

Wild-Mushroom Bread Pudding

- 4 cups (1/2-inch) fresh bread cubes (preferably brioche or challah; about 5 ounces)
- 1 1/2 pounds mixed fresh wild mushrooms such as chanterelle, cremini, and oyster, trimmed
- 1/2 cup finely chopped shallot
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 cups half-and-half
- 4 large eggs
- 1/2 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- Equipment: 8 (6-ounce) ramekins

Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle.

Bake bread cubes in 1 layer in a large shallow baking pan until golden-brown, about 10 minutes.

Tear or cut mushrooms lengthwise into 1/4-inch-thick pieces.

Cook shallot in butter in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until beginning to soften, about 3 minutes. Add mushrooms, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper and cook until liquid mushrooms give off has evaporated, about 15 minutes. Add parsley and garlic and cook, stirring, 2 minutes. Remove from heat.

Whisk together half-and-half, eggs, cheese, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper in a large bowl. Stir in mushrooms and bread cubes until coated well and let stand 10 minutes for bread to absorb some of egg mixture.

Meanwhile, butter ramekins, then put a round of parchment in bottom of each and butter parchment.

Spoon mixture into ramekins and bake on a baking sheet until firm to the touch, 30 to 35 minutes. Unmold puddings and discard parchment.

Cooks' notes: · Mushroom bread pudding can be baked in a buttered 2-quart shallow baking dish (not lined with parchment; do not unmold pudding from baking dish). · Bread cubes can be baked 1 day ahead and cooled, then kept in an airtight container at room temperature. · Pudding can be assembled (but not baked) 2 hours ahead and chilled, covered. If making the fillet of beef, bake puddings while beef stands (meat can stand a little longer).