



Savory Sausage Bread Pudding

Serves 8 to 10

Inspired from the delicious Sausage Bread we buy at the local Island butcher where my family vacations, this bread pudding combines all of the savory full-flavors of sweet Italian sausage and parmesan cheese with the nuttiness of caramelized seasonal squash and the buttery taste of Emmentaler cheese. Don't hesitate to trade out ingredients. Use what is seasonal and balance flavors with your overall taste preference.

Ingredients:

3 cups whole milk
1/2 teaspoon fennel seed
1/8 teaspoon coarse ground pepper
1 1/2 to 2 pounds mild Italian sausage
1 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoons olive oil
1 small butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cubed (to yield about 4 cups)
1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
1 tablespoon minced shallots
5 eggs
8 cups Ciabatta bread, crust on, cut or torn into about 1/2 -inch pieces (about a 1-pound loaf)
3/4 cup freshly grated Grana Padana cheese (or substitute any parmesan-type variety)
3/4 cup freshly grated Emmentaler Swiss cheese (substitute any standard Swiss cheese)
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh parsley
Coarse salt to season

Preparation:

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

In a medium saucepan, combine the milk, fennel seeds and black pepper. Heat over high heat until the milk is steaming, just before it reaches a simmer. Remove from the heat and allow to cool.

Remove the sausage from its casings. Place a large skillet over medium heat and add the sausage, breaking it apart into small pieces with a wooden spoon. Cook until the sausage is cooked through, about 5 to 7 minutes. Remove the sausage from the skillet to a bowl with a slotted spoon pan. Set aside.

Pour off all but 1 tablespoon of the liquid from the pan. Add the butter and the olive oil and place the skillet over medium heat, until the butter is frothy. Add the butternut squash and toss to coat. Cook until caramelized, about 10 to 15 minutes, toss 3 or 4 times during cooking. Add the shallots and season with salt. Cook for 1

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minute longer. Remove from the heat. Sprinkle the nutmeg over the butternut squash mixture and toss. Set aside.

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk the eggs. Whisk in the cooled milk mixture and then gently fold in the bread. Add the sausage, butternut squash mixture, and the cheeses. Gently mix until well combined. Stir in the parsley. Let the mixture sit for about 20 minutes while the bread absorbs the liquid, gently mix to aid in the absorption of all the liquid.

Pour the mixture into the prepared baking dish pressing gently down on the mixture. Bake for 35 minutes, until golden brown. Serve immediately.

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