

## Baked Indian Pudding with Vanilla Mouseline

**Time:** 20 minutes to prepare the pudding, 3 hours to bake it; 15 minutes to prepare the sauce

An elemental dessert, innocent of ingredient and impossible to resist, Indian pudding is straight cornmeal mush custard, sweetened with molasses and warmed with spice. It is as plain as a pilgrim costume and brown, brown, brown. For those of you who haven't had the pleasure—and we've met a lot of you lately—this description may not quicken your pulse, but there is dark magic in the synergy of ingredients, a swirling headiness and a light, soothing texture that pull the spoon inexorably back toward your mouth. The obligatory raft of vanilla ice cream or puddle of custard sauce doesn't hurt either.

We're tempted to say there are no *bad* Indian puddings. (One friend of ours likes his with lumps.) But the chasm between not bad and great is vast. Many pudding recipes are, in our opinion, a bit soft in the head. You can make an Indian pudding, for instance, with almost no cornmeal and absolutely no eggs. Other recipes do it all the time. But you'll wind up with a dumpy matron fit to drown in a tub of ice cream. (You can blow it completely and add flour, but we won't even speak to you then.) You can make an Indian pudding that is stirred on the stove, not steamed in the oven, but the color will be anemic and the texture fit for convalescence. You can bake an Indian pudding for just an hour, but it will slump in a bowl. The real challenge of Indian pudding is not to protect its delicate nature but to give it a little substance and shape.

### Equipment Mise en Place

For the pudding you will need a kettle to boil water, a 2-quart baking dish or pudding mold, a heavy-bottomed 2- or 3-quart saucepan, a whisk, a small mixing bowl, a rubber spatula, and a roasting pan to use as an oven insert with the baking dish. For the sauce you will need an improvised or actual double boiler, a whisk, a stand mixer with a whisk attachment or similarly outfitted hand mixer, and a rubber spatula.

### Working Ahead

It's not a bad idea to make this pudding a day in advance. For one thing, it will hog 3 hours of oven time, and, if it's a holiday, your oven might already be pretty busy. For another, the pudding doesn't suffer from a day's wait but actually benefits from a delay in serving, particularly if you're going to unmold it. If you bake the pudding in a mold, cool it completely, then dip the mold in hot water to loosen the edges. Invert the pudding onto a platter. Alternatively, you can invert the mold over a platter first and warm the bottom of the mold with hot, damp towels to persuade the pudding to slip from its form.

### Ingredients

4 cups whole milk

1 cup (5 ounces) Anson Mills Antebellum Sweet Coarse or Fine Cornmeal, yellow or white

4 tablespoons (2 ounces) cold, unsalted butter, cut into pieces, plus 1 tablespoon for greasing baking dish and foil

1/2 cup (6.3 ounces) light molasses

1/3 cup (2.8 ounces) dark brown sugar

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

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3/4 teaspoon ground ginger

1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

3 large eggs, lightly beaten

## Directions

1. Adjust an oven rack to the lower-middle position and heat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 2-quart baking dish or pudding mold and a piece of aluminum foil that will serve to cover the dish with 1 tablespoon butter; set aside. Set a full kettle on the flame and bring it to a boil.
2. Place the milk and cornmeal in a heavy-bottomed 2- or 3-quart saucepan over medium heat and bring to a simmer, whisking constantly, about 10 minutes. Reduce the heat and continue to whisk as the pudding simmers and thickens, 1 minute. Remove the pan from the heat; whisk in the butter piece by piece. Whisk in the molasses, brown sugar, cinnamon, ginger, salt, and vanilla. Ladle about a half cup of hot pudding into the beaten eggs and stir to warm them. Pour the egg mixture back into the pudding base and stir to incorporate.
3. Pour the hot pudding into the prepared baking dish or mold. Fit the foil over the pudding, buttered side down, or cover the mold with its lid. Pull the oven rack out slightly and place a large roasting pan on it. Place the pudding in the roasting pan and pour hot water to come half way up the sides of the baking dish or mold. Push the oven rack back in. Bake the pudding for 3 hours, adding water to the roasting pan if necessary to maintain the same level.
4. Cool the pudding 30 minutes before serving. If you have used a baking dish, cut or spoon the pudding into servings. For pudding molds, see Cooking Remarks. If you've prepared the pudding the day before serving, you can reheat it in a 250-degree oven for 30 to 40 minutes before serving. Serve warm with Vanilla Mousseline (recipe follows).

**Serves 8**

## Vanilla Mousseline

A stand mixer or hand-held electric mixer can be used for this recipe.

## Ingredients

1 large egg

1/4 cup granulated sugar

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and slightly warm

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Pinch fine sea salt

1 cup heavy cream, whipped to soft peaks

## Directions

- 1.** Combine the egg and sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer or, if using a hand-held mixer, a heatproof mixing bowl. Place the bowl over a small pot of simmering water. Whisk continuously until the mixture is smooth and warm and has thickened, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove the bowl from the heat. Whip, until the mixture is thick and cool, about 5 minutes. Drizzle in the melted butter a little at a time, then the vanilla and salt, and continue whipping until the mixture is cool and fluffy. Cover the surface of the sauce with plastic wrap and chill until completely cold, at least 1 hour and up to 24 hours.
- 2.** Gently fold the whipped cream into the base. Serve over warm Baked Indian Pudding.

**Makes about 1 1/2 cups**