

My grandfather was a good cook, and after he retired, he always made bread pudding. If he knew that my sister and I would be visiting he made sure to make one without raisins because my sister hated them. I honestly can't remember a time when we visited that he didn't have bread pudding, so it became something that we really craved when we knew we were headed his way. This is my version—a little more complicated than his, but always made to honor my grandfather.

BUDÍN DE PAN Y FRUTAS

Bread and Fruit Pudding

SERVES 6

This recipe is baked in a baking dish that has been "caramelized": There is a melted sugar coating in the bottom and up the sides of the pan in which the pudding is baked.

- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 4 cups milk
- 1 cup coconut milk
- 6 large eggs, beaten
- 2 tablespoons good-quality vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ cup (1 stick) melted butter
- 1 cup mashed ripe bananas
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 8 cups coarsely chopped leftover bread, cake, or doughnuts, or a combination
- Rum and Vanilla Cream Sauce (recipe follows), for serving

In a saucepan, combine 1 cup of the sugar and ½ cup water and cook over medium-high heat, stirring often, until the sugar has dissolved completely. Reduce the heat to medium and cook until the syrup turns golden brown. Pour the caramel into a 9-by-13-inch baking dish and tilt the dish so the caramel coats the bottom and halfway up the sides.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

In a large bowl, combine the remaining 1 cup sugar, the milk, coconut milk, eggs, vanilla, salt, melted butter, bananas, cranberries, and cinnamon and mix well. Stir in the bread and let it soak for 8 to 10 minutes. Pour the bread mixture into the prepared baking dish. Place the baking dish into a pan that is a bit larger, with sides that come up to at least three-quarters of the height of the caramelized baking dish. Pour boiling water into the larger pan to come halfway up the sides of the caramelized baking dish. (This is called a bain-marie and helps the bread pudding cook evenly.)

Carefully place the two pans together in the oven and bake until the pudding is golden brown, puffed, and a little firm, 45 to 60 minutes. Let cool for a bit, then pool some of the cream sauce onto individual serving plates, spoon warm bread pudding onto the sauce, and serve.

CREMA DE VAINILLA Y RON / RUM AND VANILLA CREAM SAUCE

MAKES 3 CUPS

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 vanilla bean, split in half lengthwise
- ½ cup dark rum

In a saucepan, combine the cream, sugar, and vanilla bean and cook over low heat until big bubbles appear on top, 20 to 30 minutes. Remove from the heat, then stir in the rum. Serve warm.

