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French Toast

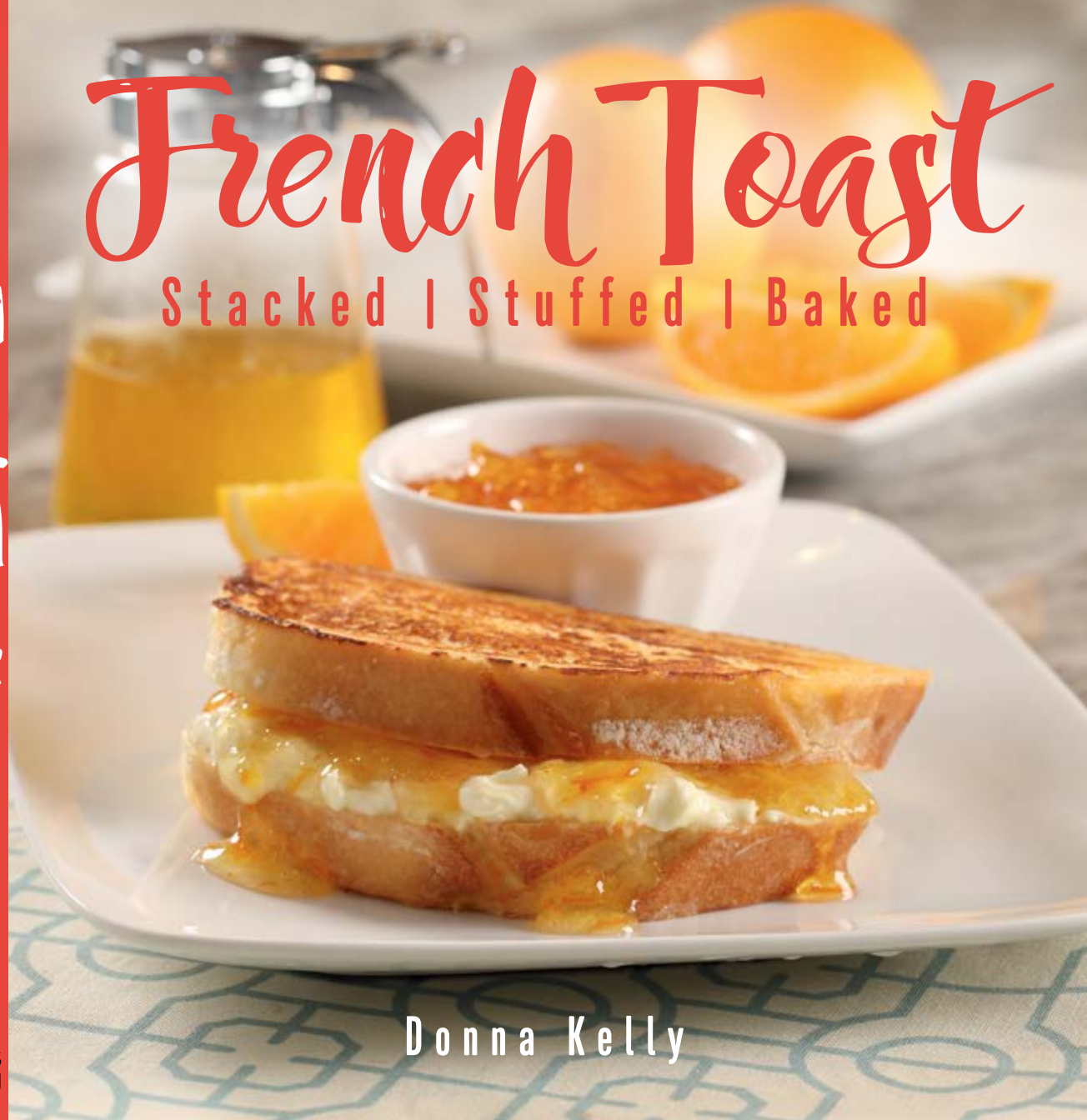
Kelly



GIBBS SMITH

# French Toast

Stacked | Stuffed | Baked



Donna Kelly

# contents

acknowledgments	4
All About French Toast	5
Family Favorites	10
Brunch Time	23
Celebrations	43
Casseroles and Bakes	52
Savory Entrées	76
Desserts	100
Specialty Syrups and Sauces	115
index	126



## all about french toast

**F**rench toast is one of the oldest and most popular breakfast foods. It is derived from the original French recipe *pain perdu*, or “lost bread.” It started as an ingenious way to use stale or “lost” bread by dipping it in an egg and milk mixture and cooking it. The concept lends itself to an almost infinite variety of flavors and versions—all easy enough to make even the average cook an instant gourmet.

