

ENGLISH PLUM PUDDING

The original recipe by Mrs. A. L. Webster appears in *The Improved Housewife* (1844). The recipe, with commentary, can be found in Keith Stavely and Kathleen Fitzgerald's *Northern Hospitality: Cooking By the Book in New England* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2011).

MAKES ONE LARGE PUDDING, 10 SERVINGS

5 cups all-purpose flour, plus ¼ cup	2 cups brandy
3 cups currants	8 medium eggs
2¾ cups raisins	1 cup milk
2 tablespoons ground nutmeg	4 tablespoons butter
½ teaspoon salt	1 cup Madeira wine or other sherry
2⅔ cups sugar	1 teaspoon rosewater
1 pound suet, finely chopped	

Also needed: a pudding bag, or 2 strips of double-thickness cheesecloth, about 30 inches long and 9 inches wide.

With a large spoon, mix together 5 cups of the flour, the currants, raisins, nutmeg, salt, and 1⅔ cups of the sugar. Add the suet.

Stir together the brandy, eggs, and milk.

In a stand mixer or large bowl, combine the flour mixture with the brandy mixture, and stir just until the batter is smooth.

If using cheesecloth strips, soak them in hot water, and wring them out. Drape the strips cross-wise over a large mixing bowl (or place the pudding bag, opened out, in the bowl).

Lightly dust the strips or bag with the quarter cup of flour and pour in the pudding batter.

Tie up the strips (or close up the bag), leaving a few inches of the cloth at the ties. Place the pudding on a trivet in the bottom of a large pot, and fill the pot with water. To keep the pudding steady, secure the ends of the cheesecloth strips or pudding cloth around the handle of a wooden spoon, and rest the spoon across the top of the pot. Bring the water to a boil.

Boil the pudding for six hours, replenishing the water as needed. During the last 10-15 minutes, melt the butter in a saucepan, add the remaining cup of sugar and the Madeira or sherry, and boil for a minute. Mix in the rosewater.

Remove the pudding from the pot, unwrap it, and place it on a large plate or ceramic platter. Transfer the butter and wine sauce to a creamer or small pitcher. Serve sliced and garnished with the sauce.