

## Sticky toffee puddings



*It was February, it was cold and I was in England. Perhaps this explains the craving I experienced for sticky toffee pudding. Having reviewed a number of formulas claiming to be 'the ultimate' or 'best ever', I came up with this version, adapted from recipes from the BBC Good Food Guide and Sharrow Bay. It's certainly the best one I've had. Make double the puddings and freeze the others for the next cold day.*

Makes: 6 little puddings

Total time: approx 1 hour

softened butter and flour for lining ramekins

200g dates, pitted and roughly chopped

275ml water

1 tsp vanilla extract

100g (salted) butter, at room temperature

150g Demerara or Muscovado sugar

175g self-raising flour

½ tsp bicarbonate of soda

pinch of salt

2 large eggs

2 tbsps dark treacle

*For the sauce:*

200ml double cream

175g Muscovado or Demerara sugar

100g (salted) butter, in cubes

1 tbsp dark treacle

1. Grease 6 little pudding pots or ramekins liberally with softened butter, then coat lightly with flour, tapping out the excess so that only a thin layer remains. Place on a baking sheet and set aside. Heat oven to 180C.
2. Place dates in a small saucepan with water, bring to a boil then remove from heat. Add vanilla and set aside to cool.
3. In the bowl of an electric mixer use paddle attachment to cream together softened butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
4. In a separate bowl mix together flour, bicarbonate of soda and salt.

5. Crack eggs into a small jug and lightly beat with a fork.
6. With motor running, add eggs to creamed butter and sugar in 4 additions. Make sure each addition is fully absorbed and combined before adding the next. Then mix in treacle.
7. By hand, stir in some of the flour mix, then some of the dates and water. Continue adding them alternately until all is combined. It will be sloppy.
8. Divide mixture between prepared ramekins, leaving a full 1" gap at the top of each as they will rise in the oven.
9. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the middle of a pudding comes out moist but not covered in raw pudding mix, approx 30 mins.
10. Meanwhile make the sauce: Place all ingredients in a saucepan, bring to a boil and simmer for 4 mins while stirring frequently. Remove from heat and set aside til needed.
11. When puddings are ready leave to cool slightly then turn out onto bowls or plates. Heat up the grill.
12. Pour some sauce over each pudding then place them under grill so their tops are 4-5" from the flame/element. Grill until heated through and bubbling on top, approx 4 mins.
13. Serve while still warm with cream, crème Anglaise or vanilla ice cream. The tops of the puddings should be slightly crunchy, the centres light and airy and the sauce rich and sweet. Prepare for an enormous sugar rush...