

Celebrating Christmas Made Easy for Everyone!

Celebrating

CHRISTMAS

Christmas 2005

Homemade Gifts for Friends and Family

Creative & Quick Christmas Crafts

100+ Holiday Decorating Ideas

Holiday Coloring Pages for Kids

*75 Easy
Holiday Recipes*

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Online Christmas Gift
Shopping Guide Inside!

Themes for a Dream Christmas

Colonial Williamsburg Christmas

Southern Christmas

★ Secret Garden Christmas

★ White Christmas

The writing is on the wall

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Friend,

Christmastime is here again and we can already smell it in the air! All around us, the hustle bustle that is so closely associated with Christmas has begun. 'Celebrating Christmas' Magazine is once again here to help you make the best of your time and creativity.

The overwhelming response to our inaugural issue last year has inspired and greatly encouraged us to raise the quality of this issue several notches up.

We begin our issue with themes as beautiful as a dream to celebrate Christmas in a memorable way. And for parents whose Christmas, like me, has already been rendered memorable because of the new addition to their family, we bring a special feature on celebrating 'Baby's First Christmas'. I know I am going to enjoy my first Christmas with my baby girl!

For all the craft lovers reading this issue, we have step-by-step instructions on making 5 beautiful handmade cards for Christmas. And we haven't forgotten the kids. There is a whole bunch of crafts, coloring pages and yummy Christmas treats for them. As 'Christmas' and 'Good Food' always go together, this issue features more than 75 easy and delicious recipes. The Quiches and the Pecan pie have my thumbs-up for sure-to-please hits this season.

Fresh and creative decorating ideas, entertaining tips, DIY decorating projects, gift ideas for the most 'difficult to please' and easy recipes will make this issue your favorite companion throughout this Holiday season.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you.

Happy Holidays!

Lata Tokhi



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Celebrate the joys of Christmas by planning your holiday along an old-fashioned theme. View all the theme ideas on Page 4.



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Themes for a Dream Christmas

'A little of this and a little of that' is the way most of us celebrate Christmas. How about celebrating on a theme this year? We bring for you four different and interestingly unique themes to celebrate Christmas.

From decorations to food to gift ideas, we have put everything together for you to have a joyous, unique and creative celebration.

A White Christmas



Christmas can be such a whirl of deadlines, decisions, budgeting and marketing, that it's rare to find a bit of quiet reflection in it all. Some years, it's nice to rest one's eyes from the flashing red-and-green hubbub, and focus instead on the beauty and peacefulness of a White Christmas season. To make the most of this idea, you should carry the theme throughout the celebration -- from tree decorations to gifts, dishes, and even food.

Decorating

Instead of holly berries and red amaryllis, use flowers such as narcissus, baby's breath or a

splurge of white French tulips; fill glass or crystal jars or flutes with seashells or anything else light in color -- even a collection of white buttons can have quite an effect! If you keep your eyes open, you will see opportunities all around you.

If you choose to go in for a complete cleanup, fresh paints for walls, new upholstery etc., keep your theme in mind and go in for soft whites and creams. If you are entertaining guests in your home, remember they will see most of the house, not just the living room and dining room. Break out the white or cream-colored sheets and towels; use a large, pearly seashell as a holder

for fine soaps; place a glass container of sea salt for the bath, if anyone is spending the night.



Use white lights for decorating. They give out a soft glow that brings the magic of white winters



to your décor. Line the pathway with 'snowflake' or 'star-shaped' lights available in most stores.

The Christmas Tree



A delightful idea to take your theme outdoors is to decorate snow-covered trees outdoors with strings of holiday lights. Your main Christmas tree indoors can be decorated in beautiful whites. Use white lights, bows, garlands, ribbons, bead strings, Angels, stars, snowflakes, white painted baubles, white decorations etc. Start with these and you will soon find yourself getting many more ideas.

Food & Entertaining

At the table, treat your guests to party favors of silver-coated Jordan almonds gathered in a bit of tulle, tied with a white or silver ribbon. White candles in silver or crystal candlesticks will brighten the room; you can use several different sizes and styles. A white jacquard tablecloth is particularly nice, as the subtle white-on-white pattern will reflect in the candlelight. For appetizers, try oysters in the shell,

served on a bed of rock salt. Serve any brightly-colored foods such as sweet potatoes individually in the hollowed-out shells of white pumpkins. Some of the traditional menu items, of course, will fit right in -- the white flesh of a turkey, creamy eggnog, whipped potatoes. For dessert, lighten things up with a Floating Island (fluffy spoonfuls of meringue adrift in a light custard sauce), or white chocolate mousse. You can even lighten a substantial meal with Angel Food Cake topped with white raspberries and zabaglione.

Gifts

For gifts, consider a winter-white sweater or scarf, crisp linen napkins, or a translucent porcelain tea set for two; a set of crystal tealight holders or a china picture frame, such as Lenox; or, if you really like someone, a cozy cream-colored new-wool throw for cuddling on a white winter's night.

We all have our favorite Christmas traditions, whether they were formed in early childhood or are ones we've made up for our own relatives and friends.

This year, with many Americans overseas for the season, many hearts are turning toward the nation's founding principles and how we can use them in our modern lives. What better time to celebrate a Colonial Christmas?

Some of the earliest Christmas celebrations in America took place in Williamsburg, Virginia. This is the heart of what most of us think of when the word "Colonial" comes to mind. Simple elegance, generous hospitality, and the use of natural elements are the hallmarks of this style.

Decorations

To bring this atmosphere in your own home, begin with your decorations. Many people equate Williamsburg decorations with lots of fruits -- wreaths and evergreen garlands accented with apples, oranges, pineapples and persimmons, even limes and artichokes.

Our original forefathers would not have dreamed of such a thing -- their religious sensibilities would have recoiled at such waste! In those days, Christmas decorations were more spartan, making use of natural materials at hand, such as magnolia leaves, holly berries, milkweed pods, sumac berries, cotton bolls, rosemary, laurel, boxwood and pine.

A Colonial Williamsburg Christmas



Common was the practice of "sticking the church" with green boughs on Christmas Eve.

Garlands of indigenous evergreens were hung from the church roof, the walls, the pillars and the galleries. Sometimes even the pews and the pulpit were included. Private homes were much more modestly adorned.

However, the use of these items

is so closely associated with the region now, that of course you can use them without fear of the Decorating Police citing you.

Just be aware that even the freshest fruits will probably have to be replaced every week or two to look their best -- and birds and squirrels may plunder tasty outdoor decorations. Rather than using edibles, you can add berries, dried flowers, magnolia leaves, oyster shells or even

dried okra pods to give your wreaths and garlands shape, texture and color.

