



Basic Bread Stuffing

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Anna's Gourmet Goodies



One of the best parts of this holiday season is the traditions we share with family and friends and Thanksgiving is one of my favorites. From friendly wagering on exactly when we'll sit down to dinner (I always add at least two hours to the estimated time), to music, games, and naps afterwards, these simple rituals are a part of the fabric of our family.

When it comes to food preparation, the making of the stuffing or dressing has

stood the test of time at our annual gathering. In years past, when the cousins were young, it was a ritual for all the girls to stand around and help tear up the bread. While we don't have too many 'little girls' to observe this part of the tradition, the Chef in charge, my Aunt Lois, is the undisputed master of the dressing and gravy. I called her in hopes of uncovering some of her secrets and she gave me her recipe. But like most great cooks, she works without instructions – so I've done my best to translate 'a little of this' and 'a handful of that' into something we can all follow.

I must admit that I did deviate slightly from her instructions. For bread, I chose to use a baguette that was just a bit stale. One long baguette worked out to be about six cups when pulled into pieces. You may select your favorite bread, but it should be on the way to drying out. If you don't have access to any 'day old' bread, warm the torn pieces in the oven at about 250 degrees until they start to dry, but are not toasted.

For the seasoning, she uses sage, but I could not resist adding a little fresh rosemary from the herb garden as well. Rosemary is one of my favorite herbs. The aroma and flavor are worth a trip to the fresh herb bin, if you don't have a plant growing around the house.

Finally, Aunt Lois always makes two versions, one with fresh oysters and one without. I opted to keep it plain. For a little variety, feel free to add about a cup of any of the following to this recipe before baking:

Oysters - fresh oysters – in a can or from the shell

Chestnuts – roast or boil, peel and chop

Sausage – cook fresh sausage, break in to small pieces and drain well.

Basic Bread Stuffing

6 cups bread pieces

1 cup chopped celery
1 cup chopped onions
2 cups Turkey stock (or chicken stock)
¾ stick melted butter
1 egg
1 tbsp ground sage
1 tbsp fresh rosemary
Extra virgin olive oil
Salt
Fresh ground pepper

Tear the bread into small chunks, about ¼ “ in size. Place in a large bowl, add the herbs, and toss to mix. Set aside.

Heat a pan, the coat the bottom with olive oil. Sautee the onions until they begin to turn translucent, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add the celery, stir, and cook for about 3 minutes more. Vegetables should be just starting to get tender.

Add the onions and celery to the bread crumbs and stir to mix thoroughly. Add the melted butter and mix. Next add the stock and stir. Finally, add the egg and toss well so that the ingredients are coated.

Grease a small baking dish with butter. Add the dressing and bake at 375 degrees for about 40 minutes. The top should be browned when done. Garnish with celery leaves and serve.

If you have questions about this recipe or would like to see something in the future, please drop a note to chris@annasgourmetgoodies.com.

Bon Appetit!