

Sticky Toffee Pudding

Dates bloomed with soda for a silky crumb. Dark muscovado + treacle for caramel that's deep, not flat. A two-stage sauce finished off-heat with whisky, poured hot so the sponge drinks it dark.

Yield: **10–12** (20×20 cm) Active: **15 min** Total: **1 hr 15** Oven: **170°C** (340°F) Done: **94°C** internal

WHERE IT WAS BORN

England by name, contested by fact — oldest claim the *Gait Inn*, Millington, Yorkshire (1907); the famous line runs through Lancashire from two Canadian wartime airmen.

EATEN, AUTHENTICALLY

Hot, the sponge skewered and drowned in toffee sauce, with cold *clotted cream* — a country-house dining-room pudding made famous at Sharrow Bay in the 1970s.

HOW IT'S USED NOW

A pub and restaurant fixture worldwide; the same date batter becomes sticky ginger & walnut pudding (below), and the sauce stands alone over ice cream.

INGREDIENTS

WEIGHT (LB/OZ) · CUPS / VOLUME IN RIGHT COLUMN

DATE BASE

Medjool dates, pitted (<i>deglet works</i>)	7.8 oz	~1¼ cups
Boiling water	9.9 oz	1¼ cups
Baking soda (<i>it foams</i>)	0.21 oz	1 tsp

CAKE

Unsalted butter, soft	3.5 oz	7 tbsps
Dark muscovado sugar	6.2 oz	¾ cup
Black treacle (<i>or molasses</i>)	0.88 oz	1 tbsps
Egg, whole (<i>RT</i>)	3.5 oz	2 large
Vanilla extract	0.18 oz	1 tsp
Plain flour	6.2 oz	1½ cups
Baking powder	0.14 oz	1 tsp
Fine sea salt	0.11 oz	½ tsp

WHISKY CARAMEL SAUCE

Dark muscovado sugar	5.3 oz	¾ cup
Unsalted butter (<i>cubed</i>)	3.5 oz	7 tbsps
Double cream (<i>35%+</i>)	7.1 oz	scant 1 cup
Vanilla extract	0.18 oz	1 tsp
Dark whisky / rum (<i>off-heat</i>)	1.1 oz	2 tbsps
Flaky sea salt	0.11 oz	½ tsp

THE RATIO — FLOUR = 100%

Flour 100 · Sugar 100 · Butter 57 · Egg 57 · Dates 125. A near 1:1:1 pound-cake frame carried by its own weight again in soft date — that date load holds the sauce.

Kit: 20×20 cm (8") square pan or 8 ramekins · heavy small saucepan · scale · instant-read thermometer · whisk · skewer

METHOD

- Bloom the dates.** Stir 6g soda into 280g boiling water until clear, pour over 220g pitted dates, stand **15 min**. Blend smooth; cool to **≤40°C** before the batter.

Alkaline water (pH ~8) dissolves pectin so the purée goes silky + pre-reacts the dates' acid; hot purée melts the butter emulsion. — McGee 2004
- Cream the sugars.** Oven 170°C (340°F); butter + line the pan. Cream 100g butter, 175g muscovado, 25g treacle **3–4 min** until pale. A little grain is fine.

Dark muscovado = up to ~15% molasses vs light brown's ~3.5%: deeper colour, smoke, dark fruit + moist crumb. — Parks, BraveTart 2017
- Eggs, then flour + dates.** Beat in 100g egg one at a time with vanilla. Whisk flour, baking powder, salt; fold in half → all dates → rest. **Stop at 80%** — streaks fine.

Over-mixing builds gluten + air → a tall springy cake that sheds sauce. — Beranbaum, Cake Bible
- Bake + rest. 30–35 min to 94°C (200°F) centre** — matte, cracked edges, skewer tacky not wet. Rest 10 min in the pan; do not unmould.

At 94°C the starch is set but porous and warm — the state that drinks hot sauce. — McGee 2004

Whisky Caramel — two stages, off-heat finish

- Melt 100g butter + 150g muscovado low until glossy, **3–4 min**. No graininess.
- Off heat:** whisk in 200g cream + vanilla. Back on low, **simmer 90 sec** to coat a spoon — never a hard boil, which splits it.
- Off heat:** whisk in 30g whisky + 3g flaky salt. Whisky's esters boil off above 78°C — add late, hold 70–80°C. — *Modernist Cuisine 2011*
- Skewer + drown:** 30+ holes in the warm sponge, pour ⅓, let it vanish 60 sec, then plate + drench ~40g a portion. Reserve the rest for the table.

Done: Sponge 94°C (200°F) internal, matte + cracked, skewer tacky. Sauce coats a spoon, glossy, unbroken.

Serve: hot, soaked dark, with cold clotted cream / crème fraîche / ice cream. Pour the sauce at 70–80°C — never cold, it gels on top.

ONE BATTER, TWO PUDDINGS — STICKY GINGER & WALNUT

The same date sponge, the Lancashire variation: add **4g ground ginger** to the dry mix, **30–40g chopped stem ginger** + **60g toasted walnuts** to the batter. Same pan, same 94°C, same whisky caramel (or a maple butterscotch). *The sauce also stands alone — 5 days fridge, gentle reheat over ice cream.*

ELEVATION

TIER 1 — NO EXTRA TIME

- Silan glaze** — swap treacle for 25g date molasses
- Pedro Ximénez** — 40g PX for the whisky; fig + raisin
- Espresso** — 1g instant into the sauce if skipping booze

TIER 2 — WORTH IT (+10 MIN)

- Brown-butter sponge** — brown 130g, weigh 100g
- Burnt-honey brake** — 30g honey to mahogany into the sauce
- Miso caramel** — 15g white miso whisked in; deeper caramel

TIER 3 — RESTAURANT

- Smoked dates** — cold-smoke 20 min over oak before soaking
- Smoked clotted cream** — 15 min hay/applewood, covered
- Bone-marrow crust** — 20g rendered marrow + salt on the warm top

TROUBLESHOOT

Metallic taste	Soda not dissolved. Stir into water until clear first.
Dense, gummy	Date purée too hot. Cool to ≤40°C — it melts the butter.
Sunk middle	Underbaked. Bake to a true 94°C, not on colour.
Sauce split	Boiled too hard. Off heat, splash cold cream, whisk hard.
Sauce sits on top	Poured cold / crumb cold. Pour at 70–80°C on warm sponge.
Tastes flat	Light brown, not muscovado. Use muscovado, or +25g molasses.

CHARTER PREP & STORAGE

The rule	Store pudding + sauce APART, always. Together = split fat, mushy cake.
Baked pudding	2 mo frozen. Reheat 120°C / 12 min, lightly pre-soaked.
Toffee sauce	2 wk fridge / 3 mo freezer. Skim fat, whisk back in 30-sec bursts.
Date base	5 d fridge in a jar. Double the soak for next week.
Raw ramekins	1 mo frozen. Bake from frozen +10 min @ 165°C.
Never	Store the two together, or pour the sauce cold.