Food

Williamsburg revelers were greeted by lavish feasts, and many people were welcomed to each one. Turkey, roast beef, cured ham and venison were popular meats, often accompanied by oysters, shellfish and lobster. A frothy, eggnog-like drink called Syllabub, and the requisite hard cider, lent warmth and cheer to the guests. For dessert,



For dessert, old-fashioned mincemeat pies joined new Southern delicacies mincemeat pies joined new Southern delicacies, such as pecan tart and oyster dressing.

The Pineapple

The pineapple was known as the symbol of hospitality, so it featured prominently in Williamsburg architecture, decor and cuisine. can incorporate this theme throughout

your celebration; carefully hollowed-out pineapples make beautiful candleholders, or you can place a whole one atop a symmetrical circle of glossy magnolia leaves for a classic centerpiece. Another beautiful idea for a centerpiece is described below.

A Pineapple Centerpiece

Another centerpiece in the traditional Williamsburg style, can be made using familiar elements such as boxwood, magnolia leaves, holly, apples, oranges, pine cones, roses, deep-toned chrysanthemums, pheasant feathers,



symmetrical - almost regimentally so. Quite a departure from today's relaxed standards, to be sure, but classically beautiful in its own right.

Gift Giving

Keeping gifts in the Colonial theme may seem daunting, but it is worth the small effort to see the surprised delight on your loved ones' faces. Men will appreciate a luxurious shaving brush set or a pewter beer mug; women will enjoy linen hand towels or a lovely tea set. Wood, pewter, brass, leather, pottery and iron were some of the most-used materials in this era, so consider a pair of candlesticks, a beautiful bowl or even a finely-crafted door knocker engraved with a family's monogram.

Activities

You can complete your theme by incorporating readings from some of the nation's founders, singing madrigals together, or having your family and guests reflect on which "old-fashioned" ideas still apply today. You may be surprised how modern and refreshing a Colonial Christmas can be!

Pineapple Centerpiece Photo Courtesy of FlowerShopNetwork.com



Secret Garden Christmas

Whether you want to celebrate your love of gardening, or are looking for ways to honor a friend's passion, a Secret Garden Christmas is a beautiful and unexpected treat in the midst of winter.

Everyone knows at least one person who is an avid gardener. If you are such a person, no amount of

explaining can quite communicate the delicious feeling of dirt-covered hands and a damp hat-band. If you are not, trust those of us who are -- it's the best hobby in the world!

For what other pastime centers around the creation and sustenance of life -- and what else could be a more perfect representation of Christmas?

The Christmas Tree

The center of any celebration, of course, must be the Christmas Tree. You want to lavish your "guest of honor" in the finest garb it ever dreamed of.

Use raffia or fresh ivy as a garland, loosely circling the tree. Tuck dried flowers, such as hydrangeas, goldenrod, roses or herbs, into the branches. Fresh juniper or mistletoe berries are welcome here, and you can add bunches of nandina or holly as well.

Place a tree skirt around the bottom, and cover it with straw as if it's mulched -- or, with a couple weeks' preparation, you can have new grass beneath the tree! Simply sow grass seed in flower pots about two weeks before you'll need them; keep them watered and you'll be rewarded with an unexpected flash of spring green in the middle of winter.

A local hardware or home-improvement store can sell you tiny white picket fencing just a few inches tall; place the pots of grass around the tree, and the fence around that, add a few pots of forced bulbs (anything from paperwhites to hyacinth will do, or white amaryllis) and it's springtime for Christmas.

You can decorate the tree or fill stockings with the small but welcome essentials of gardening; push ornament hooks through packets of seed; a pocket-sized gardener's journal with a spiral binding can hang from the tree; even a pair of small, fine pruners or goatskin gloves can dangle from a sturdy limb.

Decorations

Use nature's bounty to decorate every nook and corner of your house. But add some creativity to the usual garlands and swags by adding

surprise elements like fresh or dried flowers, fruits, foliage etc.

Ornamental peppers are making inroads as holiday plants because of their brilliant colors. Decorate inside and out by planting these peppers well ahead of time.

Gifts

Gifts are the most exciting part of a 'Secret Garden Christmas'. You can choose from gardening supplies, tools, natural products and decorations, birdhouses – almost anything that has got something to do with nature to keep your gifts in sync with your Christmas theme.

For all gardeners on your list (you are sure to have many if you plan to celebrate on this theme, I am sure!), a cart laden with Gardener's tools and favorite plant saplings from the local nursery will make an absolutely delightful gift. Give your gift a festive look by adding a big red bow on one of the cart edges or any of the tool handles. Sprinkle some confetti or streamers in holiday colors amongst the plants to complete the look.

For another great gift idea, round out the stocking with pumice-laced gardener's soap, good-quality sunscreen, brick clips for attaching trellises to walls, packets of cut-flower food, and other items.

Or, you can do a "gift basket", using instead a tall bucket perfect for carrying cut flowers, or even a rubber or plastic muck bucket. To this you can add foam bricks of Oasis, stem holders, and a really great handcream, preferably shea butter-based and scented nicely with lavender or almond. You can also make



Decorate inside and out by planting ornamental peppers well ahead of time

little gift baskets using terracotta pots as containers.

For a rosarian, tomato aficionado, or the person who trims his lawn with manicure scissors, a tremendous gift is a carton or two of milky spore (a microscopic critter that kills Japanese Beetles for oh, a decade). You will be bathed in gratitude for years.

You could also gift something from your own garden. Plant saplings, fruits and veggies – preserved or fresh and add freshly made bouquets if you have flowers in your garden.

Potted plants and Herb Gardens make lovely gifts for everyone. Place lots of potted plants tied with a red bow tied to the pot, in rows on a side table or mantle and ask your guests to take one when they leave, as a party favor.

Decorate your gifts with touches of nature. Use dried flowers, sprigs of evergreens, tiny flowers in holiday colors from your garden etc. to enhance your gift packages.

The key to shopping for a gardener is to remember: the stranger it looks to you, the more likely they are to love it!



The beauty and grace of the South is legendary, and these attributes permeate Southern Christmas festivities as well. With just a little effort, you can bring this feeling into your own home -- whether you live in the Southern states, are homesick for your down-south home, or want a break from a relentless winter.

