



Sticky Date Pudding

This dessert is pure comfort food and, assuming you keep a packet of dates in the pantry, is quick and easy to whip up without any special shopping. The Grand Marnier in the sauce isn't traditional, but I like the hint of orange that it adds - of course you can leave it out if you prefer. As for a wine, I love the marmalade notes in botrytis-affected wines, and caramel and orange seem such a happy match. Along with marmalade, d'Arenberg's The Noble Mud Pie Viognier Arneis has traces of cumquat, dried apricot, gingerbread and honey that marry beautifully with this pudding.

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

- 200g pitted dried dates, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- 300ml boiling water
- 75g butter, chopped, plus extra for greasing
- 170g castor sugar
- ½ vanilla bean, seeds scraped
- 2 eggs
- 170g self-raising flour, sifted
- Vanilla ice cream, for serving

Butterscotch Sauce

- 250g salted butter, chopped
- 300ml single cream
- 200g brown sugar
- ½ vanilla bean, seeds scraped
- ¼ cup Grand Marnier

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 180°C and grease a 20cm square cake tin.
2. Combine dates and bicarbonate of soda, stir in boiling water, cover and set aside for 20 minutes or so.
3. Meanwhile, make Butterscotch Sauce: combine butter, cream, sugar, vanilla seeds and pod in a small saucepan over medium heat and stir often until butter has melted. Reduce heat to low and cook for 5 minutes, watching it carefully as it may boil over. Discard vanilla pod.
4. Meanwhile place butter, sugar and vanilla seeds in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat until pale and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time. Fold in date mixture then flour.
5. Pour ½ cup of Butterscotch Sauce into the cake tin and top with batter.
6. Place cake tin on an oven tray and bake for about 40 minutes, until a wooden skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean.
7. Remove from oven and set aside to cool in the tin for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a baking paper-lined board.
8. Just before serving, stir Grand Marnier into remaining Butterscotch Sauce and warm over a low heat.
9. Serve pudding warm or at room temperature, with vanilla ice cream and Butterscotch Sauce.