STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING

SERVES 6 TO 8

Active time: 25 min   Start to finish: 1¼ hr

Don't be concerned if the pudding cracks a bit when you invert it onto the plate; it will taste just as good.

- 2   sticks (1 cup) unsalted butter, softened, plus additional for greasing pan
- 1   cup self-rising cake flour plus additional for flouring pan
- 1   cup pitted dates (5 oz), finely chopped
- 1¼   cups packed dark brown sugar
- 1   large egg

▶ Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 350°F. Butter and flour an 8- by 2-inch round cake pan. ▶ Simmer dates in 1 cup water in a 1-quart heavy saucepan, covered, until soft, about 5 minutes. Let stand, covered, off heat 5 minutes. ▶ Beat together 1 stick butter and ¼ cup brown sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer at medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 4 minutes. Beat in egg until combined. Add flour and ⅛ teaspoon salt and mix at low speed until just combined. Add dates and mix until just combined well. ▶ Pour batter into pan and bake until a wooden pick or skewer inserted in center comes out clean, about 30 minutes. ▶ Meanwhile, melt remaining stick butter in a 2-quart heavy saucepan over moderate heat and stir in remaining cup brown sugar, ⅓ cup water, and a pinch of salt. Boil over moderately high heat,

uncovered, stirring occasionally, until sugar is dissolved and sauce is reduced to about 1¼ cups, 2 to 8 minutes. Remove from heat and cover. ▶ Transfer pudding in pan to a rack and poke all over at 1-inch intervals with a chopstick. Gradually pour half of warm sauce evenly over hot pudding. Let stand until almost all of sauce is absorbed, about 20 minutes. ▶ Run a thin knife around edge of pan. Invert a plate over pudding and invert pudding onto plate. Pour remaining warm sauce over pudding and serve immediately.

Cooks' note:

Pudding, soaked with half of sauce, can stand at room temperature up to 2 hours. Reheat in pan in a 300°F oven 10 minutes. Warm remaining sauce before pouring over pudding.