Food

Unlike most themes, which begin with decorations, in the South we are all about the food. Thankfully for those who aren't southern, many of our recipes have become popular around the world; what family, for instance, doesn't have a favorite recipe for pecan pie? For a Southern Christmas, you can spike it with

bourbon to make it really sing, and embellish it with bourbon-laced whipped cream. Or you can add oysters to your traditional stuffing recipe for a Charleston-style treat.



But I'm ahead of myself; we must begin with hors d'oeuvres and dinner first. Southerners love seafood, and it's often incorporated into our Christmas festivities. For appetizers, you can include miniature crab cakes, shrimp, or smoked trout (applewood-smoked fish is worth

finding). As a delectable first course, try she-crab soup, enriched with cream, sherry and crab roe.

If you want to get really southern, deep-fry your holiday turkey in peanut oil. For this, you will need to buy or rent a turkey fryer, and for heaven's sake don't do the job on the wooden deck unless you have good insurance. But the danger is part of the delight, and once you taste fried turkey you'll never be the same. See our directions and recipe for making a true Southern-style Deep-Fried Turkey on Page No. 63

Baked ham, of course, is another classic; an authentic Smithfield from Virginia is the top of the heap. Soak a country ham overnight in apple juice to remove the salt; you may need to

change the juice once or twice, otherwise you'll just be soaking the meat in brine. Before you cook the ham, rub it with an orange, stud it with cloves and during baking baste it with cider. Once the ham is cooked, you can deglaze the drippings with brandy on the stove, and reduce it to a wonderful sauce. As an alternative to mashed potatoes, try a calorie-ignoring macaroni-and-cheese casserole.

Peas accented with cashew nuts are also a classic, as is sweet potato soufflé. For the latter, whip eggs into warm mashed sweet potatoes,

"upscale" experience, combine whole string beans with chestnuts candied in a bourbon and brown-sugar glaze. Jarred whole chestnuts can be costly, but if you try to save money by shelling them yourself you'll regret it.

The Christmas Tree

For decorations, be sure to focus on the Christmas Tree -- southern celebrations revolve around it! To begin with, you can choose a southern breed of Christmas tree. While the popular spruce is widely

garland; simply tie large bows out of red velvet or plaid ribbon on the branches, and intersperse with your other decorations. Because family is such an important theme in a Southern Christmas, one of the favorite traditions is to display different kinds of nostalgic or meaningful ornaments on the tree.



These might include the crude little trinkets your child made in 1st grade, or even the baby's first set of mittens, along with favorite southerners are collectors, so a tree can be swathed with only glass ornaments, or mercury glass, or silver and pewter ones.

Natural Decorations

The poinsettia was discovered and named by a native of Charleston, South Carolina, so it is the most southern of decorations. Decorate with plenty of this plant to give your home a southern look.

Citrus fruits also can accent garlands or even be placed in a silver or crystal bowl to enliven a room. Lemons and oranges studded with cloves make a wonderful scented accent. Limes, pomegranates, kumquats and pineapples also can be added to centerpieces. And magnolia leaves are triply beautiful -- the glossy green is highlighted by glimpses of the leaves' bronze underside, and the greenery can last for weeks with only dusting.



For appetizers, you can include miniature crab cakes

transfer into a buttered casserole dish, top with copious amounts of dark brown sugar or molasses, and add marshmallows. Bake it until the marshmallows are toasted and the soufflé is fluffy. (This is not a true soufflé that will crash at the first draft; it's just a light, fluffy version of sweet potato casserole). For a more

grown in North Carolina, there are also the Leyland Cypress, White Pine and Carolina Sapphire Cypress (an attractive blue color without the razor-sharp needles of the Blue Spruce).

Many people like to decorate a tree with bows rather than tinsel or

Gift-Giving

Plaid patterns in red, green and even blue are popular in the South, due to the high population of Scotch and Irish descendants. For a traditionally southern gift, simply wrap in a high-gloss red paper and tie with a wide, wired silk plaid bow. The simplicity and elegance of this look bespeaks the southern way of life.

But before you wrap, you must buy -- or, if you're southern, make. Homemade pound cakes, jams and cookies are very popular gifts for friends and neighbors, and are not considered "cheap". If you have ever tasted anyone's prized relish or praline recipe, you know such gifts are indeed priceless, and the labor involved is part of the

present.

Another traditional southern gift is a bottle of good wine or liquor, something in a price range a little above what the recipient would likely spend on himself. This is particularly popular with men, but be sure the person you are giving it to is neither an alcoholic nor a religious teetotaler!

If you are not southern and simply want to experience the way of life for a season, you can treat your friends and family to southern-themed gifts. There is a world of possibilities here -- how about a pair of tickets to a jazz concert, or a small selection of jazz or blues CD's? or, you can give a finely wrought iron garden decoration or a Portuguese painted porcelain flower pot with

some forced bulbs in it.

French and Spanish influences are widespread in the South, so both of these are items found in many Southern homes. A beautiful hat or pair of gloves is a wonderful gift for a lady, or a fine pocket handkerchief or cravat for a man. Southern gentlemen are top-notch dressers, so a set of beautiful brass, enamel or silver buttons can be given to adorn his favorite suit jacket. Or you can stretch the imagination a little and give just about anything made of cotton!

Southern Christmases are about relaxing, spending time with family and friends, and worshipping. So don't wear yourself out on the details, or you'll miss the whole point!

Personalized Teddy Bears!

Each Teddy Tin
comes with an
adorable teddy,
personalized t-shirt,
and your own
personal message.
Teddy Tin also
does customizations!

Send A Bear!

SnazzyMenage.Teddytin.com
email: contactmetoday@bigfoot.com

The Original Teddy Tin



A Teddy From The Heart



It's your baby's first Christmas! And you want to make it as memorable as possible. Put some fun and creativity into your preparations for everlasting memories and keep in mind these tips to ensure that this joyous event in your lives takes place smoothly, without anything marring your joy.

Your Childhood

Start with a travel back into your past. What were your favorite Christmases as a child like? What would you like to recreate for your baby? It might be a long-forgotten

tradition or event. Now is the time to bring it back so that your baby can enjoy the same moments and look forward to Christmas every year.

New Traditions

Start a new tradition. Include a nice family activity or a new recipe or a prayer ritual this year. Children love traditions. They look forward to doing the same things year after year. Unlike us, they do not wish for 'some change' in the way they celebrate any holiday.

Give your baby something to look forward to – something that you will enjoy too!

Decorating

Decorate all over with the baby in mind. Your first care should be to make the decorations baby-proof. Avoid sharp-edged or tiny decorations. If you must use something like this, make sure you place them far out of the reach of baby.

