

Cranberry Bread Pudding

Serves 10

2 lb. Brioche challah
3 c. half-and-half
3 c. heavy cream
1/8 tsp. salt
1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise
1 1/2 length of fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated
9 lg. eggs
1 1/2 c. granulated sugar
1 1/2 c. cranberries
1/4 c. orange marmalade
Confectioners' sugar

Preheat the oven to 350°. Cut the crusts off the bread and cut into 1-inch cubes. You should have about 10 1/2 cups of cubes. Arrange on a baking sheet and toast in the oven until light golden brown, about 10 minutes. Watch carefully to make sure they do not brown too much; set aside to cool. Leave the oven on. Alternately, leave cut brioche out at room temperature overnight to dry.

In a saucepan, heat the half-and-half, cream, salt, grated ginger and vanilla beans over medium heat, stirring occasionally to make sure the mixture doesn't burn or stick to the bottom of the pan. When the cream mixture reaches a fast simmer (do not let it boil), turn off the heat. Set aside to infuse 10 to 15 minutes. In a large mixing bowl, whisk the eggs and sugar together. Whisking constantly, gradually add the hot cream mixture. Strain into a large bowl to smooth the mixture and remove the vanilla bean. Add the bread cubes, toss well, and let soak until absorbed, about 20 – 30 minutes. Fold the mixture occasionally to ensure even soaking. In a food processor pulse the berries to roughly chop them. Fold them into the soaked bread cubes carefully. Divide half the bread mixture among 20 ramekins, custard cups, or dessert cups, reserving the rest, filling them half way. Place a teaspoon of orange marmalade in each ramekin then top off with the remaining soaked bread mixture. Arrange the puddings in a hot water bath. Bake until set and golden brown on top, about 30 minutes for individual puddings. Run a thin knife around the edge of the ramekin and turn out on to serving plate if desired. Serve warm or chilled, dusted with confectioners' sugar.

Note: To make this a pumpkin/cranberry pudding, reduce the cream to 1 cup and replace it with 1 (16 oz.) can of pure pumpkin purée, 1 tsp. each of nutmeg and cloves and 1 Tbl. cinnamon..