Because French toast is so easy and convenient, I became its biggest fan when my children were small. As time went by, it became a family favorite and eventually crept into our family

fare at meals other than breakfast. I found that, with a little experimenting, the possibilities with French toast were endless. Different types of breads opened up whole new worlds of flavors and combinations. Some of the most delicious mingled tastes were not the standard French toast with maple syrup, but rather a savory blend of cheeses, onion, and bits of meat. It was almost like a simplified and fail-safe version of a soufflé. Now French toast forms the base for many hearty and flavorful meals at our table, and I hope it does at your table too.

# banana supreme

MAKES 4 SANDWICHES

*Banana bread stuffed with a sweet almond cream and more bananas really hits the spot.*

**8 (1/2-inch-thick) slices  
day-old firm banana bread**

**4 tablespoons cream cheese,  
softened**

**1 teaspoon almond extract**

**2 tablespoons powdered  
sugar**

**1/2 cup sweetened  
condensed milk**

**3 eggs**

**1 teaspoon vanilla**

**2 ripe bananas, thinly sliced**

**Caramel syrup, optional**

**Syrup, of choice, optional**

Spread bread slices out on a baking sheet to dry for a few hours or overnight, turning at least once.

In a small bowl, using a hand mixer, mix together the cream cheese, almond extract, and sugar. In a pie plate or other shallow pan, whisk together the milk, eggs, and vanilla.

Heat a small frying pan sprayed with nonstick cooking spray over medium heat. Soak 1 side of a bread slice in egg mixture for 10 seconds and place soaked side down in the pan. Spread 1/4 of the cream cheese mixture over top and lightly press 1/4 of the banana slices into cream cheese. Soak 1 side of another bread slice and place dry side down over bananas; press slightly to seal. Cover, and cook on each side for 1-2 minutes, or until lightly browned. Repeat with remaining sandwiches. Serve with a drizzle of caramel or syrup, as desired.



# peach melba casserole

MAKES 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

*A decadent breakfast treat and a great new twist on the traditional peach and raspberry dessert.*

4 large eggs, divided

2 cups half-and-half

1/2 cup sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 to 3 pinches nutmeg

12 to 14 slices day-old  
firm white bread,  
crusts removed

8 ounces cream cheese,  
softened

3 tablespoons peach jam

2 large ripe peaches, peeled  
and thinly sliced

Raspberry Syrup (page 3)

In a bowl, whisk together 3 eggs, half-and-half, sugar, vanilla, salt, and nutmeg. Pour 1/2 of the egg mixture into a 9 x 13-inch baking pan. Arrange 1/2 of the bread slices over the egg mixture, completely covering the bottom.

In a bowl, mix together the cream cheese, 1 egg, and jam; spread over bread slices. Arrange peach slices on top in a single layer. Place remaining bread slices over peaches, completely covering surface. Pour remaining egg mixture evenly over top. Cover and refrigerate 2 hours or overnight. Remove from refrigerator and bring to room temperature, about 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Bake, uncovered, for 30-40 minutes, or until golden brown on top. Serve hot with Raspberry Syrup.





## cheesy chile strata MAKES 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

*The blend of chiles and cheese will make this dish a new mealtime favorite.*

- 3 Anaheim chiles
- 1 jalapeño
- 8 cups (1-inch cubes)  
day-old French bread
- 8 ounces grated sharp  
cheddar cheese
- 4 ounces grated sharp white  
cheddar or Monterey Jack  
cheese
- ½ cup thinly sliced  
green onion
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 6 large eggs, beaten
- 2 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chipotle  
chile powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Salsa, of choice

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Prepare a 4-quart casserole with nonstick cooking spray.

Slice chiles and jalapeño in half lengthwise and remove seeds and ribs. Grill or broil for 3–5 minutes, or until skins are blackened. Place in a ziplock bag and allow to sweat for 5 minutes. Remove skins and dice.

In a large bowl, toss together the bread cubes, chiles, cheeses, onion, and cilantro; place in casserole dish. In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, cumin, chile powder, and salt. Pour over bread mixture, making sure the bread is completely saturated. Bake, uncovered, for 35–40 minutes, or until lightly browned and almost set in the center. Serve with salsa on top, or on the side.

# tomato basil monte cristos

MAKES 4 SANDWICHES

*This fresh take on the classic sandwich will turn lunch into a little taste of France.*

**1/2 cup flour**

**1 1/2 cups seasoned toasted  
breadcrumbs**

**4 large eggs**

**1/2 cup milk**

**4 (1/4-inch-thick) slices  
mozzarella cheese**

**8 slices day-old firm  
white bread**

**1 bunch fresh basil, chopped**

**1 large vine-ripened tomato,  
thinly sliced**

Spread flour and breadcrumbs on separate plates. In a pie plate or other shallow pan, whisk together the eggs and milk. Place a slice of cheese on 4 of the bread slices. Sprinkle a little basil over the cheese and add some tomato slices; top with remaining bread.

