

## Preliminary Research - Christmas Pudding

### Summary

- A pudding of almonds, wine, raisins, figs, ginger and honey was described as Fygey in the 1392 *'Forme of Cury'* – in the footnote it was clarified that it was so named because of the figs. The *Forme of Cury* was compiled by the master cooks of King Richard II and later published and presented to Queen Elizabeth by Edward Lord Stafford.
- Pudding and beef were a staple of celebratory dinners for a large part of English history.
- First mention of puddings part of Christmas tradition is 1515 in Thomas Tusser poem 'Christmas Cheer'. Other early mentions with pudding part of the Christmas fare in *A Voyage to Virginia* 1649 and 1675 onboard HMS Assistance where it was described as a 'plumb-pudding'. This is the first written reference that associates 'plum pudding' with Christmas even though it is likely all these were savory dishes.
- Other early mentions of pudding/pottage at Christmas in 1728 receipt in "The Country Housewife and Lady's Director" again savory
- Often nicknamed 'the Pudding King' there appears to be no contemporary or other historical source linking Charles I with Christmas puddings with references limited to 20<sup>th</sup> century authors whose writings lack relevant citations.
- First plum pudding as a sweet / desert recipe (that I could find) is in 1801 *'The Art of Cookery Made Easy and Refined'* by John Mollard
- In 1804 an additional ration of beef, suet and raisins were issued to each person of the Civil and Military Establishment in Australia
- Similar recipes can be found in the 1819 *'Modern Domesic Cookery'* by Elizabeth Hammond and again in 1845 by Eliza Acton's *'Modern Cookery'* and *'A shilling Cookery for the People'* by Alexis Soyer.
- By Christmas of 1831 merchants in Australia were promoting sales of all the requisite ingredients of Christmas puddings
- The recipe of Queen Victoria's Christmas pudding was published in 1846 by Chales Eleme Fancatelli (Queen Victoria's chef 1840-42)
- By mid 1800's cemented as a sweet desert served at Christmas dinner containing suet, raisins, currents, candied citris peel, eggs, breadcrumbs, flour, nutmeg, cloves, allspice and alcohol (plenty of!).
  - Plums - dried grapes – plums when used in a dish, raisins when loose and eaten uncooked (1775 and 1884)
- A tradition of making the pudding mixture on the fifth Sunday before Christmas became known as Stir up Sunday due to the 'collect' (opening prayer) read in church on that day.
  - From what I can discover in the Catholic Church it is the first Sunday of Advent in the Anglican it is the Sunday before the start of Advent. While there are differences in the words of the prayers in both faiths the prayer starts the same

'Stir up...':

- Another tradition of putting trinkets and silver coins in the pudding is also associated with 12<sup>th</sup> night cake which is now commonly known as Christmas cake.
- Other names for Christmas Pudding –
  - Figgy pudding – immortalized in 'We wish you a Merry Christmas' the song can be reliably traced only to 1935 but likely of West County origin. Commoners were known to knock on the doors of the gentry at Christmas and ask for pudding and other seasonal treats. Carols were mentioned in the 1515 Thomas Tusser poem.
  - Plum Duff – probably due to the shape and colour of the pudding rather than the ingredients.
- Christmas pudding became a symbol of British patriotism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to promote foreign and exotic ingredients sourced from across the Empire.
- A promotional pudding was made and filmed by the Empire Day Movement and screened in cinemas throughout the British Empire

## Lost Foods of England – Glyn Hughes

- Poet Thomas Tusser (b 1515) refers to pudding as part of the Christmas feast;

### Christmas Cheer

Good husband and huswife, now chiefly be glad,  
Things handsome to have, as they ought to be had.  
They both do provide, against Christmas do come,  
To welcome their neighbors, good cheer to have some.

