

# Origins of the Christmas Pudding

Also known as plum pudding or figgy pudding, Christmas pudding can trace its origins back to a 14<sup>th</sup> century porridge called “Frumenty”. Frumenty was a stew-like meal made of beef and mutton, as well as raisins, currants, prunes, wine and spices, and was eaten as a fasting meal in preparation for the Christmas festivities.

By the late 1500s, frumenty slowly evolved into what became known as a Christmas pudding. It was thickened with eggs, breadcrumbs, and dried fruit, and was given more flavor with the addition of beer and spirits. It became the customary Christmas dessert, in Europe, around 1650.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the pudding became a popular Christmas fare in England thanks to Prince Albert’s love of rich, heavy and fruited pudding from his German childhood. By this point, the meat had all but disappeared from the pudding, though, depending on the recipe, beef suet (fat) was added. The Victorians also introduced the idea of boiling or steaming the pudding in a bowl or basin. Normally such puddings were shaped into balls. However, more affluent houses cook their puddings in fancy moulds.

In addition, the Victorians evolved a number of traditions concerning luck and their Christmas pudding. Queen Victoria, was said to be the first to add coins to the mixture, apparently as a gesture of thanks to her cook. Many believe the coins would bring wealth in the coming year to those that found it.

## *Plain Christmas Pudding for Children*

1 lb. of flour, 1 lb. of bread crumbs,  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. of stone raisins,  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. of currants  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. of suet, 3 or 4 eggs, milk, 2 oz. of candied peel, 1 teaspoonful of powdered allspice,  $\frac{1}{2}$  spoonful of salt.

Let the suet be finely chopped, the raisins stone, and the currants well washed, picked and dried. Mix these with the other dry ingredients, and stir well together; beat and strain the eggs to the pudding, stir these in, and add just sufficient milk to make it mix properly. Tie it up in a well-floured cloth, put into boiling water, and boil for at least 5 hours. Serve with a sprig of holly placed in the middle of the pudding and a little pounded sugar sprinkled over it. Sufficient for 9 or 10 children

Recipe for Christmas Pudding from Beeton’s Book of Household Management, 1861.

## *Plum Pudding*

6 eggs, 1 tablespoon salt, 1 pound coffee sugar, 2 pounds raisins, and 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds currants (floured), 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds suet (chopped fine), 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  pounds read crumbs,  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound peel, 2 nutmegs, 1 dessertspoon mace, 1 pink milk, 1 wine glass brandy,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup molasses, a few almonds chopped father fine. Mix well together, let stand over night, use no flour except what is on currants and raisins, but if too thick next morning add more bread crumbs. Mix well, grease bowls, cover with a paste of flour and water, tie cloth on top and boil 5 or 6 hours. If not used at once, steam 1 or 2 hours when wanted

Mrs. J.G. Wallace, Woodstock Cook Book, 1917

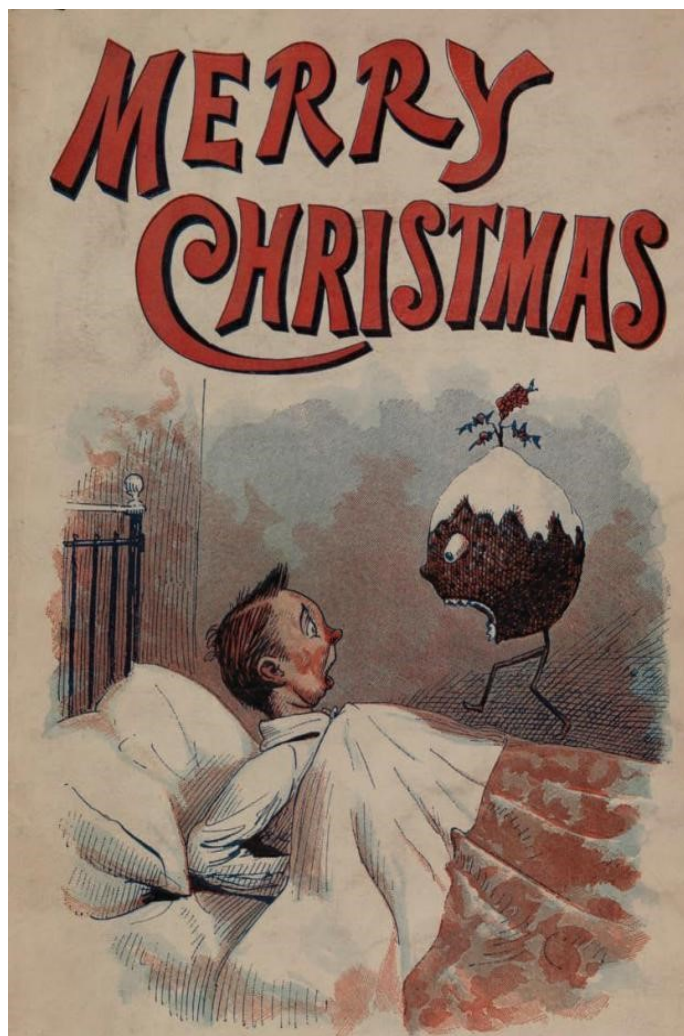


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**Fun Fact:** Despite the name “plum pudding,” the pudding contains no actual plums. It comes for the per-Victorian use of the word plums as a term for raisins.