



Station View St Pudding Club?

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They say too many cooks can spoil the broth but the old adage does not apply in Kirsty Bartter's kitchen. Every November she invites a gaggle of friends to her Lane Cove home for an afternoon of Christmas cooking. They gather around the spotless kitchen bench, sipping Champagne, nibbling sandwiches and tossing pudding ingredients into enormous bowls. Every guest has a task. One woman measures the flour, one adds the raisins, while another cracks the eggs. One pours a portion of rum into each bowl, offering to add extra for anyone with an unpleasant mother-in-law. "That should put the old bag out for the day," someone giggles. When all the ingredients are in place, they stir them together then take the raw mixture home to steam. In the four years since Bartter's first pudding day, there has never been a failure. "Kirsty makes it absolutely foolproof," her friend, Patty King, says. "The first year I came, my family were sure I'd stuff it up because I don't really like pudding but now I'm converted and I'm in charge of our family pudding every year. It's a great recipe. "Word of the recipe has spread, making an invitation to pudding day highly coveted. This year Bartter hosted three sessions to meet demand. "There are so many people who want to come," King says. "I know girls at the gym who say hopefully, 'Do you think this year we can

come to pudding day?' It's one of the best days of the year. "Bartter is not sure where the recipe came from.

Over the years she has tweaked and changed it, adding brown sugar and cutting the stout. "I'm terrible with recipes," she says. "I mess with every recipe I get my hands on. I like to think of ways I can make it better."

She buys the best ingredients, stocking up on raisins, sultanas, dates and mixed peel at the local fruit market.

Later, they split the costs. Before the guests arrive, she makes the breadcrumbs, chops the dates and lays everything out on the kitchen bench.

"It's a bit of work but I like cooking for other people," she says. "On a normal school day, we're all so busy chasing the kids around, so it's nice to put in a bit more effort when you can find the time." For Bartter, the event is a continuation of a family tradition.

Growing up in Wagga Wagga, she saw her mother and a small group of friends come together every year to make puddings, mince tarts and gingerbread. "It was always pretty noisy when I was trying to study," she says. She has always used her mother's recipes and techniques at Christmas time and throughout the year but, for many of her friends, the traditional Christmas recipes are something of a novelty. "A lot of girls my age don't really know how to make puddings," she says. "That's always been one of those things your mother or your grandmother does.

KIRSTY'S RECIPE

375g softened butter
225g fresh breadcrumbs
160g plain flour
225g raisins
225g sultanas
225g currants
250g dark brown sugar

175g almond meal
100g mixed peel
150g sliced, seeded medjool dates
130ml Bundaberg rum
130ml oloroso sherry
130ml brandy
4 eggs
1 tsp mixed spice
tsp allspice
tsp ginger
tsp nutmeg
tsp salt
tsp bicarbonate of soda
Zest of 1 orange

In a large mixing bowl, mix ingredients. Cover and place in fridge overnight. Grease and line a 10-cup capacity pudding bowl.* Spoon mixture into bowl. Cover with a pleated piece of baking paper, then a pleated piece of foil. Secure with kitchen string. Put a trivet or inverted saucer in a large saucepan. Place the pudding on the trivet in pan and add enough water until two-thirds of the bowl is submerged. Cover saucepan with a lid and simmer for five hours, checking frequently and adding boiled water to maintain the level at two-thirds. Take pudding out of saucepan and allow to cool. Replace the cover with cling film. Wrap entire pudding in foil. Refrigerate. On Christmas Day, unwrap, re-apply pleated paper and foil and secure with string. Steam (as above) for two hours. Serve with vanilla bean ice-cream and creme anglaise.*You can use two medium pudding bowls instead but then cook for three hours. Serving option: Warm cup brandy, turn pudding out on to a plate, ignite brandy and slowly pour over pudding.

Interested in a Station View St Pudding Club? Call Louise on 0433241919, or email louise@mpc.org.au