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## CUSTARDS, SWEET AND SAVORY:

### SWEET:

Golden Irish Custard Rice Pudding with  
*Calendula* Petals

Squash Custard Dessert

Vanilla Malted Milk Custard Ice Cream

### SAVORY:

Corn Meal Spoonbread with Fresh Thyme and Sage

Crustless Cheese and Spinach Savory Pie

French Garlic Custard

Custards have been comfort food ever since people first stirred eggs into warm milk or cream, I suspect. Simple, smooth, soft, lush, nutritious custards have nourished those who are ill and been the first solid food for infants for hundreds of years. My stove-top vanilla egg custard is still a fallback protein choice a couple of times a month. Have you ever tasted a *bougatsa*? It is a Greek breakfast pastry in which custard is concealed between layers of *phyllo*. The shell-shaped *sfogliatella riccia* is a similar Italian pastry that, in my admittedly prejudiced estimation, is probably one of those most beautiful and delicious foods on the planet when it is filled with a custard. The sumptuousness of Russian Orthodox Easter Dessert, known as *Paskha*, is also attributable to the rich egg custard stirred into the cheese base. [see *recipe archives* - April 2021] My Tiny Custard Pumpkin Pie in Cream Cheese Crust [see *recipe archives* – November 2018] and the Farina Custard Pie I included in my column on farina desserts [see *recipe archives* – July 2016] can both bring the concept of custard to your table.



Sweet custards are not the only way this comforting texture can become part of a meal; custards can be savory too. Quiches, *stratas*, and soufflés all adhere to the same principles. A simple soufflé, a favorite of ours from Moldova, can be found on page 287 of volume I of *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish the American Immigrant Soul*. This is a no-fuss, no-fail grated cheese soufflé that won't threaten your culinary reputation and it is delicious. *Chawanmushi* is a steamed, savory Japanese custard you might try the next time you visit a Japanese restaurant.

There are **just two simple rules** to observe when making stirred custard to assure that smooth texture. The eggs and milk or cream must be cooked slowly and they must be stirred constantly. Use a double boiler if you have to. The coagulation of egg protein is what gives stirred or baked custard that gel-like texture. **Low heat** and **stirring** are the way to encourage the necessary *slow* coagulation required. Even medium heat can result in curdling.

SWEET:

**GOLDEN IRISH CUSTARD RICE PUDDING  
WITH CALENDULA PETALS**  
*Marog Chroch*

TPT - 3 hours and 54 minutes;  
30 minutes = first cooling period;  
2 hours = second cooling period

*Saffron was and is an expensive seasoning but that is the traditional way to add color to this lovely, rich pudding. Dried and powdered Calendula petals are an adequate substitute since saffron's purpose in the original Irish recipe is to contribute a bright yellow color to the dessert. White dessert dishes are a very good choice if you have them, since the pudding's color is then contrasted beautifully.*



- 1 3/4 cups two percent milk**
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream**
- 1/4 cup white rice—do not use precooked/converted variety**
- 1 1/2 teaspoons crushed, dried, pesticide-free, Calendula petals**
  
- 1 1/2 teaspoons butter**
- 1/4 cup sugar**
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest**
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**
- Pinch ground cloves, or to taste**
  
- 1/4 cup fat-free pasteurized eggs (the equivalent of 1 egg)**
  
- Freshly grated nutmeg**
  
- 1/2 teaspoon julienned lemon zest, for garnish**
- Home-grown, spray-free Calendula blossoms**  
—well-washed and well-dried—for garnish

**Light cream, if desired**

In a saucepan set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, heat milk until just below the boiling point. Reduce heat to *LOW*. Stir in rice and crushed *Calendula* petals. Cover tightly and cook, *undisturbed*, for 40 minutes. Remove from heat.

Add butter, sugar, grated lemon zest, vanilla extract, and ground cloves. Stir *gently* until butter is melted and sugar is dissolved. Set aside to cool—about 15 minutes.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Prepare an **1-quart soufflé dish or other baking dish** by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating. Prepare a *bain marie* (water bath) bringing the water half way up your baking dish. Place it in the oven to preheat.

