

Focaccia Bread Pudding with Wild Mushrooms and Goat Cheese

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This savory bread pudding is soft and custardy, with creamy nuggets of goat cheese and crispy bits on top. I hope it becomes a new tradition on your Thanksgiving table. On other occasions, pair it with roast chicken. I developed this recipe for Wine Institute as an accompaniment to California Pinot Noir.

Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons unsalted butter
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ pound wild mushrooms or cultivated crimini or oyster mushrooms, sliced or quartered
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups thinly sliced leeks, white and pale green part only
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried herbes de Provence
- ½ pound plain focaccia, 1 to 2 days old, in 1-inch cubes
- 4 large eggs, beaten
- 2 cups whole milk
- 4 to 5 ounces fresh goat cheese with no rind



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Directions

Preheat an oven to 375°F. Using 1 teaspoon butter, grease the bottom and sides of a 2-quart baking dish. An oval baking dish measuring about 13- by 8- by 1-1/2-inches works well.

Heat 1-1/2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms. Do not stir for 30 seconds to allow the mushrooms to sear on one side. Then season with salt and pepper and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms are nicely browned and tender, about 3 minutes, adjusting the heat if necessary to prevent scorching. Set aside on a plate.

Let the skillet cool slightly, then add the remaining 1-1/2 tablespoons olive oil and return to medium-low heat. Add the leek, garlic, and herbes de Provence. Sauté until the leek is soft, about 5 minutes.

In a large bowl, combine the focaccia, mushrooms, and sautéed leek and garlic. Toss gently with a spatula.

In a bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, 1 teaspoon salt, and several grinds of black pepper. Pour over the bread mixture and stir gently with a rubber spatula. Let stand for 15 minutes, stirring once or twice, so the bread absorbs some of the liquid. Add the goat cheese in small clumps, then stir gently to distribute.

Transfer to the prepared baking dish and dot the surface with the remaining 1 teaspoon butter. Bake until puffed, nicely colored on top, and firm to the touch, about 35 minutes. If you want it a little more crusty on top, put it under a preheated broiler for a minute or two. Watch closely! Let cool 15 minutes before serving.

Serves 4 to 6