

Home Cooking Chronicles: Butterscotch pudding

BY BRIAN MEDFORD

This past December, I was tormented by a kidney stone attack. This was both fortunate and unfortunate. The unfortunate part is probably fairly obvious. The fortunate part is that I live only half a mile from an emergency room.

It was a transformational experience. I went into the emergency room a crazed, overwrought mess ready to jump out of my skin, then I came out calm and slightly bleary. Thank goodness for modern medicine.

When I got home, all I wanted to do was lie on my couch and rest. I

flipped endlessly through my streaming channels and discovered “Victorian Farm,” a delightful show that I highly recommend.

Getting up to pour a glass of water seemed like a Herculean task. That’s when the knocks on my door started. My bubble of masked friends began showing up, not only to check how I was doing but to bring me food. They knew a check-in was lovely but feeding me in the aftermath of distress was therapeutic. Even my mother, who only has a kitchen because it came with her house, brought days worth of snacks and my favorite childhood supper: peppers, steak and rice.

As a Southerner, I keep a mental rubric to match the correct home cooked item to someone’s life event; birthday: layer cake; new home: lasagna; post-surgery recuperation: apple bundt; the opposite of a birthday: pie. We instinctually know that by cooking for others, we elevate their celebration or we alleviate a bit of their pain.

I swear, the biggest spreads I’ve ever seen are after a funeral. I’d like to state unequivocally that I’m hopeful there is a hashbrown casserole available after my final service. If not, I’ll be absolutely gutted.

When words fail and you can’t do anything else, you feed someone. During quarantine, I’ve fed myself and others pudding — a lot of pudding. Adding that to the rubric; pandemic: pudding.

Butterscotch Pudding (Adapted from Melissa Clark; yields six to eight servings)

Ingredients

- Four large egg yolks
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup dark brown sugar, packed*
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon Scotch whisky (optional)
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

Preparation

Put egg yolks, cornstarch and salt into a large bowl. Whisk until smooth.

In a medium pot over medium heat, combine brown sugar and butter. Whisk until the brown sugar melts.

Let the mixture cook. Whisk constantly for about one minute until the mixture starts to smell like caramel and darkens slightly. Don’t walk away.

Pour the milk and cream into the sugar and butter mixture. Watch out — it’ll bubble vigorously. At this point the mixture will look like a nightmare. However, continue to cook, whisking constantly, for about three to four minutes, until the sugar melts.

Slowly whisk about a ½ cup of the hot cream mixture into the bowl with the egg yolks. Whisk until smooth.

Whisk the remaining hot cream mixture into the egg yolks. Pour the egg yolk-cream mixture back into the saucepan over medium heat.



Brian Medford

During the coronavirus pandemic, author Brian Medford has enjoyed making butterscotch pudding for himself and loved ones.

Cook the pudding, whisking constantly for about one minute, until it comes to a full boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, stirring the mixture constantly for about two to four minutes, until it thickens. If the pudding looks curdled, whisk to help smooth it out.

Strain the mixture through a mesh sieve into a heatproof bowl, then stir in the Scotch (if using), vanilla and lemon juice. To prevent a skin from forming, press plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the pudding. Chill for at least two hours. The pudding lasts up to two days. Spoon into bowls and serve with softly whipped cream.

*Light brown sugar will work. However, dark brown sugar ensures the pudding achieves maximum butterscotch glory.

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