



The last Sunday before Advent is 'Stir-up Sunday', the day when traditionally families gather together _____ prepare the Christmas pudding. This year it fell on Sunday 26th November 2023.

The day does not actually get its name _____ 'stirring the pudding': it gets its name from the Book of Common Prayer. The Collect of the Day for the last Sunday before Advent starts, "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people". However _____ Victorian times it has become associated with the rather lovely family custom of preparing _____ Christmas together by making the Christmas pudding, an essential part of most British Christmas dinners.

The Christmas pudding as we know it is said to have _____ introduced to Britain by Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria, however it is thought that a version of the pudding was actually introduced from Germany _____ George I (sometimes known as the 'pudding king') in 1714.

Usually the pudding is prepared well _____ advance (5 weeks before Christmas) and then reheated (and lit!) on Christmas Day itself.

Most puddings will contain some of the following ingredients: dried fruit, prunes and dates (often soaked in brandy), candied peel, mixed spice, treacle, suet, eggs, breadcrumbs and dark brown sugar. Traditionally there would _____ 13 ingredients in all, to represent Jesus and

his disciples. Most families have a favourite recipe or follow one handed _____ over the generations. Sometimes silver coins are added _____ the mixture; anyone who finds one when eating the pudding _____ said to receive health, wealth and happiness in the coming year. Unfortunately it has been known for the discovery of a coin in the pudding to result _____ a broken tooth – not quite so lucky in this case!

On Stir-Up Sunday, families gather together to mix the pudding. Each _____ of the family takes a turn in stirring the mixture whilst making a wish. The pudding should be stirred _____ east to west, in honour of the Magi (Wise Men) who came from the east to visit the baby Jesus. It's also a good excuse to enjoy a wee dram or a cup of festive mulled _____!

On Christmas Day the pudding has _____ own ritual. It is topped with a sprig of holly (plastic holly is best as holly berries are poisonous) to represent Jesus' crown of thorns. A little warm brandy is then poured over it and lit – with care, as many an eyebrow has fallen victim to an over-enthusiastic dousing of the pudding in alcohol! It is then carried proudly, alight and flaming, to the table to _____ served with brandy butter and cream or lashings of hot custard.

Indeed, even Charles Dickens mentions this festive ritual in his novel, 'A Christmas Carol':

"Mrs Cratchit left the room alone – too nervous to bear witnesses – to take the pudding up and bring it in... Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper which smells like a washing-day. That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that. That was the pudding. In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered – flushed, but smiling proudly – with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quarter of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top."

Sadly, the tradition of Stir-Up Sunday is dying _____ , as nowadays most Christmas puddings are shop-bought. If however you do decide to _____ part, next year the date will be 22nd November and in 2024.