

The Shack's Sweet and Savory Banana Pudding

Serves 8

When Ian Boden set several small mason jars of his banana pudding in front of a group of us one night at his Staunton restaurant, The Shack, I picked up my spoon to have just one polite bite. It's a mercy that after that first bite I didn't convert that spoon into a weapon to fight everyone else at the table for every last jar. Luckily, Ian had a few more in the back.

The hypnotizing goodness of this pudding lies in the earthy banana bread and the seesaw back and forth between its miso salty smack and the classic pudding sweet.

pudding

4 egg yolks at room temperature

½ cup sugar

Pinch of salt

4 cups heavy cream

1 packet (¼ ounce) powdered gelatin

2 whole vanilla beans, halved lengthwise

banana bread

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled, plus more for greasing the pan

2 overly ripe bananas

3 ounces red miso paste

1 large egg

⅓ cup packed light brown sugar

⅔ cup all-purpose flour

⅓ cup buckwheat flour

½ teaspoon baking soda

assembly

1 cup crushed vanilla wafers

4 bananas, peeled and sliced

Make the pudding: Whisk the egg yolks, sugar, and salt together in a large bowl. Set aside.

Pour ¼ cup of the cream into a small bowl. Sprinkle the gelatin over the cream and stir with a fork until incorporated. Let sit for 5 minutes.

Pour the remaining 3¾ cups cream into a saucepan and whisk in the gelatin-cream mixture. Scrape the seeds from the vanilla beans into the cream. Heat over medium-low heat, bringing the cream to a point just under a simmer, whisking every so often to incorporate the gelatin.

Remove the pan from the heat and very slowly drizzle the cream into the egg mixture while whisking constantly. Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer set over a clean bowl, and transfer it to a refrigerator to chill. For the first hour, whisk the pudding every 15 minutes to incorporate any skin that

forms on top. Then cover the pudding with plastic wrap after the last whisk, pressing the wrap directly onto the surface. Let chill for 3 hours. It will be about halfway set at that point.

Make the banana bread: Preheat the oven to 300°F and lightly grease a 1-pound (8½ × 4½-inch) loaf pan with butter.

Peel the bananas and place them in a blender along with the miso, egg, and brown sugar. Blend until the ingredients are combined and smooth.

Mix both flours and the baking soda together in a large bowl. Gently stir the banana mixture into the flour until just incorporated, and then drizzle in the melted butter. Be careful not to overmix, as that would result in a less tender bread.

Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan and bake for 30 to 35 minutes. The bread is done when a toothpick inserted into the center comes out moist but not wet. Turn out on a rack and allow to cool completely. Use your hands to break into coarse crumbs.

Make the banana pudding: In either individual mason jars or a single large baking dish, arrange alternating layers of pudding, bread crumbs, bananas, and vanilla wafers, starting with pudding on the bottom and ending with wafers on the top. Be sure all the banana slices are completely covered by pudding to prevent browning. Refrigerate, covered, for 4 hours or overnight before serving, so that the pudding can finish setting.

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