



*Easy-Bake
Herbed Stuffing*



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Start to finish: 3 1/2 hours (30 minutes active)

Servings: 8

Let's face it, stuffing is basically a flavorful sponge to soak up gravy and any stray melting butter that exapes a vegetable. But Mincing and sautéing the aromatics that help turn bland bread tasty is a chore. We speed things up -- and maximize flavor -- by giving butter, fresh herbs and raw shallots a whiz in the froot processor, then using the resulting paste to season bread cubes while they toast in the oven. We found that any sturdy, high-quality sliced sandwich bread from the grocer worked well here. As the bread bakes, the raw bite of the shallots cooks off leaving behind a mellow tang. Chopped celery is tossed with melting butter and mixed into the bread, softening as the cubes toast. The mixture then is mositened with chicken broth and a touch of cream before being baked to create a relatively carefree stuffing that will satisfy the even strictest traditionalists.

- 1 cup finely chopped celery
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) salted butter, melted
- 8 ounces shallots, peeled
- 1/3 cup lightly packed fresh sage
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 pounds sturdy white sandwich bread, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley



Heat the oven to 325°F with racks in the upper- and lower-middle positions. In a medium bowl, toss the celery with 1 tablespoon of the butter; set aside. In a food processor, combine the shallots, sage, thyme, salt, pepper and the remaining butter. Process to form a smooth paste, about 30 seconds.

In a large bowl, combine the bread and shallot-herb paste, tossing gently. Fold in the celery, then divide the mixture between 2 rimmed baking sheets. Bake until the celery is tender and the bread is crisp and golden, 50 to 60 minutes, stirring the bread and switching and rotating the pans halfway through. Let cool slightly. (At this stage, the bread mixture can be cooled, bagged and stored for a day.)

When ready to proceed, set the oven temperature to 400°F. Transfer the bread mixture to a large bowl, scraping any browned bits off the sheet pans. Fold in the broth, cream and parsley; let sit for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Transfer to a 13-by-9-inch baking dish and spread evenly. Bake on the upper-middle rack until well browned, 40 to 45 minutes, rotating the dish halfway through. Let sit for 20 minutes before serving.