**BANANA CARAMEL BAKED FRENCH TOAST**

This French toast dish is a good excuse to have the traditional New Orleans dessert Bananas Foster for breakfast. Similar in flavor, bananas cooked in a yummy caramel sauce are the star of this dish. I add depth and texture by using an egg bread, like Challah. I’ve served this dish to friends who aren’t typically French toast fans and they love it! Serve with fresh berries on the side.

Note that you need to start this dish at least 8 hours before serving.

SERVES: 6 to 8

1/2 cup butter

1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar

2 tablespoons light corn syrup

1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon Kahlua or other coffee flavored liqueur, or dark rum

2 large bananas, cut into 1/4-inch slices

8 (3/4-inch) slices Challah or other egg bread

5 large eggs

1 1/2 cups half and half 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup sliced almonds Powdered sugar (optional)

Butter a 13-by 9-inch baking dish.

In a medium saucepan, combine the butter, brown sugar and corn syrup over medium heat. Cook, stirring constantly, until the butter melts and blends with the sugar. Stir in 1 tablespoon liqueur. Pour into prepared baking dish.

Arrange banana slices over the top of sauce. Arrange the bread slices in one layer over the bananas, trimming the bread to fit as needed (depending on the size of your bread, you will likely need 6 full slices and then cut up the remaining 2 slices to fill in the gaps). Set aside.

In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the remaining 1 teaspoon liqueur, eggs, half and half, vanilla and salt. Pour evenly over the bread slices, soaking bread thoroughly with the milk mixture. Cover, and refrigerate at least 8 hours, up to 24 hours.

To serve, remove dish from refrigerator and bring to room temperature (about 1 hour). Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Sprinkle the top of the dish with almonds. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until golden brown and the top is set; let stand 5 minutes. Dust with powdered sugar, if desired, and serve.

*Recipe from Fresh Tastes by Lee Clayton Roper, reprinted with permission*