

# Alex Grehy's Christmas Pudding Recipe

Adapted and modernized from the 1965 *Good Housekeeping Cookery Book*.

This recipe is adaptable and can be suited to a range of dietary needs and preferences. It is a forgiving recipe, so don't panic if your measurements are there or thereabouts. Serves a two-pint (around one-liter) pudding basin.

Prep time: 45 minutes measuring and mixing, plus 24 hours before mixing to soak the fruit

Steaming time: 5 hours

Maturing time: 4 weeks

## Ingredients

- 11 ounces (300 grams) dried fruit: Choose any combination from raisins, sultanas, currants, dates, and cranberries.
- 2–3 tablespoons of spirit: Traditionally brandy, rum, or whisky, though fruit liqueurs like calvados, orange, amaretto, or apricot are also lovely. If you prefer to cook without alcohol, fruit juices are a good substitute, especially richer ones like peach nectar.
- 4 ounces (100 grams) fancy fruit: Choose any combination from glacé cherries, maraschino cherries, mixed candied peel, dried apricots, or stem ginger.
- 4 ounces (100 grams) nuts: Choose any combination from hazelnuts, almonds, walnuts, pecans, or macadamias. Can be omitted for a nut-free pudding—just increase the quantity of fancy fruit instead.
- 4 ounces (100 grams) flour: Plain white or gluten free
- 1 teaspoon mixed spice: Use prepared mixed spice or choose any combination of cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, mace, allspice, and ground cloves.
- Pinch of salt
- 2 ounces fresh or dried breadcrumbs: May be gluten free if required.
- 3 ounces suet: Traditionally beef suet but vegetable suet is a good substitute. Note: some vegetable suets contain wheat flour.
- 3 ounces dark brown sugar
- 1 egg, lightly beaten: Can substitute with 15 milliliters of aquafaba for a vegan pudding
- Milk for mixing if needed: Can be substituted with water or fruit juice for a dairy-free option.

## Mixing Your Pudding

1. The day before mixing day: If using raisins, sultanas, or currants, pick off any stalks and break up clumps; chop dates (if needed); chop cranberries into rough quarters; put the fruit to soak in chosen booze (or fruit juice) overnight.
2. Sieve the flour, a pinch of salt, and spices into a BIG bowl.
3. Prepare your fancy fruit.
  - Glacé cherries: Chop into quarters and wash off the syrup by putting in a sieve and running under the hot tap. Dry off the fruit with a paper towel (kitchen roll) then mix with a little flour taken from the total.
  - Mixed peel: Wash off the syrup by putting in a sieve and running under the hot tap. Dry off the fruit with a paper towel (kitchen roll) then mix with a little flour taken from the total.
4. Chop the nuts coarsely. By hand is best because then you will get crunchy chunks, but a grinder or food processor is quicker!
5. Add the sugar, nuts, suet, and breadcrumbs to the flour mixture. Stir thoroughly.
6. Add the fancy fruit; mix thoroughly.
7. Add the fruit that has been soaking in alcohol and stir thoroughly.
8. Beat an egg. Add the beaten egg and a generous slosh of milk/water to mix.
9. Stir the mixture thoroughly. Make sure that everyone in the household gives one stir and makes a secret wish!
10. Check the consistency. You are aiming for a soft dropping consistency. Pick up a spoonful of the mix and let it drop off the spoon—it should literally fall softly (splat) into the bowl!
11. Pour the mixture into a greased pudding basin.
12. Cover with greaseproof paper. Trim the edges of the paper to make it easier to put into your steamer.

## Cooking Your Pudding

Put your pudding in a steamer (if you have one).

If you do not have a steamer, you can put your pudding basin in a large saucepan with boiling water up to around one-third of the height of your basin. If you use this method, then you will have to check the level of the water and top up regularly so that it does not boil dry.

For a two-pint pudding, steam for five hours. After steaming for the required time, remove the bowl from the saucepan and turn the pudding out onto a cooling rack. Allow to cool.

## Looking After Your Pudding

Once it's totally cool, wrap your pudding in generous layers of greaseproof paper then cover with foil and store in a cool dark place (not the fridge). Every week unwrap the pudding, spike with a skewer, and pour over a dessertspoon of your base alcohol (brandy, rum, or whisky). Allow to soak in for ten minutes then rewrap the pudding. For alcohol-free puddings, just keep the pudding well-wrapped and undisturbed until Christmas Day.

## Reheating Your Pudding

In your microwave: Heat on full power for three minutes, then allow to stand for three minutes. Heat on low power for eight minutes, then allow to stand for three minutes.

Steam: Unwrap the foil from your pudding but leave it in the greaseproof paper. Put in a steamer and steam for a couple of hours.

Whatever method you use, don't forget to check that your pudding is piping hot before you serve!

Read Alex Grehy's essay "The Joys of an Old Cookery Book"

- On the Capsule Stories blog at [capsulestories.com/christmas-pudding-recipe](https://capsulestories.com/christmas-pudding-recipe)
- In *Capsule Stories Winter 2021 Edition: Sugar and Spice*, now available in paperback and ebook at [capsulestories.com/winter-2021-edition](https://capsulestories.com/winter-2021-edition)