Good bread and good drink, a good fire in the hall,  
Brawn, pudding, and souse, and good mustard withal.  
Beef, mutton, and pork, and good pies of the best,  
Pig, veal, goose, and capon, and turkey well drest,  
Cheese, apples and nuts, and good carols to hear,  
As then in the country is counted good cheer.

What cost to good husband, is any of this?  
Good household provision only it is:  
Of other the like, I do leave out a many,  
That costeth the husband never a penny.

- Receipt in "*The Country Housewife and Lady's Director*" Prof R Bradley (1728) for Plum Pottage or Christmas Pottage which while it had many of the spices, alcohol and dried fruit associated with a modern pudding it was cooked in with a leg of beef.
- References to a Christmas Pudding in "*The Gentleman's Magazine*" of 1790 but no recipes
- First published receipt from '*Modern Domesic Cookery*' by Elizabeth Hammond (1819) 'Boild plum or Christmas pudding' with ingredients and methods consistent with what we would expect in a modern Christmas pudding. The it was recommended to serve the pudding with butter and grated sugar.
- Alexis Soyer published a plum pudding recipe in '*A Shilling Cookery for The People*' (1845) requiring a mould rather than a cloth to boil the pudding (although he did also acknowledge a cloth could be used). His recommendation was to serve the pudding with sweet sauce and only for Christmas.
- receipt from '*The Book of Household Management*' edited by Isabella Beeton (1861)
  - A Plain Christmas Pudding for Children served with pounded sugar – the recipe also included the average cost which was 1s 9d.
  - Directions for dying raisins noting that sun dried raisins are sweet and oven dried will have an acid flavour.
  - Christmas Plum-Pudding (very good) which is again what we would expect in a recipe. She notes that the pudding is usually made a few days before it is required for the table. It is to be served with a wineglassful of brandy poured round it, lighted and brought to the table in flame. Average cost 4s and is seasonable for he 25<sup>th</sup> of December and various festive occasions till March.
  - She notes that several of these pudding should be made at the one time as

they keep well and are an acceptable quickly prepared dish for when unexpected guests arrive.

- The Church collect for the Sunday five weeks before Christmas 'Stir up, we beseech thee. Although many households found five weeks too short to allow the pudding to properly mature and it would often be made the preceding Easter with weekly feedings of brandy or whisky
- Also known as 'Plum Duff' or 'Figgy Pudding'. Plum may refer to the shape and colour and Figgy is a known description of something that has 'the appearance like the inside of a fig' ie filled with fruity specks.
- Common tradition to put small tokens of silver coins in mix. In 2005 *The Daily Telegraph* published an article stating the inclusion of tokens in Christmas Pudding had been banned due to health and safety concerns. This prompted the UK Health and Safety Executive to issue an official rebuttal;

Finding a coin in your pudding on Christmas day - it's a tradition that's lasted for more than 500 years and is said to grant you a good luck wish for the coming year. However, killjoys have been stirring up trouble saying it's too risky to put coins inside puddings for 'health and safety' reasons. Occupational health and safety law is concerned with what goes on in your workplace, not what you're eating after a Turkey dinner - it doesn't prevent coins or any other lucky charms being put in puddings. If we had one wish, it would be to

stamp out the health and safety Scrooges who try to dampen the Christmas spirit.

- Sir JJ Thomson's discovery of the structure of atoms is often referred to as the "Plum Pudding Model' of atomic structure (not coined by him though)
- Almost all Christmas Puddings (~20million) in the UK and Ireland are manufactured by one company – Mathew Walker of Heanor in Derbyshire

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<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/inspire-me/history-of-the-christmas-pudding/#:%7E:text=The%20pudding%20we%20know%20today,or%20at%20least%20meat%20stock.>

### **A History of the Christmas Pudding; The origin of a Christmas favourite**

- Christmas received overt royal support following QV marriage to PA
- Christmas cemented in public conscious by Dickens A Christmas Carol
- Began life as 'pottage'
  - A kind of broth including raisins and other dried fruit, spices and wine thickened with breadcrumbs or ground almonds.
  - Often included meat or meat stock
  - *Fygey from the Form of Cury* from 1392 period >> *'Take almaundes blanchéd,*

