



Stuffed French Toast Strata

December 21, 2023

This sweet strata is like a big stuffed French toast casserole. I layer cinnamon raisin bread with sautéed apples and dried cherries but you can use any of your favorite fruit like pears, blueberries, and peaches in the summertime. If you use dried fruit, make sure to plump it up in hot water or other liquid before using.

Serves 8

Ingredients:

- 1 pound of (stale)* cinnamon raisin-bread, cut into cubes
- 8 ounce package cream cheese, cubed and at room temperature
- 8 eggs
- 2 cups half and half
- ½ cup milk—if you like eggnog, you can substitute eggnog for the milk
- 6 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1/4 cup maple syrup, plus more for serving
- 1 teaspoon grated cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon grated nutmeg
- Zest of a lemon

Fruit Filling:

- 3 small Granny Smith apples, peeled, sliced and sautéed in butter with a touch of cinnamon and sugar until soft
- 1 generous cup dried cherries

Method:

1. Just before baking, preheat oven to 350°F. **(SEE NOTE*)**
2. Grease a 3-4 quart casserole pan with butter—you can use a 9x12” Pyrex as well.
3. Cut bread into cubes and set aside. *Chances are your bread is fresh, you can make it “stale” by setting it out uncovered for a couple of hours before you make the strata.
4. In a small heavy-duty saucepan with a lid, sauté apples in 1-2 tablespoons of butter, add a tablespoon of sugar and a sprinkle of cinnamon. Stir to mix and put the lid on the pan for about 2 minutes or until the apples start to soften and release some of their juices. Add the dried cherries and stir. Turn off the heat and leave the lid on so the cherries re-hydrate, a.k.a. get plump. Set aside.
5. **To Assemble:** In the prepared pan, place half of the bread cubes. Top with the sautéed apples and dried cherries and then the remaining bread cubes. Set aside.
6. With a blender, puree the cream cheese, eggs, milk, melted butter, maple syrup, cinnamon, nutmeg and lemon zest until well combined. Pour the egg mixture evenly over bread and fruit. Using a spatula, slightly press layers down to moisten all the bread. I also poke small spoon in



between the layers to make sure all the bread on the bottom is covered. Pour as much liquid as will fit—this is the custard and the more, the better. You may have a little left over depending on the size of your casserole dish. Cover the casserole with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

7. Remove plastic wrap and bake in a pre-heated 350°F oven for 60-70 minutes or until the center appears to be set and the top is golden. Since every oven bakes a little differently, set a timer for 35-40 minutes so you can see how it is baking. If you stick a knife in the center, it should come out dry and clean. If you have a streak of liquid on the knife, then it isn't done yet. It will also puff up and be taller than the baking dish. Remember, the deeper your dish, the longer it will take to bake.
8. Let stand for 10 minutes. *Note: This is very important as it need to cool down and set up a little before digging in!* Pour maple syrup over top and serve.

Note*: Don't Forget that this must be made the night before you bake it.