A wonderful way to decorate your tree would be to hang your old ornaments – the little clay ones, photo ornaments, popsicle stick decorations that you and your husband made as a child. Jingle bells or any other ornament that makes a sweet sound will be welcomed by the baby!

Buy or make yourself, a new ornament just for the baby. Ask the baby to hang it on the tree, and if he/she is too small to do it, hold her in your arms while you or your husband hangs it. Make sure your little family – baby and her parents – are together to cherish this moment when baby's first ornament adorns the tree. This would be a moment worthy of a photo.

Another such moment would be hanging baby's tiny stocking on the mantle. Once again, you can either buy or make a small stocking personalized with the baby's name.

Decorate your mantels with soft cuddly snowmen, Santas, Angels etc. To continue the baby theme in other places, use cuddly pillows and cushions in Christmas shapes, soft materials etc.

Commemorative Gifts

Your gifts to the baby should be commemorative of this event. A new ornament, a personalized stocking, a Santa suit of her size, small Santa and Snowmen dolls, a silver spoon etc. Preserve these gifts with care and they will give you memories for

a lifetime. If you have a baby girl, give her a new ornament and then continue doing so every year. Preserve all her ornaments carefully and give them to her when she marries.

A large variety of gifts are available in stores made specially for commemorating Baby's First Christmas. Some of the more popular choices are personalized Christmas ornaments, Christmas clothes set including bibs, pacifiers, bottle covers, stockings, Christmas-themed Baby Blanket. Most gifts have the words 'Baby's First Christmas'

in his life, he will cherish those more than anything else. But right now, there is nothing more attractive to him than the bright colored wrapping paper that was discarded after his gifts were opened.

Scrapbooking

Start a 'Baby's First Christmas' scrapbook to journalize all these special memories. Apart from photos and written details, include scraps of discarded wrapping paper, bows, gift tags, greeting cards, payment receipts of gifts bought for him, letters received etc.



Buy or make yourself a personalized stocking for your baby to commemorate the occasion



printed or embroidered. Take your time and shop for one or more of such gifts for your baby.

You can also, of course, buy other toys, presents, clothes etc. for your baby, but don't be disappointed if your baby is more interested in playing with the colorful wrapping paper than the gifts. The baby is too small to appreciate the gifts and later

Going through them years later will bring back the fondest of memories. Make a note of this celebration in your Baby's Baby Book.

Capture the Memories

Do not forget to take lots of pictures. Try to take pictures of the baby without her knowledge while he/she is busy taking in everything going family while they are sitting together

around. Capture her amazement at the glowing tree lights, bright ornaments, colorful flower decorations etc. Video-shoot your around the baby. Don't forget the traditional family photo. Gather everyone together and set the time on your camera for a complete family portrait. Take one such photo every year and see your baby grow every Christmas.

Family Fun

This is a joyous occasion for the whole family. Get your family together and plan cozy meals by the fireplace.

Your baby will be seeing a lot of faces – some new to him/her. While the baby will enjoy the warmth of the closeness of a family gathering, he/she might also be intimidated by the so many new faces around her. The busy Holiday season might also disrupt her daily routine and upset her. If you feel this happening, take the baby away from the noise and bustle for some time and comfort and cuddle her.

It is also possible that the baby will get difficult to comfort. The hustle-bustle associated with the holidays is very overwhelming for babies. Allow your baby some down time and be prepared for such reactions.

Your Family and the Baby

Baby's first Christmas is also the time when your baby will get introduced to all your family members. Those who will be visiting you, will meet your baby in person. For others whom you communicate through cards and letters during Christmas, enclose pictures of your baby within your cards.

Get photo ornaments with your

baby's photo made, and send them to doting aunts and uncles, grandmas and grandpas.

This is also a very good time to increase affection between siblings if you have other children. Encourage your older children to help the baby with opening gifts, hanging ornaments on trees, singing Christmas carols or reading stories to him or her. And here's a lovely poem to share with them:

Baby's First Christmas

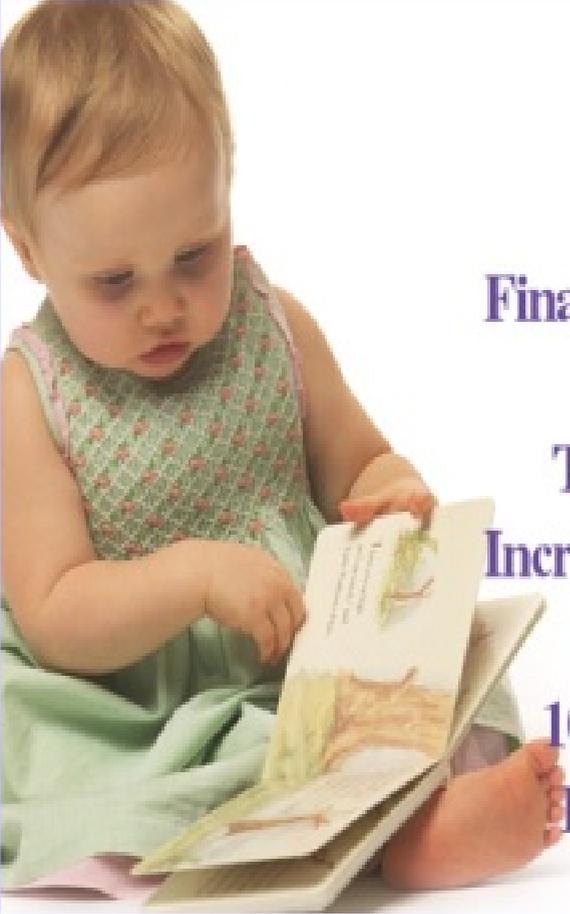
It's baby's first Christmas,
It's somethin' to see,
Mommy and Daddy,
Trimmin' baby's Christmas tree.
Baby's big brother,

Is busy with his toys,
He's shinin' up the chimney,
For Santa Claus!

It's baby's first Christmas,
And oh, what a joy,
Shopping all around,
For every pretty toy.
It's a very special Christmas,
A blessing from above,
It's baby's first Christmas,
A Christmas full of love!

It's baby's first Christmas,
And oh, what a joy,
Shopping all around,
For every pretty toy.
It's a very special Christmas,
A blessing from above,
It's baby's first Christmas,
A Christmas full of love!