Stir pasteurized eggs into *cold* rice mixture. Turn into prepared soufflé dish. Place in water bath in oven. Bake in preheated 325-degree oven for about 35-40 minutes, or until custard is set, but still quakes slightly when shaken.

As soon as you take it from the oven, sprinkle a little nutmeg over. Chill in refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

Garnish with julienned lemon zest and well-washed *Calendula* flowers, if available, before serving. Accompany with a small pitcher of cream. Refrigerate any leftovers.

Yields 4 servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled when required.

1/4 SERVING (exclusive of extra pouring cream) –  
PROTEIN = 5.5 g.; FAT = 4.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 29.3 g.;  
CALORIES = 192; CALORIES FROM FAT = 22%



## SQUASH CUSTARD DESSERT

TPT - 2 hours and 4 minutes;  
1 hour = refrigerated setting period

*Every fall we buy Jack-Be-Littles enthusiastically for winter menus. Although we would undoubtedly consume every one baked with butter and brown sugar, these little charmers provide just enough squash flesh for this delicious fruit dessert. You've heard of custard pumpkin pie, haven't you? Well . . .*



**1 large Jack-Be-Little squash—to yield 1 cup pulp**

**1/2 cup light cream or half and half**  
**1/2 cup fat-free pasteurized eggs—the equivalent of 2 eggs**  
**1/4 cup sugar**

**1 tablespoon almond syrup**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare a *bain marie* (water bath) in a small roasting pan by filling it half way with water.

Cut the tops from the squash as you would for a pumpkin which you are about to carve. Scoop out the seeds and, using a spoon, scrape fibrous material from the walls and from the top. Replace lid. Place in baking pan. Bake in preheated 350-degree F. oven for about 40 minutes, or until tender. Remove to a bread board and allow to cool until easy to handle.

Meanwhile, in a non-stick-coated saucepan set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, combine cream, pasteurized eggs, and sugar. Using a wire whisk, combine well. Cook, stirring frequently, until custard thickens. Remove from heat.

Add almond syrup. Whisk until well-combined.

Scoop all the flesh from the baked Jack-Be-Little. Press through a sieve to remove any fibrous material or seeds that may have been overlooked in preparation. Turn sieved squash flesh into the almond custard. Whisk until well-combined. Turn into a **5-inch soufflé dish** or other small serving dish. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

*Serve chilled.*

Yields 4 servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 4.8 g.; FAT = 3.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 24.3 g.;  
CALORIES = 154; CALORIES FROM FAT = 18%

## VANILLA MALTED MILK CUSTARD ICE CREAM

TPT - 8 hours and 15 minutes;  
8 hours = freezing period

*Instead of making a malted milk shake with ice cream, the kind we knew as “a malted” and so enjoyed when we were young, I decided to add the malted milk powder to ice cream, the frozen custard of my youth. This very delicious ice cream has the rich mouthfeel of premium ice creams and a glorious golden color due to the eggs but not the fat calories. Add a drizzle of chocolate syrup and a few fresh berries on the side and you have a very delightful treat.*

**1 cup heavy whipping cream**

**2/3 cup fat-free sweetened condensed milk**

**1 cup fat-free pasteurized eggs (the equivalent of 4 eggs)\***

**1/3 cup unflavored malted milk powder**

**1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

Prepare a **9 x 5 x 3-inch non-stick-coated loaf pan** by placing it in the freezer until required.

Using an electric mixer fitted with *chilled* beaters or by hand, using a *chilled* wire whisk, beat heavy cream in a *chilled* bowl until stiff. Set aside.

In a large bowl, combine sweetened condensed milk, pasteurized eggs, malted milk powder, and vanilla extract. Stir to blend thoroughly. *Whisk-fold* stiffly whipped cream *gently*, but *thoroughly*, into milk-egg mixture.

