



## *Savory Brie and Vegetable Bread Pudding*

Serves 8

*The heady flavors of brie cheese, mushrooms, and sweet onions are layered here with country bread and asparagus to create this aromatic and rustic bread pudding. The flavors are substantial enough to stand up to the hearty bread and work perfect as a main course when served with a tossed green salad, or as a side dish. For holiday entertaining, this savory bread pudding will complement any buffet.*

### **Ingredients:**

1 bunch thin asparagus, tough ends snapped off and sliced on the diagonal in generous 1-inch pieces  
2 tablespoons butter  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
8 ounces small cremini mushrooms, cleaned and sliced in 1/4-inch pieces  
1 small Vidalia or other sweet onion coarsely chopped (to yield about 1/2 cup)  
About 3/4 of country-style white bread (French Boule) cut into coarse cubes about 1- to 1 1/2-inches square (crusts on) (about 1 1/2 – 2 pound loaf)  
2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves  
4 ounces ripe Brie cheese, cut into cubes approximately 1/2-inch square  
1 1/2 cups whole milk  
1 1/2 cups heavy cream  
5 eggs at room temperature  
Sea salt and fresh ground pepper, to season

### **Preparation:**

Butter a 2 1/2-quart casserole or soufflé dish and set aside.

Blanch the asparagus in boiling salted water about 30-45 seconds. Transfer the asparagus to an ice-water bath and let cool. Drain and transfer the asparagus to a paper towel lined dish. Reserve.

In a medium skillet, melt the butter in the olive oil over medium heat. Add the mushrooms and the onions. Season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally until the mushrooms are golden brown and the onions are translucent. Remove from heat and set aside.

Arrange half of the bread cubes in the bottom of the casserole dish and sprinkle with half of the thyme leaves. Place half of the asparagus over the bread, and do the same with the mushroom and onion mixture. Sprinkle half the cheese cubes on top. Place the remaining bread cubes on top of the cheese, repeating the layers of thyme, asparagus, mushroom and onions and cheese.

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In a medium mixing bowl combine the milk, cream, and the eggs whisking to combine. Season with salt and pepper. Pour the mixture slowly into the prepared casserole dish pressing down on the vegetables and bread to completely soak the casserole dish through. Cover loosely with cling film. Place a plate (or other flat surface) on the cling film and weigh down the plate with a heavy can. Let the pudding stand at room temperature at least 20 minutes, or until the bread has fully absorbed all of the milk and cream mixture.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Remove plate and cling film and bake about 45 minutes until the custard has set and the pudding is puffed and raised like a soufflé; the top should be golden. Transfer to a rack to cool and set, about 10 minutes. Serve hot.

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