

HOME School

Cooking class brings decadent dessert to home kitchens

By Gene Lucht
Iowa Farmer Today

Katie Porter is giving a cooking class tonight. The clock is ticking down toward Valentine's Day and she is teaching a group of people how to make a chocolatey dessert. But this is the era of COVID-19, so she is doing it all via Zoom.

"We were looking for ways we could connect with our customers online," says Porter, food programs manager for the Wallace Centers of Iowa and chef at the Wallace House in Des Moines. "I already did cooking classes. This was the next best thing."

The Wallace House is the historic home of Henry Wallace, father of one secretary of agriculture and grandfather of another. The Wallace Centers of Iowa also includes the historic Wallace farm near Orient, southwest of Des Moines.

This week's class features a dark chocolate bread pudding with a winter fruit compote and chocolate sauce.

"There's no butter in this," Porter explains to her students as they make their chocolate sauce. "You've got enough richness from the bread pudding, but you can add butter to it if you want."

She explains that the trick to a good bread pudding is to use a water bath and that there should still be some moisture in it when they are done. She tilts



Photos courtesy Katie Porter

Katie Porter's latest virtual cooking class featured a dark chocolate bread pudding with a winter fruit compote and chocolate sauce.

Judy Monroe. "We love that we can do it in our kitchen."

In a normal year Porter would be serving meals at the Wallace House for part of the year and would be doing some cooking classes and other activities. There are also meals and events at the farm. But with COVID-19, the indoor meals aren't happening.

The online cooking classes offer both Porter and her students an escape of sorts. Tonight that escape is a decadent one.

There have also been pizza events, and registration for a special Valentine's Day meal class ends on Feb. 7. The classes begin again on March 25.

For more information, visit the Wallace Centers of Iowa website at www.wallace.org.

Dark Chocolate Bread Pudding

12 oz. of bread torn into bite-sized pieces (King's Hawaiian Sweet Rolls work well.)
2 C. half and half
4 eggs
4 T. maple syrup
½ tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. cardamom
½ tsp. nutmeg
½ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. black pepper
1 C. bittersweet chocolate chips, Ghirardelli 60% preferred

Heat the oven to 425°. Heat the half and half to a simmer in a small saucepan. While it's heating, place the eggs, maple syrup and spices in a medium bowl and mix.

Tear the bread and place into a greased 8x8-inch pan or 9-inch cake pan and sprinkle with ¼ C. of the chocolate chips.

When the half and half reaches a simmer, turn off the heat and whisk in the remaining ¾ C. chocolate. Then slowly pour over the egg mixture while whisking. Pour the custard mixture over the bread, press the bread down gently, and then cover with foil. Place the bread pudding pan into another pan, like a 9x13-inch pan, and put about 1 inch of water in the bottom pan. Bake for 30-40 minutes, until the custard is set. Let cool 5 minutes before serving.

Winter Fruit Compote

12 oz. fresh cranberries
1 C. dried cherries
½ C. raisins
2 small apples
1 orange
3 T. maple syrup
½ C. water
Pinch of salt and pepper
1 tsp. vanilla
1 star anise

Heat the cranberries, water, maple syrup, star anise, orange juice and three peeled orange pieces in a medium sauce pot over low heat. Cook until the cranberries are tender, about 10 minutes. Turn off the heat and add the cherries, raisins, vanilla, salt and pepper and let sit for about 5 minutes.

While the compote is resting, cut the apples into small dice and add to the pot. Cook over low heat for about 3-5 minutes, or until the apples are tender. Best if served warm.

Chocolate Sauce

½ C. half and half
1 tsp. vanilla
¾ C. bittersweet chocolate chips, Ghirardelli 60% preferred
Heat the half and half to a simmer in a small sauce pan. Turn the heat off and whisk in the chocolate until smooth. Add the vanilla and a pinch of salt.

This sauce can be stored in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. Reheat over simmering water.

