

Dan Lepard's simnel pudding recipe

This Easter, switch your 'traditional' simnel for this (historically accurate) bread pudding. And while you're baking, try this [spiced marzipan bake](#) too. It's a long weekend, after all ...



Dan Lepard

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Simnel pudding. Photographs: Jill Mead for the Guardian

Historian Ivan Day recently built a menu around the Stuart-period recipes of Elizabeth Rainbow, for a dinner held at the medieval Rose Castle in Cumbria. The dessert was a "white-pot" sweetmeat pudding, rich with musk, ambergris, candied fruit and cream, and it inspired this spiced Easter bread pudding.

As the original simnel was a bread rather than a cake, and marzipan a Victorian addition that alluded to its earlier crust, this pudding links it with those near-forgotten historic white-pot desserts and simply puts bread back into the simnel and the Easter menu. Do use good white bread, as the ready-sliced cheap kind just turns to mush in

the custard.

Simnel pudding

Serves 5-6

4-5 slices good white bread

Butter, softened

100g marzipan

Ground nutmeg or mace

75g chopped glacé ginger

600ml milk

300ml double cream

5 medium eggs

100g caster sugar

25g honey

2 tbsp rosewater (optional)

1 Take a deep ovenproof bowl that holds about 1.5 litres of liquid comfortably and heat the oven to 160C/140C fan/325F/gas mark 3. Butter the bread slices lightly then cut them into triangles or rectangles.



2 Slice the marzipan thinly and place on top of the buttered bread like slices of cheese. The butter will hold the marzipan in place. Lay the marzipan bread slices over the bottom of the dish, overlapping slightly.



3 Sprinkle a little nutmeg on top, and some of the glacé ginger, then put another layer of bread on top of that, and sprinkle with more nutmeg and ginger, until all the bread is in the bowl, with any remaining ginger sitting on top.



4 Bring the milk and cream to the boil. In a mixing bowl whisk the eggs, sugar and honey until smooth, then pour in the boiling milk and cream. Whisk well.



5 Ladle this mixture over the bread in the dish, with the rosewater if you're adding it. Leave to sit for 5 minutes so the bread softens in the liquid.



6 Bake for about 30 minutes or until the centre of the pudding is barely set – keep an eye on it. If you want an utterly delicate set you can bake the pudding in a water bath – but I don't. Slightly overcooking the edges isn't a huge issue. Serve warm.



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