Pour mixture into chilled loaf pan. Spread evenly. Cover tightly with aluminum foil. Freeze overnight or until firm—about 8 hours.

Either scoop ice cream from pan to serve or remove entire block of ice cream from pan and slice.

Leftovers should be returned to the freezer, tightly covered.



Yields about eight 1/2-cup servings

Notes: \*Because raw eggs present the danger of *Salmonella* poisoning, commercially-available pasteurized eggs are recommended for use in preparing this dish.

This recipe can be doubled if you have a secure container(s) in which to freeze it.

1/8 SERVING (i. e., per 1/2 cupful) –  
PROTEIN = 6.1 g.; FAT = 10.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 22.6 g.;  
CALORIES = 211; CALORIES FROM FAT = 44%

## SAVORY:

### CORN MEAL SPOONBREAD WITH FRESH THYME AND SAGE

TPT - 48 minutes

*Calling a spoonbread a bread is really a stretch but I suppose it is really a cornbread although I prefer to think of it as a very American soufflé or a savory grain custard. This nutritionally-packed version of a Colonial classic is incredibly flavorful, but less salty and lower in fat than those I have eaten in the South. I never use dried herbs to make this protein-rich dish which can be a side or a main course at your pleasure. Even in the middle of winter there is fresh thyme and sage under the snow cover so this spoonbread can be a thought for winter meals for us.*

**6 tablespoons finely ground yellow corn meal**  
(masa harina)

**1 teaspoon sugar**

**1/2 teaspoon baking powder**

**1 1/4 cups two-percent milk**

**1 1/2 tablespoons butter**

**2 teaspoons very finely chopped fresh thyme**

**2 teaspoons very finely chopped fresh sage**

**1/3 cup very finely chopped onion**

**6 tablespoons fat-free pasteurized eggs**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare a **1-quart soufflé dish** by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

In a mixing bowl, combine corn meal, sugar, and baking powder. Stir to combine well. Set aside until required.

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, bring milk to the boil. Reduce heat to *LOW*. Stir corn meal mixture into hot milk and cook, stirring constantly, until corn meal thickens. Remove from heat. Add butter, *very finely* chopped fresh thyme and sage, and *very finely* chopped onion. Stir until butter has melted into corn meal mixture.

Using the electric mixer, beat pasteurized eggs at *HIGH* speed for 1 minute, or until thick and frothy. *Gently, but thoroughly, whisk-fold* beaten pasteurized eggs into corn meal mixture. Pour batter into prepared soufflé dish.

Bake in preheated 350-degree F. oven for 22-25 minutes, or until top is firm and a cake tester, inserted into the center, comes out clean. The pudding should still “quake” when shaken slightly.

*Serve hot, directly from soufflé dish.* To serve, tear the custard as you would a soufflé and spoon the soft, custardy “bread” onto plates.

Yields 4 servings



Notes: This recipe may be doubled, when required. Use a 1 1/2-quart soufflé dish when doubling and carefully test to be sure that it is done before serving.

Leftovers do not reheat well.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 6.6 g.; FAT = 5.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 21.9 g.;  
CALORIES = 167; CALORIES FROM FAT = 31%



## CRUSTLESS CHEESE AND SPINACH SAVORY PIE

TPT - 1 hour and 9 minutes;  
10 minutes = pre-serving cooling period

*Savory meat pies are a mainstay in Great Britain and pot pies are so popular here in the United States that vegetarian versions are as common as are those with meat. But, when you mention a spinach pie, it is usually assumed that you are making Greek spanakopita or a quiche. This crustless vegetarian pie is neither but it is at once comforting and sophisticated. The golden brown top and the custardy texture are so beautiful that someone always comments.*

