

Breakfast Strata

We used Bruce Aidells' brown Sugar and Sage Sausage, which is also in his "Complete Book of Pork," but any well-flavored pork sausage may be substituted.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1½ pounds bulk fresh pork sausage
- 1 cup finely chopped onions
- ½ cup finely chopped celery
- 4 large eggs
- 2 cups milk
- Softened butter, for greasing the dish
- 12 slices day-old French or Italian bread, crusts removed
- 1½ cups grated cheese, such as sharp cheddar, Jack, Swiss, fontina, Asiago, Parmesan, or mozzarella

INSTRUCTIONS: In a large skillet, cook the sausage over medium-high heat, breaking it up as it cooks with a fork, about 5 minutes. Add onions and celery. Cook 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Remove pan from heat; set aside.

Whisk eggs to break them up, then whisk in milk.

Butter inside of a 2½-quart casserole or shallow baking dish. Put a layer of bread slices (one third) on bottom of casserole. Spoon half of the sausage

mixture over it. Sprinkle with ½ cup cheese. Make another layer with more bread, followed by remaining sausage mixture and ½ cup cheese. Cover with one more layer of bread and cheese.

Pour egg and milk mixture (the custard) slowly and evenly over contents of casserole. Cover and let bread absorb mixture for at least 1 hour, or preferably overnight in the refrigerator.

Preheat the oven to 350°.

Put casserole on a baking sheet (to catch any overflow) and bake in the middle of the oven for 1 hour, or until top is browned and bubbling.

Serves 6 to 8

PER SERVING: 455 calories, 23 g protein, 25 g carbohydrate, 29 g fat (13 g saturated), 181 mg cholesterol, 1,019 mg sodium, 1 g fiber.