*grynde hem and draw hem up with water and wyne: quarter fygur, hole raisouns. cast perto powdour gyngur and hony clarified, seeth it well & salt it, and serue forth.'* - Fygey from the *Form of Cury* (1392)<< - served at the start of the meal

- *From end of 17c began to take more solid appearance served like a porridge or in a skin – sliced and cooked under a roasting joint alongside main meal/as starter – not desert*
- Raised in prominence by Victorians– Christmas should be celebrated (although not to excess) – came to be expected as finale to Christmas dinner by all classes
- Featured on cartoons and cards
- Began Tradition of 'Stir up Sunday' 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday before Christmas – book of Common Prayer >> "*Stir up, we beseech thee, oh Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*" <<
- Each family member to stir east to west to honour the journey of the Magi – also to bring luck to the family for coming year (assuming clockwise and not withershins!)
- Shaped in sphere and boiled in cloth – wealthier households soon took to steaming in basin or elaborate mould
- With sweet custard or 'hard sauce' (brandy butter)
- Trinkets inserted similar to 12<sup>th</sup> night cake
- Eliza Acton '*Modern Cookery for Private Families*' provides frugal vegetable plum pudding (carrot and potato – no brandy) 'cheap and good'
- Queen Victoria's Christmas Pudding – 1846 '*The Modern Cook*' by Chales Eleme Francatelli (QV chef 1840-42)

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

- *¾lb (335g) raisins*
- *¾lb (335g) currants*
- *½lb (225g) candied orange, lemon and citron*
- *1¼lb (560g) chopped beef suet*
- *1lb (450g) flour*
- *¾lb (335g) moist sugar*
- *4 medium eggs*
- *3 gills (450ml) of milk*
- *Grated zest of 2 lemons*
- *1 tsp each of ground nutmeg and cinnamon*
- *½ tsp ground cloves*
- *Glass of brandy (about 50ml)*

- A very little salt

#### **METHOD:**

*Mix the ingredients thoroughly together in a large basin several hours before the pudding is to be boiled; pour them into a mould spread with butter, which should be tied up in a cloth. The pudding must be boiled for four hours and a half; when done dish it up with a German custard sauce spread over it, made as follows:*

*Put four yolks of eggs into a bain-marie or stew pan, together with two ounces of powdered sugar, a glass of sherry, some orange or lemon peel (rubbed on loaf sugar), and a very little salt. Whisk this sharply over a very low fire, until it assumes the appearance of a light frothy custard.*

- Left overs – ‘Food in England’ Dorothy Hartly
  - Lancashire - Eccles cake with crumbs
  - Devon – leftovers into type of custardy pudding
  - Others – sliced and fried similar to the original plum porridge
- English Heritage – How to make Christmas Pudding – the Victorian Way - <https://youtu.be/3XOKmaElzqw>

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<https://www.history.com/news/the-holiday-history-of-christmas-pudding>

#### **The History of Christmas Pudding: Christmas Pudding (also known as plum pudding or figgy pudding) is a dish as famous as it is misunderstood**

(embed video European Christmas Customs – how pagan traditions have been included in Christmas traditions Slovakia / Germany / Italy - not relevant to pudding)

- Figgy Pudding in ‘We Wish You a Merry Christmas’ – 2 verses **(source)**
- Described as cross between fruitcake and a haggis set on fire
- Root in medieval English sausages
  - Fat spices fruits (“best preservatives of their day”) mixed with meats, grains and vegetables backed into animal stomachs to preserve them
- 15c (early)
  - plum pottage “ heavy on meat and root vegetables... served at start of a meal”
  - Plum – generic term for any dried / preserved / candied fruit – commonly raisins and currents – prunes and other fruit added as available
- 16c (by end of)
  - dried fruit was more plentiful – pudding made shift from savoury to sweet
  - Pudding cloth emerged around this time to free pudding from intestines
- 17c (mid)
  - Oliver Cromwell banned plum pudding (along with Yule log, carol singing and nativity scenes - 1647 - source)

