

LAMB'S WOOL

This Old English and Irish punch, which dates from the Middle Ages, probably gets its name from the woolly appearance of the flesh of the roasted apples floating in the cider. It's an Epiphany tradition.

- 6 baking apples, cored
- 2 tablespoons to 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 2 quarts sweet or hard cider, or ale--or a mixture of cider and ale
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger

Roast the apples in a baking pan at 450 degrees F. for about an hour, or until they are very soft and begin to burst. (An alternative and quicker procedure is to peel and boil the apples until they are very soft and flaky.) You may leave the apples whole or break them apart.

In a large saucepan, dissolve the sugar a few tablespoons at a time in the cider or ale, tasting for sweetness. Add the spices. Bring to a boil and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. Pour the liquid over the apples in a large punch bowl, or serve in large heat resistant mugs.

Yield: About 8 one-cup servings.