

Our State eats

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Baked French Toast Casserole

Yield: 10 servings.

- 1 (12- to 14-ounce) loaf French, sourdough, or challah bread
- 8 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
- 2 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract, divided
- 8 large eggs
- 2¼ cups whole milk
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅔ cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon pure orange extract

Topping:

- ⅓ cup packed dark brown sugar

- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 6 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes

Garnish:

- Fresh orange slices
- Powdered sugar

Grease a 9 x 13-inch dish with butter or nonstick spray. Cut bread into 1-inch cubes. Spread half of the cubes into the prepared dish.

Using an electric mixer, beat cream cheese on medium-high speed until completely smooth. Beat in the powdered sugar and ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract until combined. Drop spoonfuls of cream cheese mixture evenly on top of the bread. Layer the remaining bread cubes on top of cream cheese. Set aside.

Whisk together the eggs, milk, cinnamon, nutmeg, brown sugar, remaining vanilla, and orange extract until mixture is smooth. Pour mixture over the bread. Cover the pan tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 3 hours and up to overnight.

Preheat oven to 350°. Remove dish from the refrigerator.

For the topping: In a medium bowl, whisk together the brown sugar, flour, and cinnamon. Cut in the cold cubed butter with a pastry blender or two forks. Sprinkle the topping over the soaked bread.

Bake, uncovered, for 45 to 55 minutes or until golden brown on top. Serve immediately with fresh orange slices and a dusting of powdered sugar.

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