

Homey rice pudding becomes a dessert star

Surprised to find rice pudding nestled among the white chocolate mousse and poached pear on the dessert menu? Don't be. Chicago's Drake Hotel is known for its creamy rice pudding, and trend-setting Los Angeles restaurants have adopted this homey dessert with great success. The new star of the dessert cart, however, more than deserves the illustrious status which has been bestowed upon it.

Today's rice pudding features much more than the traditional milk, eggs, sugar, and a sprinkling of two of cinnamon. Macadamia nuts, bitersweet chocolate, poached fruits, dates, coconut, coffee, liqueurs, maple syrup, peanut brittle and pumpkin share the stage. Whipped cream or prepared vanilla pudding may replace the usual custard. Sauces, creamy or fruit, often accompany the pudding. And a cold pudding may be served with a warm sauce or vice versa.

The flavors of the traditional ris a l'amande are captured in the sophisticated yet simple to prepare Danish Rice Dream. To save time, prepare the crimson sauce while the rice cooks. Both will then have ample time to chill. Just before serving fold the whipped topping, almond extract and toasted slivered almonds into the rice. Spoon into elegant

wine glasses and top with the Kirsch-laced raspberry sauce.

Equally delicious Maple Walnut Rice Custard also starts with cooked rice. You'll always have cooked rice on hand for impromptu dessert making. If you make it a point to cook an extra cup of rice whenever rice is on the menu. After cooking, simply remove half of the rice from the saucepan, cool slightly covered and refrigerate. Rice can be stored without losing quality.

When ready to prepare, combine the cold cooked rice with half-and-half, eggs and maple syrup. A hot water bath (a baking pan filled with a small amount of water) helps insulate the pudding during baking to ensure a smooth and creamy texture. Maple syrup, an old-fashioned sweetener which is enjoying a resurgence in popularity, sweetens the pudding and reappears in the delectable maple walnut sauce. Surprise guests by serving the warm sauce over chilled pudding. The temperature and texture contrasts are an unexpected delight.

Rice can be used to create simple family desserts, too. Combine the cooked rice with vanilla or

fruit-flavored yogurt and layer in dessert dishes with fresh fruit. Add to instant vanilla pudding along with semisweet chocolate pieces and chopped nuts for a rocky road dessert. Or, simply stir into softened vanilla, chocolate or coffee ice cream and top with fudge sauce.

DANISH RICE DREAM

2 1/2 cups water
1 cup rice
1/4 cup sugar
1 tbsp. butter or margarine
1 tsp. salt
1 pkg. (10 oz.) frozen sweetened raspberries, thawed
2 tsp. cornstarch
1 tbsp. Kirsch, if desired
1 container (8 or 9 oz.) frozen whipped topping, thawed
1/4 cup toasted slivered almonds
1/4 tsp. almond extract

Bring water to a boil in medium saucepan. Stir in rice, sugar, butter and salt. Cover lightly and simmer until all water is absorbed, according to package instructions, about 30 minutes. Transfer to large bowl. Cover and chill several hours. While the rice cooks, drain raspberries, reserving liquid. Blend cornstarch and 2 tablespoons of the raspberry liquid in small saucepan. Add remaining rasp-

berry liquid and Kirsch. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until thickened and clear. Gently stir in raspberries. Cover and chill for 1 hour before serving. Fold whipped topping, almonds and almond extract into rice. Top with raspberry sauce. Makes 8 servings.

MAPLE WALNUT RICE CUSTARD

3 eggs, beaten
1 1/2 cups half-and-half
1 cup maple-flavored syrup
1 1/2 cups cooked rice
1 tbsp. butter or margarine
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Combine eggs, half-and-half and 1/4 cup of the maple syrup in bowl; mix well. Stir in rice. Pour into 1 1/2 quart casserole. Place casserole in baking pan filled with 1-inch hot water. Bake at 350 degrees about 1 hour and 15 minutes or until knife inserted near center comes out clean. Stir once after 30 minutes of baking. Remove pudding from oven. Cool on rack. Serve pudding warm or chilled with maple topping.

Maple Topping: Combine remaining 1/4 cup syrup and butter in small saucepan. Cook over moderate heat, stirring constantly, until mixture comes to a boil. Reduce heat. Simmer 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Stir in walnuts. Serve warm sauce over rice custard. Makes 8 servings.



Any way you use them, love those mushrooms

When I go shopping for mushrooms, I always have a recipe or two in mind because they don't keep too long. I don't always come home with them because they must pass the freshness test.

First, I look for caps closed and about the stems. Secondly, the mushrooms must be free of spots. Next, if they are loose, they should be firm.

Since most often mushrooms are prepackaged, the unopened container goes right in the crisper. After I use some of them, the others stay in the container, covered with a damp towel. That way, they stay fresh for at least a couple of days.

I don't rinse off mushrooms until I'm ready to use them because water tends to make them brown early. Then I pat them dry. Then I chop, slice or use them whole numerous ways.

I guess you can tell I love mushrooms.

MUSHROOM CRACKER SPREAD
1 container (8 oz.) whipped cream cheese, softened
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1/4 tsp. seasoned salt
1 tbsp. minced green onion
1/4 lb. mushrooms, finely chopped

In bowl, combine first 4 ingredients. Stir in mushrooms. Cover and chill. Yields about 1 1/2 cups. Spread on crackers.

MUSHROOM SANDWICHES
1 tiny onion, finely chopped
2 tbsp. margarine
1/4 lb. mushrooms, chopped
1 tbsp. mayonnaise
1/4 tsp. snipped parsley
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 cup, crumbled dried oregano leaves
1/4 cup, black pepper
4 bread slices
4 tomato slices

In small skillet, saute onion in hot margarine until limp. Add mushrooms and saute about 5 minutes, stirring. Let mushroom mixture cool 15 minutes and combine with mayonnaise, parsley and seasonings. Spread on 2 bread slices, add tomato, cover with remaining bread and cut in half.

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