**5 ounces fresh baby spinach—trimmed and well-washed**

**1/4 cup chopped onion**

**1/2 cup shredded Italian *Fontina* or *Havarti* or Monterey Jack cheese**

**4 1/2 ounces (one-half can) *evaporated skimmed* milk**

**1/4 cup *fat-free* pasteurized eggs (the equivalent of 1 egg)**

**1 tablespoon water**

**1 tablespoon unbleached white flour**

**1 teaspoon *finely* ground cornmeal—*masa harina***

**Pinch ground allspice**

**Pinch freshly grated nutmeg**

**Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

**1 tablespoon grated *pecorino Romano* cheese**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare an **8-inch pie plate** by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

Put well-washed spinach in a kettle and cook, covered, over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat with just the water adhering to the leaves until wilted. Drain thoroughly, pressing out as much liquid as possible. Chop coarsely and transfer to prepared pie plate.

Layer onion over spinach. Then, layer shredded cheese over the onion.

In the container of the electric blender, combine evaporated milk, pasteurized eggs, water, white flour, cornmeal, ground allspice, grated nutmeg, and black pepper. Blend until smooth. Pour over vegetable and cheese layers. Using a knife, poke holes to the bottom of the pie plate to allow the custard ingredients to reach the bottom.

Sprinkle the grated cheese evenly over. Bake in preheated 350-degree F. oven for about 40 minutes, or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. The top should be golden. Remove to a wire rack and allow to stand for about 10 minutes before serving to allow filling to set.

Cut into wedges to serve. Refrigerate any leftovers.

Yields 4 servings

Note: This can be doubled and prepared in an 9-inch pie plate.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 10.0 g.; FAT = 4.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 11.7 g.;  
CALORIES = 126; CALORIES FROM FAT = 35%



## RAMEKINS OF FRENCH GARLIC CUSTARD

### *Flan d'Ail*

TPT - 1 hour and 11 minutes

*Perhaps this is an unusual side dish to consider but, if you like garlic, this is a lovely addition to any meal. I serve it with grilled vegetables and steamed asparagus and "aligot," French mashed potatoes with cheese . . . and . . . and . . . Although it is French in origin, I find it is a perfect addition to Asian menus too.*

**6 garlic cloves—peeled and halved**  
**1 quart water**

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**1/4 cup skimmed milk**  
**3/4 teaspoon finely chopped fresh thyme**

**6 tablespoons light cream or half and half**  
**3 tablespoons fat-free pasteurized eggs**

**Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F. Butter **two ramekins or custard cups.**

In a saucepan set over *HIGH* heat, combine halved garlic cloves and 1 quartful water. Bring to the boil. Boil for 5 minutes. Drain. Return garlic cloves to the saucepan.

Add another quartful of water. Return to the heat and again bring to the boil. Boil for 5 minutes. Drain. Return garlic cloves to the saucepan.

Add the final quartful of water. Return to the heat and again bring to the boil. Boil for 5 minutes. Drain. Put parboiled garlic cloves into the container of the electric blender.

Add milk and *finely* chopped fresh thyme. Blend *until smooth*.

Add cream, pasteurized eggs, and black pepper. Blend *briefly*. Divide between prepared ramekins or custard cups. Place custard cups in a large baking pan. Prepare a *bain marie* by pouring water into the baking pan so that it comes about halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Transfer *carefully* to preheated 300-degree F. oven. Bake for about 40 minutes, or until custards have set. Remove from oven and allow to cool briefly in the water while assembling other dinner components.

*Serve warm.\**



Yields 2 individual servings

Notes: \*I serve the custards in the ramekins and provide spoons for that purpose. The custards may be *carefully* unmolded onto each plate, if preferred.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 5.0 g.; FAT = 4.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 7.2 g.;  
CALORIES = 90; CALORIES FROM FAT = 43%

*Cartoons, children's books, and sci-fi movies would have us believing  
that the earth's timeline warped allowing man to hunt dinosaurs for dinner  
or be hunted by dinosaurs for their dinner.  
Although that was not the case, the diet of ancient man can be revisited today  
since food choices of our ancestors are still food choices today,  
in one form or another.  
Come by next month and we'll take a quick trip back in time  
with a meal fit for a caveman,*

*Judy*

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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