* * *



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Christmas Wreaths

Elegant Christmas Wreath

To Welcome Holiday Guests

Designer – Sandy Kay

Materials

24” Mixed foliage pine wreath
7 6” Pointsettia’s
6 stems gold leaves
6 stems gold twigs
5 large pinecones
6 loop wired bow with 12” tails
gold spray paint

How To

- > Adjust pine branches on wreath into a pleasing shape.
- > Using hot glue, insert the poinsettias evenly around one half of the wreath. Insert the gold leaves and gold twigs in between the flowers as in the picture.
- > Spray the pinecones gold and let dry
- > Insert pinecones randomly around the flowers
- > Hot glue the six loop bow in the centre of the decorated portion of the wreath .
- > Tuck the tails of the bow



Elegant Christmas Wreath

through the foliage

- > Hang your beautiful creation on your front door.

Advent Wreath

Designer - Chrissie Harten

Advent Wreaths were originally made of a circular flat piece of wood, bound with evergreen

foliage, and often hung with ribbons. Nowadays, it is easier to use a floral foam wreath ring. For this Wreath I have used a mixture of foliage, including *Picea pungens*, *Chamaecyparis*, *Pittosporum tobira variegata*, *Hedera colchica "Sulphur Heart"*, *Buxus sempervirens* and *Hedera helix*.

The wreath has four candles around the outside, with one in the centre. Historically, all the candles were white, but now the accepted colours are three purple candles, (the liturgical colour for Advent), one pink and one white.

The first purple candle is lit on the first Sunday in Advent, and is the candle of hope, the second purple candle is lit on the second Sunday in Advent, and is the candle of peace, the third (pink) candle is lit on the third Sunday in Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday, and is the candle of joy, and the fourth purple candle is lit on the fourth Sunday in Advent, and is the candle of love. The central white candle is lit on Christmas Day.



Colors of Christmas



Add class to your Christmas decorations by choosing color schemes and themes to decorate upon

Decorating your home is an activity that captures the holiday spirit and reflects personal style. Choosing two main colours and building your Christmas décor around them is a great way to get maximum impact. The decorating team at Canadian Tire suggests these Christmas colour combinations to help you create a beautiful, festive space:

Enchanted Forest

Burgundy and gold form a warm, welcoming look that is contemporary and easy to achieve.

Romantic

White and apple green create a romantic, modern look using pure, radiant white and apple green accents. This simple, elegant colour combination can begin with white lights and glass tree decorations and carry through to apple green candles and wreaths, such as the white bubble berry wreath available at Canadian Tire.

Country Get-Together

Classic holiday colours mixed with vintage style characters create a country theme. Start with a berry

topiary for the table and feature snowmen and other holiday characters throughout the house. Stuffed character stocking holders add some merriment and fun to your holiday decor.

Angels

Ivory and gold create a warm atmosphere and a sense of harmony with the use of gold accents with soft ivory undertones. Canadian Tire carries a wide range of tree skirts, table runners, ornaments and candles in gold and ivory. Candles enhance the warmth of a room and invite friends and family to make themselves at home.

Winter Wonder

Turn your home into a winter wonderland using blue and white. Crisp, clean lines will offer maximum impact with minimum effort and give a modern look to your Christmas décor. Nickel and silver-plated items complement blues and bring the look together. The nickel-plated sitting reindeer and large silver candleholders at Canadian Tire are a great way to bring this colour combination beyond the tree.

Violet Dreams

Create a contemporary, unique look using a non-traditional colour. Violet is typically not considered a festive colour, but is a great way to bring your personal style into your holiday decorating. Violet stockings bring attention to the fireplace.



Create your own centre piece by placing a variety of purple-hued holiday decorations and balls in a clear bowl.

Mystical Evening

Make your home glow this holiday season with lights. From the outside to the inside, lights are the easy way to create a feeling of warmth. For the outside, pre-lit LED wreaths highlight your front door. In the front hallway, a pre-lit double topiary tree or cashmere pine tree in a sturdy gold pot adds elegance to your home and makes your friends and family feel immediately welcome.

- News Canada

Christmas Floral Splendor

By Chrissie Harten

Decorate any corner or table for the Holidays with this tall, elegant and cheerful arrangement of flowers in reds and gold. Add your favorite 'Santa Collectible' to spark more festive cheer!

This beautiful and festive flower arrangement is actually a harmonious combination of two arrangements on different levels. Tones of red combined with golden colors give the arrangement a distinctive 'Christmassy' look. The colors give it a traditional look whereas the artificial gold foliage, wicker container and candles lend the whole theme a dramatic look.

I have used two placements. The lower one is on a circular base and the taller one in a gold-coloured wicker container. Both the arrangements are made using floral foam for the mechanics. Both arrangements used the same plant material given below.

Foliage

Foliage used for these designs was

- Dried Eucalyptus
- Picea pungens glauca
- Fatshedera lizei
- Mahonia japonica
- Fatsia japonica variegata
- Hedera colchica 'Sulphur Heart'



Hedera helix deltoidea

Flowers

Flowers used were

- Red Roses
- Red Carnations
- 'Kermit' Chrysanthemums

I have also used some gold artificial flowers and foliage, artificial red grapes, gold wicker spheres, and gold ribbon.

In the top arrangement, I have

added three gold candle holders, with dark green candles. This heightens the arrangement further and creates drama.

Finally, to link the two designs together, I have added a figurine of Father Christmas, dressed in red, gold and green - just to add a bit of fun and festive spirit!

Chrissie Harten is a talented Flower Arranger residing in Worcestershire, England.



Cozy by the Fire

A lit fireplace warms any room and creates an inviting atmosphere for family and guests alike. "For a more intimate gathering, consider setting up a temporary dining area in front of the fireplace," says DiFonzo.

If you don't have a fireplace, the process of installing one is relatively easy, and today's new models give off heat and warm rooms without the use of traditional logs.

For more do-it-yourself decorating tips, visit www.homedepot.ca or The Home Depot store in your community.

- News Canada

Spruce up your Home for the Holidays: A quick décor overhaul

In communities across Canada and the world over, families and friends are making plans for holiday entertaining and the arrival of out-of-town guests. At the top of their to-do list is getting the house in order, fast.

For a quick décor overhaul consider the following simple ways to add style from The Home Depot Canada:

Foyer First

The foyer is the first step holiday guests take into a house. "One of the easiest ways to make it welcoming for everyone is to decorate it in a style that reflects your personality," says Rose DiFonzo, décor expert for The Home Depot Canada.

Consider a glossy round table to make a foyer feel intimate and inviting. If your floors have seen

better days, a lush area carpet will add colour to the room and warm your guest's feet at the same time

Framed Elegance

For a simple, sure way to add style, decorate your dining room with framed prints, wallpaper and mirrors. "The secret to decorating with prints is to pick a theme or frames in the same shade and hang them within an imaginary rectangle or square and you're set," says DiFonzo.

