

SAVORY CHESTNUT PUDDING

This dense pudding is really a savory custard, and it makes a tasty side dish for a fall or winter holiday meal. The butter was reduced by half to prevent the pudding from separating. To serve it as a dessert, triple the sugar.

Butter or oil for greasing

1 pound chestnuts or 12 to 14 ounces vacuum-packed chestnuts

1 ½ cups milk

6 eggs, beaten

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

Pinch of salt

2 tablespoons light brown sugar, tightly packed

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 350°. Lightly butter a 1-quart soufflé dish or pudding dish.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Meanwhile, use a paring knife to cut an “x” on the flat side of each chestnut. Drop the chestnuts into the boiling water and boil for 5 minutes. Remove a chestnut, run under cold water to cool, and peel off the shell and inner brown skin. If the chestnut does not peel easily, boil for another few minutes. Turn off the heat, and, one by one, remove a chestnut, run under cold water and remove the peels and skins. If using vacuum-packed chestnuts, omit this step.

Place the chestnuts on a baking sheet and roast until thoroughly dry and toasty, about 30 minutes. Remove and cool. Transfer chestnuts to a food processor fitted with a steel blade and process to a fine meal.

Whisk together the milk and eggs in a large bowl. Beat the butter, salt, and sugar together in a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, or with a hand mixer, until fluffy. Add the chestnuts to the mixture and beat well. Add the milk, eggs, and vanilla. Combine thoroughly.

Pour into the buttered soufflé dish. Place in a larger baking pan and add enough boiling water to the baking pan to come halfway up the sides of the soufflé dish. Bake 45–60 minutes in the water bath in the oven until firm but still slightly quivery in the center when gently shaken. Serve immediately or at room temperature.

Note: For a more savory pudding, lightly sauté ¼ cup minced celery and 1 tablespoon minced shallots until soft in 1 tablespoon butter. Add ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼–½ teaspoon fresh ground pepper, or more to taste. Add to the chestnut mixture. Serve with a sherry wine sauce if you desire.

For a dessert pudding, use 6 tablespoons brown sugar. Serve pudding dusted with confectioners sugar and whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.

Serves 6–8

Chestnut Pudding

Boil a quantity of chestnuts, first slitting the skins of each with a sharp knife to prevent their bursting. When they become tender take them out of their skins and put the meats into an oven. When they are thoroughly dry pulverize them, and then make a batter as follows. 6 ounces of good butter, beat it to a cream, and then add 8 ounces powdered chestnuts, 2 tablespoons sifted loaf sugar, a few drops of vanilla extract, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pint of milk and 6 whisked eggs. Beat the mixture well together pour it into a buttered mold, cover the top with buttered paper and bake in a good oven. Serve it to the table with wine sauce.