- Druidic paganism/RC idolatry
- 1660 Christmas pudding restored along with the Monarchy
- +50yrs (~1810\_ George I styled the 'pudding king' requested plum pudding at his first English Christmas banquet
- Christmas pudding solidified during Victorian era
  - Promoted by English journalists / political leaders/novelists (incl Dickens) as a family friendly English Christmas
  - Christmas savings clubs for the poor to allow savings for pudding ingredients
- Stir up Sunday – last Sunday before Advent
  - Book of Common Prayer
  - Stirred by family – wrapped and boiled then set aside to mature
- 19c and British Empire
  - Ingredients standardized to suet / raisins / currents candied orange peel / eggs / breadcrbs / nutmeg / cloves / allspice and plenty of alcohol
  - "...the Christmas pudding was a summation of their conception of the world: a globelike mass, studded with savory bits from distant colonies, bound together by a steamed and settled matrix of Englishness."
  - Satirical cartoons - "John Bull Showing the Foreign Powers How to Make a Constitutional Plum-Pudding"



- Well preserved a month to season and could then last over a year – could be sent to family serving in the colonies
- 1885 British newspaper report showing plum pudding being enjoyed by British Soldiers in NW Afghanistan
- 20c
  - Christmas pudding slimmed down and simplified
  - Pudding bag replaced by molds – half melon or bundt and recipies include fire safety caveats for lighting
  - Pagen roots celebrated rather than shunned

- Snap Dragons – where children compete to pluck raisins from the flaming branding (Celtic Druid origins {?})

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<https://foodhistorjottings.blogspot.com/2012/08/one-family-and-empire-christmas-pudding.html>

### **One Family and Empire Christmas Pudding**

- Symbol of British patriotism in early 20c reinvented at peak of Empire boasting of the foreign and exotic ingredients that could not be produced in UK
- Disputes plum pudding being consumed at Christmas in medieval period and being banned by Cromwell – early 18c – ‘...we have not found any contemporary sources which verify these claims’
- Earliest reference that firmly associates plum pudding with Christmas
- - Served on board HMS Assistance on Christmas Day 1675 off the west coast of Crete in the diary of British naval chaplain Henry Teonge;

*‘Our Captaine had all his officers and gentlemen to dinner with him, where wee had excellent good fayre: a ribb of beife, plumb-puddings, minct pyes, &c. and plenty of good wines of severall sorts; dranke healths to the King, our wives and friends; and ended the day with much civill myrth.’*

- Other early references to Christmas pudding served at Christmas on board naval ships - in *A Voyage to Virginia* by Colonel Norwood in 1649

*Many sorrowful days and nights we spun out in this manner, till the blessed feast of Christmas came upon us, which we began with a very melancholy solemnity; and yet, to make some distinction of times, the scrapings of the meal-tubs were all amassed together to compose a pudding. Malaga sack, sea water, with fruit and spice, all well fried in oyl, were the ingredients of this regale, which raised some envy in the spectators; but allowing some privilege to the captain's mess, we met no obstruction, but did peaceably enjoy our Christmas pudding.’*

- Christmas pudding became a focal point of the campaign by the British Women's Patriotic League to 'make your Christmas Oudding and Empire Budding' and to boycott ingredients from non Empire sources.
- This was eventually supported in 1926 by the Empire Marketing Board who published a Empire Xmas Pudding recipe in the Christmas of that year (on website)
- It also became known as the King's Christmas Pudding after the King was confirmed he and the Royal Family would be eating Empire pudding on in 1926.





