

WHAT'S FOR PUDDING?

Britain's claim to culinary fame is undoubtedly its vast repertoire of old-fashioned puddings that not surprisingly, are making a comeback on swish restaurant menus. **Fareeda Kanga** explores the sweet return of nostalgic times.



Photographs: Visit Britain

Britain may have lost its dominance on the world political stage, but it certainly has shaped the way the world enjoys its sweets. Most of us remember coming home to the aroma of a delicious caramel custard or bread and butter pudding emanating from our mum's kitchen.

In the last two decades, puddings had taken a back seat to their more fashionable siblings—desserts.

However, an increasing number of chefs around the globe are embracing the whole 'Comfort Food' trend and guess what? Puddings are back with a bang and are slowly replacing some of the uber-cool stylised desserts we find on restaurant menus.

Says Chef Saudamini Mathur, Sous Chef, Pastry at Trident, Bandra Kurla, Mumbai, "Old fashioned puddings are the most delicious and comforting desserts across the globe, a reason why they are making a comeback to niche hotel and restaurant menus as well. Also, with such a long history of Victorian influences on the cuisine of India, puddings are reminiscent of childhood memories. Quaint cafés dotting the colonial part of South Bombay have been serving the mawa cakes, caramel custards and trifles since times immemorial. I am a regular there as they bring back memories of growing up eating at 'family restaurants' vis-a-vis the standalone fine diners

we have today with their cover charges and reservations."

So we come to the tricky one—what's the difference between a pudding and a dessert? Although the two words are largely interchangeable, many purists use the word 'pudding' to describe the more filling and heavier recipes (like sponges and crumbles) and 'dessert' for the lighter mousses, meringues and so on. "A pudding needn't necessarily be sweet—the staple British Yorkshire pudding is a savoury delicacy, for example," points out foodie Karen Anand.

The word pudding is believed to come from the French word boudin, originally Latin, meaning 'small sausage', referring to encased meats used in medieval European puddings. That practice has mostly stopped and puddings are generally homogeneous either baked or steamed with all the elements together. They mostly get their name from the ingredients used in it. For example, bread pudding, rhubarb crumble and apple crisp. They range from being either dairy based or dense sticky sponges. Some popular savoury British puddings like the Yorkshire pudding are eaten on particular occasions like Christmas and Easter.

A Culinary Journey Begins

To really satisfy my pudding craving, I head to the picturesque county of



The Old Original Bakewell Pudding Shop at Derbyshire, UK

Bakewell Tart

Ingredients

For the shortcrust pastry
175gm plain flour
75gm chilled butter
2-3tbsp cold water

For the filling

1 tbsp raspberry jam
125gm butter
125gm caster sugar
125gm ground almonds
1 free-range egg, beaten
½ tsp almond extract
50gm flaked almonds

For the icing

80gm icing sugar
2½tsp cold water

Method

To make the pastry, measure the flour into a bowl and rub in the butter with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs, add the water, mixing to form a soft dough.

Roll out the dough on a lightly floured work surface and use to line a 20 cm/8in flan tin, leave in the fridge to chill for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 200°C / 400°F / Gas 6 (180°C fan).

Line the pastry case with foil and fill with baking beans; bake blind for about 15 minutes, then remove the beans and foil and cook for a further five minutes to dry out the base.

For the filling, spread the base of the flan generously with raspberry jam.

Melt the butter in a pan; take off the heat and then stir in the sugar, add ground almonds, egg and almond extract, pour into the flan tin and sprinkle over the flaked almonds.

Bake for about 35 minutes. If the almonds seem to be browning too quickly, cover the tart loosely with foil to prevent them burning.

Meanwhile, sift the icing sugar into a bowl, stir in cold water and transfer to a piping bag.

Once you have removed the tart from the oven, pipe the icing over the top, giving an informal zigzag effect.



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Derbyshire in the UK to uncover the recipe of one of Britain's best-loved puds—The Bakewell Pudding.

In the tiny town of Bakewell way back in 1820 a culinary legend was born... According to folklore, visiting noblemen ordered a strawberry tart at the Rutland Arms Pub but the cook, instead of stirring the egg mixture into the pastry, spread it on top of the jam. The result was so successful that a certain Mrs Wilson, who resided in the cottage now known as the Old Original Bakewell Pudding Shop saw the commercial viability of selling the puddings...and the rest as they say is history!

So like all tourists we trot off to The Old Original Bakewell Pudding Shop to sample this culinary delight. The Bakewell Pudding Shop is bustling with locals and tourists alike as we partake in a sampling



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"Old fashioned puddings are delicious & comforting desserts." —Chef Saudamini Mathur, Sous Chef, Pastry, Trident, Bandra

of the rich egg and almond custard nestled on a pastry case covered in jam and served with lashings of cream.

By scouring English cookbooks and speaking to locals I learn that British puddings are gloriously stodgy, heavy and often made with suet (a type of animal fat—from around the kidneys of bovine cattle) and invariably have a custard base or jam, toffee and lashings of treacle syrup. Syrupy basin puddings with moist sponge and sticky sauce are favourites as are the jam roly-poly and spotted dick. In fact in the old days, travellers charted their course by the delicious puddings produced by the innkeeper—Bakewell pudding, Chester pudding, Manchester tart or Kentish cherry batter.

Follow these easy tips and recipes and enjoy a luscious slice of pudding; the perfect soul food.

Old-Fashioned Bread & Butter Pudding

Ingredients

8 slices of white bread, ½ inch (1 cm) thick with crusts left on bread
150gm of sultanas & raisins (75gm + 75 (each))
2 to 3 rounded tablespoons dark chunky orange marmalade
200gm butter
250ml milk
3eggs
Sugar (to sprinkle on top)

Method

Preheat oven to about 180°C (350°F). Grease a 30x30(cm) ovenproof baking dish on the bottom and sides.

Take four slices of bread, and butter each on both sides.

Place them in the dish. Add raisins and sultanas, simply sprinkling them on top of the bread. Next, spread the marmalade over the raisins and bread liberally (You can increase the quantity of marmalade if needed).

Next, take the other 4 pieces of bread and butter them on both sides.

Place the bread on top of the jam, raisins, etc. and then cut the four sandwich-like portions into halves or even quarters so that you will have smaller pieces.

Put milk into a mixing bowl and whisk in the eggs, when this becomes an almost cream like colour, pour the mixture on top of the bread.

Sprinkle a small amount of sugar (optionally) and bake in the oven for about 35 to 40 minutes until it's puffy and golden and the top crust is crunchy.

Serve the pudding straight from the oven whilst it's still puffy with fresh cream or custard.