El Pato Capirotada – Mexican Bread Pudding

By Ernest Miller

Capirotada is a traditional Mexican bread pudding that is usually served during Lent. Unlike more common bread puddings, it does not have a custard base and contains what are generally considered savory ingredients, such as tomato, onion and cheese.

Makes two 8 by 8-inch baking pans.

For the Syrup:
- 8 cups water
- 1 pound piloncillo, chopped
- 2 green onions
- 1 large tomato, quartered
- 1/3 cup El Pato salsa

In a large stainless steel pot, combine the water, piloncillo, onions and tomatoes. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the El Pato salsa. Strain through a China cap and allow to cool.

For the Capirotada:
- One 24 ounce loaf of sourdough bread
- 1 cup walnuts, rough chopped, divided
- 1 cup raisins, divided
- 1 cup Monterey jack cheese, shredded, divided

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Dry or lightly toast bread and cut into cubes.

Meanwhile, toast walnuts for ten minutes.

In a large, stainless steel, bowl toss bread cubes with half of the walnuts, half of the raisins and half of the cheese. Continue tossing the mixture while drizzling with the Syrup.

Spray two 8 by 8-inch baking pans with cooking spray. Divide mixture between the two pans. Sprinkle tops of both pans with remainder of walnuts and raisins. Top with remainder of cheese. Cover with foil and bake for 20 minutes. Uncover both pans and continue baking an additional 10 minutes.

Serve immediately warm or allow to cool and serve either at room temperature or chilled.