grated Potatoes
 - 120g Grated Carrots
 - 1tsp Nutmeg
 - 28g Candied Peel
 - ¼tsp Salt
 - ½tsp Cinnamon
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1. Mix all the dry ingredients (everything but the potatoes and carrots) in a large bowl
 2. Add in the wet ingredients.
 3. Butter a pudding basin (can be found on amazon) and place a buttered circle of parchment paper on the bottom as well.
 4. Place a large square of parchment paper on top of a larger square of foil and fold in half lengthways then unfold to create a crease that will allow for movement.
 5. Place this foil and parchment 'lid' on your pudding basin and, as tightly as you can, tie a piece of string around to secure the lid and create a watertight seal.
 6. Trim the foil and tuck it underneath itself to double water seal it.
 7. Tie another piece of string over the pudding basin, attached to the seal string, to create a strong handle that can lift the basin without snapping or coming undone.
 8. Place the entire thing in a large pot and pour boiling water two-thirds up the side of the basin.
 9. Cover the pot with its lid and put on a medium heat for 9 whole hours, topping up the water as necessary.
 10. For the sauce, cream together 113g of butter and 70g sugar, then slowly whisk in 60ml brandy, use as is or warm until it is pourable.

Victorian Mince Pies

There's a reason they're called *mince* pies... So usually this recipe would call for roasted ox tongue, but for the sake of a 21st century reader I'll replace it for steak mince, but it has to be *steak* mince. By the time the Victorians were making mince pies, it was a hundreds of years old tradition that it would contain actual meat. The term mince when describing the pie is not any specific ingredient but a marker that all the contents were to be minced, cut into small pieces. As the recipe became sweeter (and, actually, smaller) the meat started to be phased out, eventually becoming what we know and love today.

Recipe:

- 45g Steak Mince, just about fried off and drained
 - 90g Raisins
 - 120g Currants
 - 90g Apple
 - 90g Suet
 - 115g Sugar
 - 50g Candied Peel
 - 1tsp Lemon Zest
 - ½ Boiled Lemon
 - 1tsp Nutmeg
 - ½tsp Mace
 - ¾tsp Ground Ginger
 - ½tsp Salt
 - 2tbsp Brandy
 - 2tbsp Dark Sherry
 - Pre-rolled Shortcrust Pastry
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1. Mix the meat and fruit, then mix in the suet in a large bowl.
 2. In a separate, smaller bowl, mix the sugar, spices, lemon zest, and salt.
 3. Mix this evenly into the meat mixture.
 4. Pour in the spirits, cover, and leave in the fridge for a week.
 5. Line a tart tray with your dough, fill with the mixture (optionally cover with a pastry lid with 2 slits in to let steam out)
 6. Bake in a preheated oven at 175°C for around 15 minutes.

So that's it, two classic Christmas desserts brought back in time. They're recognisable, sure, but are they worth it? For me the Pudding is a lot nicer than the pies, I've tried both if you're wondering what my credentials are. The pies are an acquired taste, but not nasty. The pudding however, is actually wonderful, and I'd truly recommend it. It's nowhere near as heavy as a traditional pudding, and has a bit of a carrot cake quality about it. Furthermore, the brandy sauce that I recommended is heavenly, honestly I could drink it on its own. But, of course, it is entirely up to you what traditions you follow and which you modernise, either way, have a very merry Christmas.