

FOOD

THE BAKER *By Flo Braker*

Far Breton — easy dessert from France

Desserts that blur the lines often provide the most delicious discoveries.

A case in point is Far Breton, a French country-style specialty that borrows ingredients from custard and cake blueprints but has architecture different from both.

Far Breton is from Brittany, deriving its name from farine, or flour. It traditionally contains two of the region's prized products — brandy and prunes — but the addition of rich Medjool dates makes for a pleasing variation.

At first glance, a recipe for Far Breton has much in common with another French dessert, a clafouti, although Far Breton is perhaps more like a tex-



Craig Lee / Special to The Chronicle; styling by Lynne Char Bennett

tured flan than a tender clafouti.

The two desserts share another appealing characteristic — their absolute ease of preparation.

An added bonus: The ingredients for Far Breton — milk, eggs, sugar, flour and dried fruit — are almost always on hand. Use the moistest prunes you can find; otherwise you can heat the prunes in water to

soften, or soak them in water overnight.

Far Breton is best enjoyed still warm from the oven when the baked batter is reminiscent of a souffle and the fruit remains soft and jammy. The dessert's natural tendency is to deflate slightly as it cools.

Rustic simplicity is inherent in a dessert like Far Breton. Spoon portions directly from the

Far Breton

Serves 8

Far Breton, which originated in France's Brittany region, gets its name from the word far (think farine, or flour). It is best when served warm from the oven, since it deflates as it cools. This goes especially well with a cup of tea or coffee.

- 2 tablespoons soft butter, for the baking dish
- 4 ounces moist pitted dried plums (prunes), chopped into thirds
- 3 large (2½ ounces) pitted dates, preferably Medjool variety, halved lengthwise
- 2 cups whole milk
- 3 large eggs
- 2 large egg yolks
- ¼ cup packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 tablespoon brandy, such as Armagnac, or rum (optional)
- ¾ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Powdered sugar, for garnish

Instructions: Center a rack in the oven and preheat to 375°.

Generously butter a 6-cup baking dish or pan. Scatter pieces of prunes and dates into the buttered dish, distributing evenly.

Place in a blender or small food processor the milk, eggs, egg yolks, sugars, butter, brandy or rum (if using) and vanilla. Add the flour and salt; pulse until smooth. Without delay, pour the batter into the baking dish. Bake 25–35 minutes, until the top is golden and the sides start to pull away from the dish.

Spoon or cut into servings, and dust each serving lightly with powdered sugar.

Per serving: 280 calories, 6 g protein, 37 g carbohydrate, 13 g fat (7 g saturated), 161 mg cholesterol, 93 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.

baking dish, and dust lightly with powdered sugar.

One thing is clear:

Even if you cannot classify a dessert precisely, you can savor it categorically.

A note from Flo

As the saying goes, time flies when you're having fun. For the past 23 years, planning and writing this column have been high priorities and have enriched my life.

People who love to bake, especially home bakers, have been my target audience. I have thoroughly enjoyed conversing with readers and answering their questions, but now it's time to pass the rolling pin forward.

Starting next month, Emily Luchetti, pastry chef at Farallon and Water Bar, and a baking author in her own right, will take over this column. But I'm not abandoning baking — I'll continue to pursue my passion for it with friends and family, and especially with my grandchildren.

Heartfelt thanks to Chronicle readers and to the Food & Wine staff for making the past two-plus decades so rewarding.

Flo Braker's latest book is "Baking for All Occasions" (Chronicle Books). food@sfgate.com