

# CABALLEROS POBRES

## BREAD PUDDING "SOUFFLÉ" WITH CINNAMON SYRUP AND NUTS

Every culture has its recipe for using up stale, left-over bread, and bread pudding is probably as old as bread itself. In medieval England, the dish was referred to as "poor knights" signifying its humble status. Yucatecan *caballeros pobres* makes use of French bread, which gives a clue that it is hardly a Maya classic! Nonetheless, it can be found on every restaurant menu in Yucatán, where it is typically served chilled or at room temperature. Our version is served hot, enriched with almonds or pecans, and is finished with a lush *canela*/brandy syrup. Serving it *á la mode* with *Helado de Vainilla Mexicana* or *Chocolate Mexicano* makes it more like *caballeros ricos* ("rich knights")!

10 SERVINGS

### ☞ PREPARE THE BREAD ☞

- 2 cups (500ml) milk
- 3 Tbs. (45g) sugar
- 2 tsp. (10ml) vanilla
- 4 small or 2 large loaf stale French bread, sliced into 3/4-inch (2cm) thick rounds
- 6 eggs

• Vegetable oil, enough for about 1 1/2" (4cm) in the bottom of a skillet

- 1 cup (250ml) water
- 1 cup (200g) sugar
- 1 cone *piloncillo*, chopped (Substitute: 1 cup brown sugar)
- 2 whole cloves
- 10 3-inch (8cm) sticks of *canela* (Also known as Mexican cinnamon)
- 1/2 cup (50g) whole almonds or pecans
- 1/4 cup (75ml) brandy or Kahlúa

**STEP 1 COMBINE MILK, SUGAR** and vanilla; dip each slice of bread into the milk mixture, then put bread in a colander placed over a bowl to drain.

**STEP 2 SEPARATE THE EGGS.** Beat the whites until stiff but not dry. Beat three of the egg yolks well; fold carefully into the meringue, being careful not to deflate the whites.

**STEP 3 HEAT THE OIL** in a heavy skillet until hot but not smoking. Dip each bread slice into the meringue to coat, then fry in the oil. When browned, flip rounds to cook the other side. Drain on paper towels.

### ☞ MAKE THE SYRUP ☞

**STEP 4 MEANWHILE, PLACE WATER, SUGAR, *piloncillo*** and spices in a small saucepan. Simmer, stirring frequently, until sugar and *piloncillo* are completely dissolved. Allow to continue cooking until the syrup coats a spoon. Strain into another small pan; place *canela* sticks on waxed paper to cool; discard cloves. Add liquor, along with nuts, and continue cooking another 5 minutes, or until syrup re-thickens.

### ☞ BAKE & SERVE ☞

**STEP 5 PREHEAT OVEN TO 350° F (180° C).** Meanwhile, in a deep baking dish or in individual soufflé molds, place fried bread rounds in one layer at the bottom. Pour on a large spoonful of the syrup/almond mixture. Repeat with one more layer of bread. Finish by topping with more syrup and almonds. Bake for 30 - 40 minutes or until syrup begins to boil and you see caramelization occurring on the top. Allow to rest at room temperature for 15 minutes before serving.

**STEP 6 GARNISH WITH THE CANELA STICKS** and top with a scoop of ice cream.