Heat a small frying pan that has been sprayed with nonstick cooking spray over medium heat. Coat the outsides of each sandwich by first dipping in the flour, then the egg mixture, and finally the breadcrumbs. Place 1 of the sandwiches in the pan, cover, and cook on each side for about 2 minutes, or until golden brown. Repeat with remaining sandwiches.



# lemony blueberry cobbler

MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

*All the taste of classic blueberry cobbler in a French toast dish.*

6 large eggs

1 cup liquid vanilla  
coffee creamer

8 cups (1-inch cubes)  
day-old French bread

6 cups fresh or frozen and  
thawed blueberries

3 tablespoons cornstarch

1/2 cup sugar

2 tablespoons fresh-  
squeezed lemon juice

1 teaspoon lemon zest

Whipped cream or ice cream,  
optional

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs and creamer. Add bread cubes, tossing until evenly coated; set aside. (Toss with a spoon occasionally to make sure liquid is evenly absorbed.)

In a separate bowl, toss berries with cornstarch, sugar, juice, and zest; place in a 4-quart baking dish, and spread soaked bread cubes evenly over top. Bake, uncovered, for 30-40 minutes, or until cooked through and bubbly around the edges. Serve topped with whipped cream or ice cream, if desired.

**VARIATION:** *Once mixture is ready to bake, it can be divided into individual ramekins and baked for 30 minutes, or until baked through and bubbly around the edges.*



# smoked salmon bagels

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

*This New York deli-style French toast makes a great brunch for a lazy day.*

3 large eggs

1 cup milk

½ teaspoon salt

3 savory day-old bagels

Butter

½ cup whipped cream cheese

3 tablespoons minced  
fresh dill

6 ounces sliced smoked Nova  
Scotia-style salmon

6 tablespoons minced fresh  
flat-leaf parsley

Capers, optional

In a pie plate or other shallow pan, whisk together the eggs, milk, and salt. Cut bagels in half and soak each half in egg mixture for about 1 minute on each side.

Melt a little butter in a small frying pan over medium-high heat. Add a soaked bagel half to the pan, cover, and cook on each side for 2–3 minutes, or until lightly browned. Repeat with remaining bagels.

Place on individual plates and cool to room temperature. When ready to serve, spread a thick layer of cream cheese on cut side of each bagel. Sprinkle ½ tablespoon dill over cream cheese and top with 1–2 slices of salmon, cutting to fit so the salmon hangs slightly over sides of bagel. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon parsley over salmon, and top with capers, if desired.





# seafood newberg stacks

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

*You'll be hooked on the flavor-packed combination of lobster bisque and shrimp, and how quick and easy this fresh take on an American classic dish comes together.*

**3 green onions, thinly sliced**

**½ green bell pepper, diced**

**1 tablespoon butter**

**1 (14-ounce) can condensed lobster or shrimp bisque**

**½ pound cooked and peeled shrimp, diced**

**½ pound cooked scallops, diced**

**½ pound cooked regular or imitation crab, chopped**

**1 cup half-and-half**

**3 large eggs**

**½ teaspoon salt**

**6 day-old English muffins, split**

In a large frying pan, sauté onions and bell pepper in butter over medium heat until limp but not browned; stir in bisque. Add the shrimp, scallops, and crab to soup mixture, and cook until hot and bubbly around edges; reduce heat and cover to keep warm.

In a pie plate or other shallow pan, whisk together the half-and-half, eggs, and salt. Dip muffin halves in egg mixture for a few seconds on each side, gently shaking off any excess. Heat a small frying pan sprayed with nonstick cooking spray over medium heat. Add 1 soaked muffin half to the pan, cover, and cook on each side for about 3 minutes. Repeat with remaining halves.

To serve, top 1 muffin half with ⅓ cup seafood mixture, second half of the muffin, and another ⅓ cup seafood.



# waffle style

MAKES 8 TOASTS

*The combination of waffles and French toast creates a crispy crust that holds as much butter and syrup as your heart desires.*

4 large eggs

1 cup milk

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 tablespoon sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

8 (1-inch-thick) slices day-old  
challah or French bread

Syrup, of choice, warmed

Powdered sugar, optional

Fresh fruit, of choice, optional

Preheat waffle iron according to manufacturer's directions, and spray generously with nonstick cooking spray.

In a pie plate or other shallow pan, whisk together the eggs, milk, vanilla, sugar, and salt. Soak bread slices one at a time in egg mixture on each side until completely soaked. Place a soaked slice in heated waffle iron, close lid, and cook until lightly brown. Repeat process, spraying iron with a little cooking spray before adding each slice of bread. Serve with syrup, powdered sugar, and/or fresh fruit.

