

# The Magic of Custard

Eggs, milk, and sugar combine to make a host of desserts, from rich ice creams (see [Vanilla Ice Cream](#)) to custards like crème caramel or [Coconut Custard](#). Custard is also used to make French toast and as a binder for desserts like bread pudding (which is really just deconstructed baked French toast).

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## CAKE PUDDING

SERVES 8 TO 10

The idea of “cake pudding” came to me when I had been experimenting with pound cakes and had tons of it just sitting there. I could not bring myself to throw any away. Then, the “aha” moment. I swapped in the cake for bread in my bread pudding recipe—and voilà! Cake pudding was a hit at the restaurant staff meal and a regular for me at home. I also discovered that leftover muffins are as good as pound cake in this easy dessert. By the way, this would be a good place to use leftover [Orange Buttermilk Bundt Cake](#)... if there is any.

**8 (1-inch) slices pound cake or 6 standard-size muffins (any flavor will do), cut into 1-inch cubes**

**4 large eggs**

**4 large egg yolks**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar**

**2 cups heavy cream**

**2 cups whole milk**

**1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise**

**Pinch of kosher salt**

**2 cups butterscotch chips or semisweet chocolate chips (optional)**

**Ice cream, for serving**

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Arrange the cake in a 9 x 13-inch baking pan in one layer.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the whole eggs, egg yolks, and sugar; set aside.

In a medium saucepan, combine the cream and milk. Scrape in the vanilla seeds and add the vanilla bean halves and salt. Whisking all the while, slowly pour the hot cream mixture into the egg mixture to temper it. Pour the custard back into the pan. Continue to whisk the custard over medium heat for 1 minute longer. Discard the vanilla bean halves. Pour the custard over the cake cubes. Mix in the chips, if using. Bake until the custard has set, about 40 minutes.

Cut into rectangles or squares. Serve warm with a scoop of ice cream.

## **PAIN PERDU**

**SERVES 8 TO 10**

We call it French toast. The French call it *pain perdu*. But whatever you call it, the bread and custard combo is always a hit. Although most people think of this as breakfast, I make it for dessert, with a rich custard (heavy cream and some extra egg yolks) and thick-cut bread—either an enriched bread like challah or brioche, or baguette. There are two keys to success when making pain perdu: First, let the bread soak in the custard just long enough to saturate the middle; it shouldn't be soggy. Second, always cook it in a hot pan; too cold a pan will not yield the beautiful, even golden crust. And use salted butter to cook the bread—the salt balances the flavors (bread can be bland) and helps with the browning.

2 cups heavy cream  
4 large eggs  
2 large egg yolks  
2 tablespoons honey (I prefer clover)  
1 tablespoon vanilla extract  
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
Pinch of kosher salt  
9 thick (1- to 1 1/2-inch) slices bread  
Salted butter, for cooking  
Confectioners' sugar and fresh fruit, for serving

In a blender, combine the cream, whole eggs, egg yolks, honey, vanilla, flour, cinnamon, and salt on low speed. Pour the mixture into a square pan or a shallow dish (large enough to fit more than one bread slice, if possible). Working in batches, soak the bread for about 1 minute on each side and set aside in a clean pan.

In a 10-inch nonstick skillet, melt enough butter to coat the bottom of the pan over high heat. Place as many slices of bread as will fit without overlapping and cook for about 1 minute or until golden brown. Flip the slices over and cook for about 1 minute on the other side. If the pan gets too hot, turn the heat down to medium-low until the temperature goes down a little. Repeat with the remaining bread and more butter.

Serve warm topped with a dusting of confectioners' sugar and fresh fruit.

**Pain Perdu with Orange-Glazed Bananas:** Make the Pain Perdu and while it's cooking, melt 6 tablespoons ( $\frac{3}{4}$  stick) unsalted butter with  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup packed light brown sugar in a saucepan. When the sugar just

starts to bubble, add  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup orange juice. Gently fold in 2 bananas, sliced  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick. Cook for about 1 minute to reduce the sauce. To serve, spoon some glazed bananas over each slice of French toast and sprinkle each serving with some butterscotch chips or milk chocolate chips.