

Breakfast Bread Pudding

This recipe is based off the one I use for my annual Christmas bread pudding bake-a-thon. Shake's first reaction was, "Is this bread pudding? For breakfast?!" Normally "bread pudding" conjures up thoughts of a sweet dessert, but this is a completely savory dish.

- Italian fennel sausage (about ½ lb.)
- ¼ – ½ Maui onion (or other sweet round onion)
- 2-4 cloves garlic
- approx. 2 cups arugula, divided
- Chicken broth (optional)
- ¼ to ½ loaf French bread, cubed (1-inch)
- several slices of Hawaiian (Portuguese) sweet bread, cubed (1-inch)
- 5 eggs
- 8 tablespoons butter, room temperature, cubed (¼-inch)
- 2 cups half-and-half (you can use cream, but I prefer the lighter half-and-half)
- Salt & pepper to taste

In a sauté pan with a little bit of olive oil, cook the sausage until nicely browned, breaking it into medium-sized bits. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until the onion is soft and translucent. If you're not using a non-stick pan, add a little bit of chicken broth to deglaze the pan and pick up all those nice crusty bits stuck to the bottom of the pan. Add half the arugula (1 cup) and cook 'til it begins to wilt. Turn off the heat and set aside.

In a bowl, whisk the eggs until well blended. Add the butter and half-and-half; season lightly with salt and pepper. Lay the bread cubes in a 9-by-9-inch square baking dish, add the sausage/arugula mixture, then the remaining fresh arugula and gently mix everything together.

Be sure to leave some of the arugula at the top of the dish; it will get crispy as the pudding bakes and develops a nice, almost grilled taste. Carefully pour the liquids over the bread.

Preheat oven to 350° F. Cover the dish with foil and poke holes in it. Bake until the bread begins to swell—it will resemble a soufflé rising—about 40 minutes, then remove the foil. Bake another 10-15 minutes to brown lightly and give the top a nice, crusty texture. You may wish to put a baking sheet underneath the pan, in case there's any overflow of liquid as the dish cooks.