Set the Holiday Mood with Light

Nothing brightens up a room like lighting. Instead of sconces or a ceiling fixture, consider a mini chandelier for the guest bathroom. "Pendant lamps make for great task lighting, especially over the kitchen island as you're preparing the turkey," says DiFonzo.

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***Sprinkle Holiday Cheer
All Over Your Home
with Ornaments
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The Years***

One problem that families seem to run into over the years is that they gain a great amount of Christmas tree ornaments. Often many of the ornaments are too full of memories to get rid of, so why not display them in more ways than just on the tree?

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Do you have a wallpaper border that doesn't necessarily go with holiday décor? Get tulle that matches and bunch it together by tying small bows at even intervals. Attach the tulle to the wall just above the wallpaper border with pushpins and arrange the bows so that you can see the pushpins. Hang lighter ornaments along the tulle for a fun display.
- Hang ornaments attached to a long piece of ribbon from the mantle in between the stockings.
- Create a wreath and hang ornaments on it. Or create wreaths made entirely of baubles. String 2-3 various-sized baubles into thread and tie the thread to a wreath form. Go on doing this till the wreath form gets covered completely.
- If you always put garland up, why not add some more holiday

Ornaments Can Decorate More Than Just Your Tree



fun by hanging ornaments in the garland?

- Use small ornaments as gift toppers.
- Hang ornaments by ribbon from the ceiling around the Christmas tree. This will add even more beauty.
- Put a candle into a large bowl and put small round ornaments around it for a nice affect. Add a large poinsettia or some greenery in between to complete the effect.
- Display them on the mantle by with a little bit of fake snow under the ornaments. Alternatively, place baubles on a bed of evergreens and some holly.
- Hang small ornaments on any houseplants you have. Adding a small string of lights will give you several tiny 'Christmas Trees'.
- Flat wooden ornaments can be hot glued to napkin ring holders. To carry the theme further put ornaments in the corners of the placemats. Put a showy table runner on the table and place some of your more interesting ornaments all the way down the runner.
- To add holiday spirit in the kitchen tie ribbon to the top corners of the back of a chair and hang unbreakable ornaments from it.

- A blank spot on the wall becomes the perfect place to create an ornament advent calendar. With a paint pen write the numbers 1-25 on different ornaments. Attach to the wall with ribbon low enough so that everyone can see it, and start counting down the days.
- Place ornaments in bowls and put out on side tables.
- Use ribbon to tie the corners of the tablecloth and hang an ornament on each ribbon. Or you can even sew up tiny round ornaments to the edges of a tablecloth like jingle bells.
- At the dinner table for place settings hang a light ornament from each person's cup and attach a tag with each person's name.
- Hang ribbon from the corners of all the doorframes in the house and hang ornaments from them.
- Hang ornaments from the shower curtain rings in the bathrooms.
- Hang ornaments from key racks, coat hooks, and mug hooks.
- Hang a few ornaments with a large bell from the doorknob.
- Have a chandelier or other similar lighting fixture? String beaded garland around it and hang ornaments from the garland.
- String some small ornaments in wool roping and use as curtain tiebacks.

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Light up the night with these safety tips in mind

Nothing says "home for the holidays" quite like a fresh cut Christmas tree, its branches twinkling with soft lights while outdoors, lighted deer or inflatable snowmen say Season's Greetings to passers by. "Although beautiful, sometimes lights and other holiday decorations can be dangerous, if not installed properly," says Ian Cleghorn, lighting expert for The Home Depot Canada. To ensure safe trimming and decorations throughout the season, The Home Depot offers these lighting and electrical tips:

Indoor and Outdoor Lights

- Verify that all of your lights and extension cords are certified by a recognized organization (CSA, ULC or cUL) and have been designed for their proposed use inside or outside of the home.
- Inspect every string of lights for damage to the wire insulation or smashed light sockets. Smashed sockets or loose wires can cause shock or fire.
- Replace burned-out bulbs immediately and make sure all of the bulbs are firmly fastened in their sockets.
- Throw away damaged strings.

They aren't worth the risk of a fire.

- Use one long extension cord rather than linking several shorter cords together, and avoid plugging too many holiday lights and other electrical decorations into a single outlet.
- Unplug lights when you're not home and when you go to bed.



Stringing Outdoor Lights

- Make sure your ladder is long enough to reach your highest point and that you position it on level, secure ground. Always have at least one adult helper to hold the ladder for you.
- Use plastic light clips to hang the strings from your gutters and eaves. Or, use insulated staples to secure lights to the house or tree. Remember that sticking a nail through the electrical strings could damage the wire and cause an unsafe situation.
- Keep extension cords away from water, snow and ice. Use only extension cords designed for outdoor use. Consider putting the lights on a timer for energy efficiency.
- Remove outdoor lights soon after the holidays to prevent winter weather from causing extensive wear.

Indoor Decorations

- Use only noncombustible or flame-resistant materials.
- Do not start fires in fireplaces decorated with stockings or other trimmings and avoid burning tree trimmings and wrapping paper in the fireplace. They may release toxic fumes or cause flash fires.
- Don't run extension cords under rugs or carpets.
- Avoid sharp or breakable decorations and keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children.
- Use clear, thin wires to anchor trees to walls. This keeps children from pulling trees down on top of them. Also, position trees away from exits.

For more holiday lighting safety tips, visit The Home Depot store in your community.

- News Canada

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Holiday Décor Problems Solved

Decorating your home for the holiday season is a great way to get into the spirit of the season. Sometimes however, dealing with common holiday décor problems can drain you of your holiday mood.

The décor team at Canadian Tire offers solutions for common holiday problems:

Problem

Setting up your Christmas tree and getting it to stand straight.

Solution

Look for The Swivel Straight Tree Stand with a revolutionary pivoting base that will make straightening your tree quick and easy.

Problem

Watering your Christmas tree without tipping it over and getting

needles everywhere can be very difficult and straining.

Solution

The new Swivel Straight Tree Stand from Canadian Tire also has a removable water container which attaches to the tree stand and filters water directly to your tree, which means you don't have to strain your back.

Problem

Getting Christmas lights around the tree evenly and effortlessly.

Solution

Pre-lit trees save you having to string lights yourself and are available in many styles and colours.

Problem

Often one bulb burns out on your string of lights that effects the entire

string. Identifying the culprit can be time consuming.