**Have an EMPIRE  
Xmas Pudding**

*This is How to Make it.*

Take 1 breakfastful of each of the following eight ingredients—  
Canadian flour, Australian or South African maize, Australian  
sultanas, Australian currants, Demerara sugar, chopped mixed  
peel, English or Scottish beef suet, breadcrumbs. Also 1 English  
cooking apple & 6 eggs (Home laid), 3 teaspoonful pudding  
spice (Indian), 1 wineglassful Jamaica rum, sufficient milk to mix,  
grated rind and juice of one lemon. One English 50, 50, 50 lo! lo! lo!  
Mix well. Place in greased basin. Cover with greased paper;  
tie on cloth and steam or boil 6 to 8 hours.

Here you have a quite simple recipe. It will  
make as delicious a plum pudding as you have  
ever tasted. And you will enjoy it all the  
more if you remember that, by using Empire  
fruit to make it, you give a helping hand to the  
thousands of British settlers Overseas—most  
of them ex-Servicemen and their families—by  
whom that fruit is grown.

**Buy  
EMPIRE GOODS**

**ASK—IS IT BRITISH?**

- The Empire Day Movement led by Reginald Brabazon 12th Earl of Meath also supported the concept of an Empire Christmas Pudding and he orchestrated the making of a pudding which was filmed and shown in cinemas throughout the British Empire - <https://youtu.be/XC92kfaXnQo?feature=shared>

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<http://foodhistorjottings.blogspot.com/2012/02/pudding-king.html>

### pudding King

- This article disputes the connection between the Christmas pudding and King George I and his nickname of the 'Pudding King' due to lack of contemporary sources and no subsequent mention of this legend until the 20<sup>th</sup> century where the promoters fail to provide sources.
- The earliest record is from a newspaper article in 1911 where the royal family are said to be having plum pudding with their Christmas dinner which *..was made from a recipe that has been in the possession of the Royal Family since the days of George I'* however the recipe given has a different structure, ingredients and methods than what would have been in 18<sup>th</sup> century plum puddings. The article provides a comparison and discussion
- Also interesting that they Royal Family were having roast turkey for dinner – I wonder if that set off the turkey tradition over goose and beef??
- 'Plums' dried grapes – raisins was the term used when loose and plums when used in a dish Dr. Samuel Johnson in *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: 1755) and Stephen Dowell in *A History of Taxation and Taxes in England* (London: 1884, IV. i. vii. 37)

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<http://foodhistorjottings.blogspot.com/search/label/Christmas%20Pudding>

## Christmas Pudding

- Takes a pot shot at food writers not providing citations / reference to historical sources for the claims in their books particularly the furphy of 12 ingredients representing the 12 magi

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This article would also be interesting and cited in Once Christmas and Empire Christmas Pudding but can't have access – you may have more luck

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-global-history/article/abs/kings-christmas-pudding-globalization-recipes-and-the-commodities-of-empire/96C917D798B0198DA9C7A4D7AEF8E158>

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<https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-ancient-traditions/christmas-pudding-origins-0020082>

## How the Christmas Pudding Became an Iconic British Dish

- Christmas Pudding not known in US
- Not similar to US concept of pudding
- "...boiled mass of suet..." flour dried fruits soaked in alcohol and set alight
- Not enjoyable to author (a historian of GB and Empire)
- Rich global history / legacy of British Empire with ingredients from all corners of BE
- Christmas pudding related to;
  - Plum pottage – runny porridge – mixture of meats/dried fruits and spices that could be preserved through winter
  - Figgy Pudding – 14c (We Wish you a Merry Christmas written around 14c) mixture of sweet and savory ingredients – firmer rounder hot mass
- Christmas Plum pudding 18c
  - Steamed pudding showcasing ingredients from expanding BE
  - Key less new form of cookery but showcased availability of previously luxury ingredients - french brandy / dried foreign fruits / foreign spices / sugar / citrus / iconic British treat (although not exclusive with Christmas)
  - James Gillray satirical cartoon depicting PM William Pitt and Napoleon Bonaparte carving up the world between them -



