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One of the best ways to make a house into a home is to invite some friends over for a meal. If you try this recipe, let me know how it turns out for you. And if you have a favorite recipe of your own, send it my way.

Figgy Pudding

I've been singing about Figgy Pudding every holiday season for 40 years, but until this year I had never actually had any, and I'm sorry I waited so long. It is "pudding" in the English sense of "dessert" and not in the Jello Pudding style, and you will find it to be something like a fruitcake—but one you will want to eat yourself, not re-gift at the office party. Because it is steamed, the baking process takes several hours, but in that time your home will be filled with a delicious aroma, and the recipe calls for little more than peeling, chopping, & mixing, so give it a try.

1/2 cup butter	Grated peel of 1 lemon & 1 orange
1/2 cup vegetable shortening	1 cup chopped nuts
1 cup granulated sugar	1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
3 large egg yolks	1/4 tsp ground cloves
1 cup milk	1/4 tsp ground ginger
2 Tbs rum extract (or other flavor)	1 1/2 cups dried bread crumbs
2 apples, peeled, cored, & finely chopped	2 tsp baking powder
1 lb dried figs, ground or finely chopped	3 large egg whites stiffly beaten

1. Preheat oven to 325°. Generously grease an oven-proof 2-quart bowl or mold; set aside.
2. Cream together butter & shortening.
3. Gradually add sugar, egg yolks, milk, extract, apple, figs, lemon & orange peel.
4. Add nuts & spices, then stir in bread crumbs & baking powder. Mix well
5. Gently fold in beaten egg whites.
6. Pour into prepared bowl or mold and place into a large shallow pan. Carefully add boiling water to large pan until it is about half full. Place on middle rack of oven and steam pudding for 3 1/2 to 4 hours, replacing water as needed.
7. When pudding is done, let stand on a cooling rack and then invert on large plate to serve.

I was a little hesitant to add the dried crumbs, as I was concerned about the texture they might bring to the dessert. As it turns out, they just serve to bind together some of the other ingredients, but you still get a nice crunch from the ground-up fig seeds. The recipe seems like it is pretty flexible, so you can try a variety of nuts & fruits to suit your taste. A warm slice goes very nicely a la mode—we had some cinnamon ice cream in the freezer which was a great accompaniment.



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