SAVORY BREAD PUDDING

This is kind of ‘anything goes!’ Use whatever combination of veggies you have on hand.

**INGREDIENTS**

- ½ pound stale bread, such as levain, rustic white, or baguette, cut into 1-inch pieces
- Extra-virgin olive oil and/or unsalted butter
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups cooked mixed vegetables, such as chopped asparagus, broccoli florets, sliced mushrooms, chopped greens (chard, spinach, or kale), and/or chopped bell peppers
- 1/2 small red or yellow onion, finely chopped; 1 medium leek, halved lengthwise, rinsed well, and sliced; or 1 large shallot, minced
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh herbs, such as thyme, oregano, or marjoram
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (optional)
- 4 large eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese or other shredded cheese such as Gruyère or cheddar (optional)

**DIRECTIONS**

- Preheat the oven to 400°F. Spread the bread onto a baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil. Season with a little salt and pepper. Toss to coat. Bake, turning once or twice, until crisp and browned, 10 to 15 minutes. Set aside. Reduce the heat to 350°F.

- Meanwhile, cook the vegetables. If using asparagus or broccoli, fill a saucepan half full of salted water and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Add the vegetables and boil until barely crisp-tender, 30 seconds to 2 minutes. Drain and rinse under cold running water to stop the cooking. If using mushrooms, greens, or peppers, cook in a skillet over medium heat with a little olive oil until crisp-tender.

- In a bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and a few grinds of pepper. Grease the skillet with oil. Transfer the bread and vegetable mixture to the skillet. Pour the egg mixture over the bread and vegetables. Set aside for about 30 minutes, pressing down on the bread occasionally so it soaks up the egg mixture.

- Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spread the cheese (if using) over the top of the pudding. Bake the pudding until golden brown on top and set in the middle, about 25 minutes; if you’d like the top to be more brown turn on the broiler for the last few minutes. Set aside to cool for 5 minutes, then serve hot or warm.