

Leek Bread Pudding

Ingredients:

2 cups ½" thick sliced Leeks, white & light green parts only, cleaned & rinsed
4 tbsp unsalted Butter
12 cups 1" cubed crustless Brioche or Pullman loaf
1 tbsp finely chopped Chives
1 tsp fresh Thyme leaves
3 large Eggs
3 cups whole Milk
3 cups Heavy Cream
Kosher Salt
Freshly ground black Pepper
Freshly grated Nutmeg
1 cup shredded Comte or Emmenthaler cheese

Directions:

Place a medium sauté pan over medium heat, drain excess water from leeks, and add to pan.
Season with salt, and sauté until leeks begin to soften, about 5 minutes, then reduce heat to medium-low. (They'll release liquid as they cook.)
Stir in butter.
Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until leeks are very soft, about 30 minutes.
Adjust salt and pepper to taste.
Heat oven to 350°.
While leeks are cooking, spread bread cubes on a baking sheet and bake until dry and pale gold, about 20 minutes, turning pan about halfway through.
Transfer to a large bowl, leaving the oven on.
Add leeks, chives, and thyme to the bowl of bread; toss well.
In another large bowl, lightly whisk the eggs, then whisk in milk, cream, a generous pinch of salt, pepper to taste, and a pinch of nutmeg.
Sprinkle ¼ cup shredded cheese in bottom of a 9" by 13" baking pan.
Spread ½ of bread mixture in pan, and sprinkle with another ¼ cup cheese.
Spread remaining bread mixture in pan, and sprinkle with another ¼ cup cheese.
Pour in enough milk mixture to cover bread, and gently press on bread so milk soaks in.
Let rest 15 minutes.
Add remaining milk mixture, letting some bread cubes protrude.
Sprinkle with salt and remaining cheese.
Bake until pudding is set and top is brown and bubbling, about 1½ hours.
Serve hot.