Solution

Look for the Lightkeeper Pro light testers at your local Canadian Tire store. They detect a lack of light current, quickly and easily and help you to find the broken bulb in a set.

Problem

Expensive energy bills once the holiday season is over.

Solution

LED lights save up to 90% more energy than traditional holiday lights, and have approximately 200,000 hours of bulb life. LED lights are available in a variety of styles and colours and are suitable for all holiday décor themes.

- News Canada

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10 Christmas Gift Ideas for Mommies-to-Be:

Partners of Pregnant Ladies Take Note!

Pregnant women feel overweight, that nothing fashionable fits, they can't sleep comfortably, and are so tired they could fall asleep in the queue waiting to pay for the antacids that will hopefully keep the heartburn away – and

what they really want is this baby born! Unless your baby is due to arrive around the Holiday season, this isn't going to happen, so here are a few ideas to ease the comfort zone of a pregnant partner.

1. Pregnant ladies need to be pampered. How about a gift certificate to a local beauty salon for a facial, manicure and pedicure? An afternoon of being fussed over and made to look human again will do wonders for sagging spirits - if not a sagging chest.

2. Magazine subscription. Find out what your partner likes to read and have a subscription ordered so that it comes directly to her door every week or month.

3. Pregnancy pillow. My husband referred to this long narrow pillow as my "substitute husband"! It will not do a whole lot for intimacy in the bedroom, but it will make your partner feel so much more comfortable in bed.

4. Aromatherapy Oils are great during pregnancy. They can ease all manner of discomfort from morning sickness to swollen ankles - and can help to release stress and ease tired muscles - buy the book "Aromatherapy and Massage for Mother and Baby" by Allison England and package it together with some of the special oils such as lemon and a carrier oil (you can easily purchase these at the Body Shop) that are recommended for pregnancy. Note: not all oils are recommended for all stages so read the section on what is recommended before purchasing the oils for your partners. My personal selection would include lemon, geranium, and lavender.

5. "Mother Massage" book by Elaine Stillerman. This is an interactive gift however, there is no good buying your partner this book unless you, or someone else your partner is close to, intend to use its techniques on your partner. Used with some of the oils above, and a pregnancy pillow, it could produce the first real night's sleep your partner has had in weeks.

6. "Girlfriends Guide to Pregnancy" by Vicki Iovine. This is not a

medical book. If your partner has not already read this book, she will probably find it hilarious. It takes all the "stuff" connected with pregnancy and presents it in a real way by someone who has obviously been pregnant. Many pregnancy books could have been written by 60-year-old men who have never had children of their own as they are so clinical and impersonal. This book takes the opposite view; it offers practical advice on how a woman feels and explores what she experiences during the time she is carrying her child.

7. A journal where your partner can record her progress during the pregnancy. You could either purchase a blank notebook with a pretty cover for her to write her thoughts about the baby during the pregnancy, or if you feel she would prefer it, buy "The Pregnancy Journal" which gives

facts and comments for each day of the pregnancy together with some space to write things such as measurements and notes to provide an overall view of the pregnancy to look back on.

8. Perfume, flowers and make up. Just because your partner has suddenly decided that she can't move off the sofa, doesn't mean that she is no longer female. Pregnancy makes some women feel unattractive and feminine gifts help to remind them that they are beautiful.

9. A lovely negligee for after the birth. Don't forget that visitors and medical staff will see your partner in this (and your partner will not be pre-pregnancy size immediately after the birth) so something pretty but not-too-sexy will score better points than a short black lace shift with slits

up to the thigh!

10. Monitor for listening to the baby in the womb. These are not as expensive as you might think, and although locating the baby's heartbeat can be tricky, it is comforting to lie and listen to the water protecting the baby moving around, not to mention the occasional thrill when you hear the baby kick.

I hope that there is something in the above list that you can give your partner for Christmas, but don't forget that the best gift you can give her is your support. It is easy for you to find ways to escape the pregnancy at the moment, but your partner will probably be more impressed by your willingness to explore baby books, and discuss birthing techniques, than she will a material gift.- Katie-Anne Gustafsson

Gifts for baby and expecting moms this holiday season!

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When giving to the elderly at Christmas, take into consideration what their circumstances currently are. If your elderly loved one is like so many elderly Americans, they are struggling to get by and keep up with their daily needs. Do they really need another knick-knack or bauble for Christmas? You may want to consider a more practical gift.

Groceries

Groceries are very much appreciated by the elderly and sometimes, even needed. The cost of groceries and food items has risen dramatically over the years and living on a fixed income can make it difficult to shop for the necessities. If you don't know what they would need or like, a simple money order to the grocery store they patronize would be best.

Fuel

A valuable gift and probably much needed, would be heating fuel. The cost of oil, propane, and even electricity can empty the pockets of the elderly in no time at all. Keep your loved one warm this year.

Household Help

For the elderly that have a hard time keeping up with their house, a gift of a cleaning service or handyman service may be one of the most treasured gifts they receive. The elderly can not climb a ladder to clean the gutters or reach the highest or lowest points of cleaning. If you do not wish to hire a service, give a coupon to your loved one and take care of the issues at hand yourself. Your loved one



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Simple Luxuries

Another need of the elderly would be the cost of life's added pleasures. For elderly watching their pennies, the gift of cable television or satellite dish would be a much enjoyed pleasure. For those already using the service, pay for it ahead of time and put the amount paid in a card for them.

Remember your elderly loved one or friend this year and give them the gift of your time. Nothing could be more appreciated.

- By Penny S. Harmon

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Handmade Christmas Cards

The most beautiful way to express Christmas spirit is to give a gift that is lovingly handcrafted. Exchanging cards has become one of the many traditions of Christmas.

For most of us, Christmas planning starts with a 'Christmas Card List'. Why not put some more fun and creativity into this year's annual Christmas card-giving?

For the more dear ones on your card list, take some time out and craft these simple, yet unique and appealing cards which can be made quickly and with a few basic materials.

You will find step-by-step instructions to make five different holiday cards, all with a unique style of their own, including an especially easy-to-make card for your kids to make and gift this year.

All cards require minimal materials and expertise to create a look that is very seasonal and festive. We are sure you would love to make this a family activity and have lots of fun creating beautifully handcrafted cards for Christmas.

Add a delightful special touch to your cards and make Christmas merrier for those who receive them!

Snowflake Christmas Card

Keep it simple, using a rubber stamp and a few strips of coloured paper and you can create this seasonal card with the minimum of effort.

