Morel, Ramp, and Asparagus Bread Pudding

Ramps (wild leeks) can be found at your local farmer’s market in the spring. If you can find fiddlehead ferns on the same trip, substitute them for the asparagus. This bread pudding is great for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. If serving for a meal other than breakfast, serve with a crisp green salad laden with fresh fruit.

**Yield:** 6---8 servings

**Ingredients:**

olive oil cooking spray

1/4 cup olive oil

6 cups cubed soft Italian bread (about 1 inch)

2 tablespoons Smart Balance® (or any oil-based low-calorie butter substitute)

6 ounces fresh morels, brushed or rinsed and sliced into rounds

8 fresh ramps (wild leeks)--white bulb and purple part only, washed and sliced into narrow rounds

8 stalks of fresh asparagus, washed and sliced into narrow rounds

1/2 cup fat-free half-and-half

6 large eggs (if using only egg whites, use 10)

3/4 cup freshly grated Parmigiano---Reggiano cheese

Sea salt (1/4 teaspoon or to taste–remember the cheese contains salt)

**Special Equipment:**

1 baking pan (7 cups) and 1 baking sheet with sides

**Directions:**

Preheat oven to 400̊F. Set oven rack set to middle position.

Coat baking pan and baking sheet with vegetable spray; set aside.

In a large bowl, toss bread cubes with olive oil. Place oiled cubes on a baking sheet and bake until golden brown and crisp (about 15 minutes).

Reduce oven temperature to 350̊F.

In a medium-large nonstick sauté pan over medium-low heat, melt butter substitute. Add rounds of morels and cook for approximately 6 minutes (there will be some moisture). Stir to cook morels evenly.

Add the cut rounds of ramps and sauté mixture for about 3 minutes, or until transparent.

Add rounds of asparagus and cook for about a minute, just to cook lightly. Let mixture cool slightly.

Add toasted bread cubes to ramp mixture and toss until well mixed, set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together half-and-half, eggs, and sea salt; add cheese.

Place mixture of toasted bread cubes in the well-sprayed baking pan. Pour egg mixture over bread cubes.

Bake approximately 45 minutes or until firm to the touch, golden brown in color, and crisp on top. Remove from oven and serve warm.