

# Chocolate Bread Pudding with Two Chocolate Sauces & Almond Bark

*For 8 very generous servings or 12 standard-size servings*

Bread puddings come in a multitude of variations. Here is a wonderfully rich and dense one specially designed for chocolate addicts. The sweetness of it comes, not from the pudding's custard, but from the two sauces and the garnish of almond-bark candy.

- 1 piece day-old New Orleans-style French bread,\* about 23 inches long and weighing about 7½ to 8 ounces, cut into ½-inch cubes with crust on
- 3 cups heavy cream
- ½ cup whole milk
- 1¾ cups sugar, divided
- 1 2-inch-long piece of vanilla bean
- 1¼ pounds (3½ cups) semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 8 large eggs
- 1 recipe chocolate sauce, for serving
- 1 recipe white chocolate sauce, for serving
- 8 to 12 pieces almond bark, for garnish

\*If New Orleans-style French bread is not available, you can get similar results using a sugarless, natural-yeast white bread with a low gluten content and a thin crust.

1. Scatter the bread cubes in a 9-by-13-inch glass baking dish. Set aside.
2. In a heavy 3-quart saucepan, combine the cream, milk, and 1½ cups sugar. Cut the piece of vanilla bean in half lengthwise, and scrape the tiny beans into the cream mixture. (Discard the scraped bean pod or add it to granulated or powdered sugar to make vanilla sugar.)
3. Bring the cream mixture to a simmer over medium-high heat, whisking constantly until the sugar dissolves, then whisking occasionally.
4. Add the chocolate chips and continue cooking until the chocolate is melted, about two minutes more, whisking frequently and being sure to scrape the pan bottom clean as you whisk. Remove from heat.
5. In a large mixing bowl, lightly whisk the eggs until frothy. Very slowly add the chocolate mixture to the eggs, whisking constantly so the eggs don't curdle. Pour this custard mixture over the bread. Let the custard sit until cool enough for you to put your hands in it, about 10 minutes.

## NOTE

For the best results, refrigerate the uncooked bread pudding overnight before baking.

## ADVANCE STEPS

Prepare the recipes for:

- Chocolate sauce on page 313
- White-chocolate sauce on page 314
- Almond bark on page 276

## SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

- A 9-by-13-inch glass baking dish
- A heavy 3-quart saucepan
- Aluminum foil

- 
6. Once the custard is cool enough, toss the bread cubes with your hands, squeezing the cubes in the liquid to make sure all are well saturated. Cover and refrigerate overnight. About three hours before baking the pudding, remove the pan of pudding from the refrigerator, and evenly sprinkle the top with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar. Let the pudding sit at room temperature for 45 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 300°F.
  7. Once the pudding has sat 45 minutes, seal the baking dish with aluminum foil. Bake the pudding until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out almost clean and the pudding looks solidified with no puddles of liquid on the surface, about two hours. Once done, it will also start developing a few small, shallow cracks on top and there will be an irresistible smell of chocolate emanating from the oven.
  8. Remove the pudding from the oven and let it sit for 15 minutes at room temperature before serving.

*Serving Suggestion:* Cut the pudding into eight to 12 equal-size rectangles and place on heated dessert plates. Drizzle 2 to 3 tablespoons of the chocolate sauce on one half of each portion of pudding and the same amount of white chocolate sauce over the other half of the pudding. Position a piece of almond bark upright in the center of each serving for garnish.

Refrigerate any leftover pudding and sauces. **S**