- Victorians key to linking plum pudding with Christmas
  - Dickens
  - QV chef published her favourite Christmas Pudding recipe including (ref English Heritage webpage also [https://nottinghamindustrialmuseum.org.uk/christmas\\_pudding/](https://nottinghamindustrialmuseum.org.uk/christmas_pudding/) - reviewed below)
  - citrus peel, nutmeg, cinnamon, lemons, cloves, brandy and a small mountain of raisins and currants – affordable treats for middle class
  - families of lesser means could substitute brandy for ale
  - Eliza Acton – frugal recipe using potatoe and carrots
  - Replicated across the Empire by mid 19c incl in Australian gold fields
- High alcohol – gave pudding long shelf life 1yr + so they could be sent to empire frontiers (afghansistan) – soldiers in Crimea in 1855
- *The royal recipe for the Christmas pudding.* ([BiblioArchives/CC BY 2.0](#))



- 1920s, the British Women's Patriotic League heavily promoted Christmas pudding calling it 'Empire Pudding' in global marketing campaign as emblem of empire and should only be made with ingredients from BE fruit fm Aust and SA / cinnamon fm Ceylon / spices fm India / Jamaican rum instead of French brandy
- 1926 – press BM reps - ingredients pouring into ceremonial mixing bowl
- King George V – Empire marketing board promoted royal recipe with empire sourced ingredients (follow link)
- Sainbury's mass produced promotial recipies
- Passengers traveling through London airports confuse security scanners with Christmas puddings
- Australia – pavlova/trifle
- India – puddim (link)
- Canada – tradition endured – source?
- Jamie Oliver – modern tastes / gluten free although classic recipe on QV lines
- Adapted to US tastes with pecans / cranberries and bourbon
- *This article was originally published under the title '[How the Christmas pudding, with ingredients taken from the colonies, became an iconic British food](#)' by [Troy Bickham](#) on [The Conversation](#), and has been republished under a Creative Commons License.*
- Some links worth following
- You tube link - <https://youtu.be/MHkTK2XjDcc?feature=shared>

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Interesting tid bits from <https://theconversation.com/how-christmas-pudding-evolved-with-australia-35027>

- 1804 – For Christmas an extra ration of suet, beef, raisins were issued to Civil and Military personnel and an extra ration of salt pork and flour was issued to each prisoner - <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/626554>
  - 1831 – Merchants began advertising the special ingredients needed to make a Christmas pudding <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/2203856>
  - 1832 - convict Charlotte Welsh was sentenced to 6 weeks punishment for insolence in demanding she have brandy with her Christmas pudding - <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/28654073>
  - With UK still under rationing after WWII the Australian League of Remembrance organized parcels of dried fruit, spices and suet to the UK (in addition to their regular food parcels) so Christmas puddings could still be made despite UK still being under rationing - <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/52606739>
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<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2017/december/we-wish-merry-christmas.html>

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#### We Wish you a Merry Christmas

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- Version currently known first attributed to Arthur Warrell a former director of music at the University of Bristol in 1935. The song was played by the University of Bristol Madrigal Singers on 6 Dec 1935. With a copyright attributed to Warrell in 1939.
  - the song with the famous lyrics 'figgy pudding' is often cited as being mid 15c West Country origins.
  - While it is likely the lyrics were from that region and may trace back to Tudor times there is a lack of historical record. There was a custom for the poor to knock on the doors of the gentry to demand seasonal treats.
  - Although there was a craze in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century for collecting and recording traditional songs the lyrics and tune for we wish you a merry Christmas does not feature among those songs collected.
  - Warrell was born near Bath in 1882 grew up in Somerset so it may have been a song he heard in his childhood while he was a composer in his own write he had a love for writing arrangements of existing tunes
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