

caramel dumplings

recipe: adapted from a family recipe

Serves 4-6.

For the sauce:

- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 1/2 cups water

For the dumplings:

- 1/2 cup granulated white sugar
- pinch of salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 tablespoons cold butter
- 1/2 cup milk

You will also need:

- 1/2 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Mise en place - begin by getting organized. Measure out all of your ingredients.

Preheat oven to 400°F. Grease a 2-quart casserole dish. If the sides of your dish are very shallow, place a cookie sheet under the casserole dish during baking to prevent splatters on the oven floor.

Begin by making the sauce. Place the brown sugar and butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Cook until the butter has melted and combined with the sugar, stirring constantly. Add the water and bring to boil, stirring occasionally. Continue to gently boil for 4-5 minutes. The sauce will not thicken. As the sauce is cooking, make the dumplings.

To make the dumplings, in a medium sized bowl, whisk together the sugar, salt, flour, and baking powder. Cut in the butter (with a pastry cutter, two knives or a fork) until it resembles coarse crumbs. Add the milk and mix until just combined (avoid over-mixing). It will be a loose batter.*

Pour the sauce into the prepared casserole dish. Sprinkle the pecans over the sauce. Then drop batter by spoonfuls into the sauce. Bake uncovered for about 20-25 minutes. The sauce will sputter as it's baking - this is normal. The dumplings will get plump and cake-like as they bake, and turn golden. Use a knife or toothpick to check that the dumplings are cooked throughout. The sauce should be hot and bubbling forth from the dumplings. (Handle with care - avoid getting splattered.)

Best if served immediately. (Though we often re-heat leftovers in the microwave!)

* TIP: Adding the milk the dumpling batter at the last minute will give you a softer, floofier dumpling, as the leavener (baking powder) won't lose its potency. I wait until the sauce has only 1-2 more minutes of cook time, and then add the milk to my dumpling mixture.