



Bread

Bread is a classic food typically thrown away too soon, neglected slices gone stale and unused, a chunk of baguette hardened. But bread a day or more past its use by date can still be revived - and here are just two recipe ideas.

French Toast with Orange, Berries and Ricotta

The French call this pain perdu, 'lost bread', and I love the idea of saving tragic lost bread by bathing it in a soothing mixture of milk, eggs and vanilla before caramelising it in a little butter, sugar and spice. The inside is tender and gooey, the outside crisp and caramelised, scented with spices and brown sugar.

4 thick slices of stale brioche, white bread or sourdough
250ml milk
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 eggs
A pinch of salt
20g butter
1 tbsp brown sugar
A pinch of ground cinnamon
2 oranges
A handful of raspberries and strawberries
Ricotta, to serve

Whisk together the milk, vanilla, eggs and salt and pour into a shallow dish. Lay the bread in a single layer in the mixture and leave for around 5 minutes, then turn over and leave for another 5 – it should have absorbed almost all of the liquid.

Meanwhile, slice the skin off the oranges with a sharp serrated knife and then slice the segments away from the membranes of the fruit into a bowl. Squeeze any remaining juice into the bowl. Stir in the raspberries. Quarter the strawberries and add to the bowl.

In a large, non-stick frying pan, heat the butter over a medium heat until melted then swirl to coat the pan. Sprinkle the sugar and cinnamon evenly over the butter. Place the bread in the pan and let it sizzle and caramelize for a few minutes, then flip over (check by lifting with a spatula to see if it's golden brown on the bottom before flipping) and cook for a few minutes on the other side.

Divide the toast between two plates, spoon over the fruit and its juices and serve with a dollop of ricotta on the side.

Steamed Apple and Marmalade Sponge Pudding

Inspired by a favourite recipe from Diana Henry, this is the ultimate in comforting winter puddings – it's a big bowl of spiced, syrupy sponge, sticky with sweet apples and marmalade. Serve with good vanilla ice cream.

75g caster sugar
75g butter, at room temperature
1 large egg
40g self-raising flour
½ tsp ground ginger
A pinch of ground cinnamon
200g cooking apples, peeled, cored and cut into 2cm cubes
A pinch of salt
40g breadcrumbs (I use sourdough)
3-4 tbsp milk
3 tbsp orange marmalade
1 tbsp golden syrup

Lightly grease a 1-pint pudding basin with butter. Cream the butter and sugar together until fluffy, then add the egg and mix again. Fold in the ginger, flour and apples, then the salt and breadcrumbs. Add enough milk to make a thick but pourable batter.

Put the marmalade and golden syrup in the bottom of the pudding basin. Pour in the sponge mix. Cover with buttered foil, pleated in the middle, and tie this tightly around the rim of the basin with string (find instructions on the internet for steaming a pudding, if you need to). Thread another piece of string through this, on each side of the basin, to make a handle.

Find a large lidded pan that will fit the pudding basin in it. Scrunch up a piece of foil and put the basin on top of this in the pan. Pour in enough boiling water to cover the basin up to the bottom of the foil tied round it, then put the lid on. Simmer for 1 hour 10 minutes, leave to rest for 5 minutes, then remove the foil, put a plate over the basin and turn out the pudding.