

Persimmon Pudding

1 pound dark and golden raisins
1 1/2 cups brandy
2 pounds, 4 ounces ripe Hachiya or Fuyu persimmons (see note)
1 pound, 12 ounces granulated sugar
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
12 ounces bread flour
1 tablespoon baking soda
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
10 ounces coarsely chopped walnuts
1 1/2 cups milk

NOTE: Hachiya persimmons are the type most commonly found in stores. They have a slightly oblong shape and are pointed at the bottom end. The Hachiya are very high in tannin and can be eaten raw only when fully ripe (the fruit should be almost jelly-like throughout). Otherwise the fruits have an unpleasant dry, almost rough taste. The smaller Fuyu persimmon is shaped like a tomato. It has very little tannin and can therefore be eaten raw before it is completely ripe and soft. This persimmon is easy to peel using a vegetable peeler.

The unpleasant dry taste associated with unripe Hachiya will disappear when the fruit is cooked, so it is acceptable to use unripe fruit in the Persimmon Pudding if necessary. Unripe Hachiyas must first be frozen solid and then thawed to make them soft enough to puree. (after freezing and thawing, the fruit will be as soft as when perfectly ripe, but they will still have the dry taste.) If you are planning far enough in advance, place the fruit in a plastic bag with a ripe apple for a few days; this will speed up the ripening process and eliminate the dry taste.

When either variety is very ripe and soft to the point of falling apart, just remove the stems, puree with the skin on, and then force the puree through a fine strainer. Prepared persimmon puree freezes well. Add 1 tablespoon (15 ml) lemon juice for every 2 cups (480 ml) puree. Since persimmons are not available year-round, it is a good idea to prepare some persimmon pulp to store in the freezer. Place in freezer containers, cover, and freeze. (If you are using the puree in a recipe that calls for lemon or lime juice leave it out since it is already in the persimmon pulp.)

1. Combine the raisins and brandy and set aside to macerate.
2. Cut two rings of baking paper to fit the bottom of two 2-quart (1-l, 920-ml) angel food cake pans, or other tube pans of the same size with a flat bottom. Place the paper in the pans, butter and flour the pans, including the paper.
3. Slice the persimmons in half and then use a melon-ball cutter or small spoon to scoop out the flesh, scraping the skin thoroughly. Discard the skin. Puree the pulp, strain, and measure: you should have very close to 3 cups. Mix the persimmon puree with the sugar, oil, and vanilla.
4. Sift together the flour, baking soda, salt, cloves, and 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg. Mix the dry ingredients into the puree mixture. Stir in the walnuts, milk, and the raisin mixture including all of the

brandy. Divide the batter equally between the reserved pans.

5. Bake at 325°F for about 1 hour and 15 minutes or until baked through. Let the puddings cool in the pans completely before unmolding. Unmold, remove the baking paper rings, and cut the puddings into twelve slices each.