

sticky toffee pudding

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Sticky Toffee Pudding

A date sponge under a hot toffee sauce. British, and much more recent than it feels — the Sharrow Bay Hotel in Cumbria popularised it in the 1970s, and its own account traces the recipe to a Lancashire cook who had it from two Canadian airmen. It is now the default British restaurant dessert.

The dates are not a flavour so much as a texture technology.

What makes it work

- **Soak the dates in boiling water with baking soda.** The soda breaks the fruit down into a purée in ten minutes and the alkalinity darkens the sponge. That purée is what makes the crumb wet and sticky rather than cakey. See [Dates](#).
- **Black treacle or molasses**, a spoonful, for depth. See [Molasses](#).
- **Sauce twice.** Pour a third of the toffee sauce over the hot sponge and let it soak in, then serve the rest hot at the table.
- **Do not boil the sauce hard.** Cream, butter and dark brown sugar brought to a gentle simmer for three minutes. Boiled, it splits.
- **Serve hot.** Cold sticky toffee pudding is a different and much worse thing.

Ingredients

One 20 cm square tin, or 8 dariole moulds. Serves 8.

Sponge:

- 200 g pitted [dates](#), chopped
- 250 ml boiling water
- 5 g baking soda
- 85 g unsalted butter, softened
- 150 g dark brown sugar
- 2 [eggs](#)
- 1 tbsp black treacle or [molasses](#)
- 190 g self-raising flour, or plain flour with 8 g baking powder
- 3 g fine salt
- 1 tsp vanilla — see [Pure vanilla extract](#)

Toffee sauce:

- 250 ml double cream
- 150 g dark brown sugar
- 100 g unsalted butter
- 1 tbsp black treacle
- 3 g fine salt

Method

Pour the boiling water over the dates, stir in the soda, and leave 15 minutes. Mash roughly — some texture is good.

Heat the oven to **180 °C / 350 °F**. Butter the tin.

Cream the butter and sugar two minutes, beat in the eggs and treacle, then fold in the flour, salt and vanilla. Stir in the date mixture, liquid and all. The batter is very loose; that is correct.

Bake **30–35 minutes**, until springy and a skewer comes out clean.

For the sauce, warm everything together, stirring, until the sugar dissolves, then simmer three minutes.

Prick the hot sponge all over and pour a third of the sauce over it. Leave ten minutes. Serve with the rest of

the sauce and cream or vanilla ice cream.

Notes

- **It reheats better than almost any dessert.** Portions keep three days refrigerated and freeze for three months; microwave 40 seconds with a spoonful of sauce.
- Sticky ginger pudding is the same method with 30 g of stem ginger and 2 tsp of ground [ginger](#) in place of half the dates.
- The pudding is often baked in individual moulds for service — 18 minutes at the same temperature.

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