

MENA DHU CORNISH STOUT CHRISTMAS PUDDING

SOAKING YOUR FRUIT OVERNIGHT IN MENA DHU, ST AUSTELL BREWERY'S AWARD-WINNING CORNISH STOUT, MAKES FOR A PROPER PLUMP, DELICIOUSLY RICH AND DARK PUDDING.



PREPARATION TIME: OVERNIGHT TO SOAK

COOKING TIME: 6 HOURS PLUS 1 HOUR WHEN SERVING | SERVES: 8

INGREDIENTS

140g raisins
140g sultanas
140g currants
140g dates, chopped
50g mixed peel
1 large Bramley apple (about 125g)
peeled and finely chopped
250ml Mena Dhu Cornish stout
50ml Walter Hicks 125 rum
Zest of one orange
Zest of one lemon

100g cold butter
100g plus two tbsp dark
muscovado sugar
100g fresh white breadcrumb
50g self raising flour
½ tsp ground cloves
½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp ground ginger
½ tsp nutmeg
2 eggs
An old sixpence or coin

METHOD

Mix the dried fruit with the apple, then stir in Mena Dhu, Walter Hicks rum, orange and lemon zest. If you like tradition, then this is the moment when you get the family together to have a good stir and make a wish! Cover and let it soak overnight.

When you're ready, butter a 1.25 litre/2 pint pudding basin and spoon in 2 tbsp of the dark muscovado sugar. Turn the bowl around at an angle so that the sugar coats the inside of the bowl.

Get another bowl and mix the remaining dry ingredients. Then grate the butter into the dry ingredients and add the eggs and soaked fruit. Spoon just a little into the prepared pudding basin and put in the coin. Now cover with the rest of the mixture and level off the top.

Take a sheet of foil about 30cm long and cover it with a similar-sized sheet of baking parchment or greaseproof paper and butter the paper. Fold a 3cm pleat in the middle and place it on top of a pudding bowl. Next, tie a piece of string around the bowl under the rim, trapping the paper underneath and ensuring the pleat is in the middle. It's a good idea to tie a strong piece of string across the top also to make a handle.

Put the pudding on a heatproof saucer in a saucepan, then pour in freshly boiled water to halfway up the basin. Cover and steam for 6 hours, ensuring you keep a regular eye on the water and top it up with boiling water straight from the kettle about halfway through the steam. When the pudding is steamed allow it to cool, then remove the baking parchment and foil. Replace with fresh foil and baking parchment and make another string handle for easy moving. Store in a cool, dry place.

On Christmas Day itself, half fill a saucepan with boiling water and put it on to heat. When it comes back to the boil, place a steamer on top of the pan and turn it down to a gentle simmer. Put the Christmas pudding into the steamer, cover and leave it for 1 hour. Check the water from time to time and top it up as required. Alternatively, remove foil and microwave the pudding for 10 minutes on medium heat.

When you are ready to serve the pudding, remove from the steamer and take off the wrapping. Slide a palette knife around the pudding and turn it out on to a warmed plate. Warm a little brandy over a direct heat and remove as soon as it becomes hot. Set light to the brandy using a long match and pour over the pudding for the grand finale to your Christmas meal. And of course, serve with Walter Hicks Rum butter or sauce.

Mena Dhu is available at the St Austell Brewery Visitor Centre (01726 66022) online at www.staustellbreweryshop.co.uk and at the following retailers: Tesco, Sainsbury's, McColl's, Majestic Wine, Spar.