Materials:

- Blank white card and envelope
- Snowflake stamp (“Anita’s”)
- White paper
- Pale blue card
- Dark blue inkpad
- Dark blue ribbon
- Silver letter peel-offs
- Scissors
- Glue
- Foam pads

Directions:

1. Stamp the snowflake onto the sheet of white paper. Try to align it along one edge of the paper to make cutting it out later easier.



2. Cut the snowflake into a strip, which is the same height as the card you will be using. Then, cut out a strip of blue card



the same height, but slightly wider than the snowflake strip.

3. Using peel-off letters, spell out “Merry Christmas” onto a small rectangle of blue card as shown in the photograph.



4. Stick the pale blue strip of card and the snowflake strip together as shown in the photograph. Glue this to the front of your blank card.

5. Stick a strip of dark blue ribbon to either side of your strips of card.

6. Finally, stick the “Merry Christmas” greeting to the bottom of the card using foam pads. Again, you are not limited to using a snowflake stamp – any Christmas themed stamp, or a combination of stamps could be used. Simply alternate the colourings to suit. For example, if you were to use a Christmas tree stamp, you could use green ink and card in place of the blue.





4. Repeat this for the other present.

5. Tear, cut and stick strips of red mulberry paper, pearl card and gold glitter card together as shown in the photograph.



Christmas Present Card

Create something a little different using tissue paper and gold wire. With a little time, you can make this beautiful card and impress your loved ones this Christmas.

Materials:

Blank white card and envelope
Scrap White card
Red and Gold tinted mulberry paper
Gold wire
White pearl card
Gold glitter card
Scissors
Glue
Peel-off "Happy Christmas" sticker

Directions:

1. Cut two squares of white card out of the scrap card, approximately 4 x 4cm (1.5").
2. Cover both in red mulberry paper and seal down with glue.



3. Wrap the gold wire around the present and form into a bow at the front.



6. Stick the "Happy Christmas" peel off to another smaller piece of red mulberry paper.

7. Finally, stick the presents and greeting to the card using glue. Feel free to experiment with colours, it doesn't have to be red, but I went for something festive for this project.



'Merry Christmas' Card

Show someone you care this Christmas – create this beautiful card in minutes, using only a few simple materials combined with a little inspiration.

Materials:

- Blank, red card and envelope
- Gold card
- Green card
- Red card
- Peel-off letters
- Small circle punch
- Silicon adhesive or sticky foam pads
- Pritt stick
- Pencil
- Scissors

Instructions:

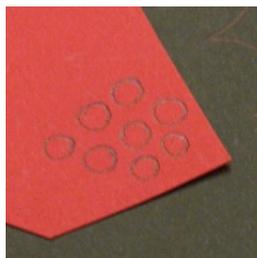
1. Cut out sufficient circles from the gold card using a small circle punch, to convey your Christmas message. You can use any message you like - I have used 'Merry Christmas' here, but you could always use 'Happy Christmas' or 'Seasons Greetings'.

2. Using peel-off letters, stick each letter to a gold circle.



However, if you are feeling artistic, you can always handwrite your message.

3. Using silicone adhesive or foam pads, stick your circles to the card to spell out your Christmas message. Be creative, the circles don't have to be in a perfectly straight line, experiment before sticking them to the card.



4. Mark the holly on the green card, and a few berries on the red card, cut them out and arrange the holly and berries to create two "sprigs".

Glue these together using pritt stick, or using silicone adhesive/foam pads to create a layered effect

5. Attach the holly sprigs to the top two corners of the card using either pritt stick or silicone foam pads. You could also try placing them in alternate corners, don't be afraid to experiment.



6. Finally, add your personalised message inside.



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Christmas Tree Card

Do something a little different this year – with a little wire, a few beads and pinch of creativity you can create something very unique for your family and friends.



Materials:

White blank card and envelope
Gold wire
Assorted coloured beads
Green paper
Gold paper
Silicone adhesive
Pritt stick
Scissors

Instructions:

1. Start by carefully bending the gold wire into the shape of a Christmas tree.
2. One by one, thread the coloured beads along the wire and glue into place using a little blob of silicone adhesive.



3. Create a rough rectangle, slightly smaller than the size of the front of the card, by tearing the gold paper.

Repeat this process with the green paper, though this time so it is slightly smaller than the gold paper.

You could neatly cut out the rectangles with scissors if you wanted a more uniform look.



4. Glue the gold paper to the front of the card using pritt stick. Then, stick the green paper on top of the gold paper again using pritt stick.

5. Attach the wire Christmas tree to the front of the card using several small blobs of silicone adhesive on the beads, add your own greeting to the inside of the card and you are done!



Kids' Snowman Card

Let your child's creativity run riot, with this fun and easy to make snowman card. Just goes to show that Christmas card making isn't limited to just the adults!

Materials:

Blank white card and envelope

White card

Black Card

Orange Card

Red Card (For the scarf, so any colour is fine)

Pale blue paper

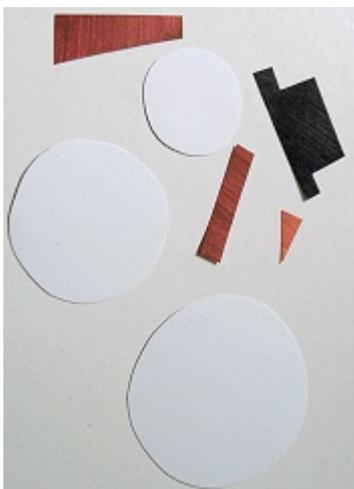
Black felt tip pen

Pritt stick

Foam pads (Optional)

Instructions:

1. Cut out 3 different sized circles of white card to form the



snowman's head and body. One small for the head and two bigger ones for the body.

2. Cut out a hat from the black card.

3. Cut out a triangle shape for the nose from the orange card.

4. Cut out two rough rectangles to form the scarf from the red card.

5. Cut out a rectangle slightly smaller than your blank card from the light blue paper. Stick this on the front of your blank card in the middle using pritt stick.

6. Put your snowman together on the front of the card using foam pads, or pritt stick, as shown in the final photograph.

7. Finally, add eyes, mouth, buttons and arms using the black felt pen – be careful, you don't want to mess him up now! Once



you've added the finishing touches, your card is done!



Face Washer Friends

A Cute Homemade Gift

Your kids can make these with a little help from you and gift to their friends this Christmas!



What you will need:

- 1 Face Washer
- Small amount Ribbon
- Embroidery Thread
- Cake of soap (I placed a decal on mine and sealed it with 2 coats of varnish)

How to:

Roll face washer from one side to the centre, roll the other side to the centre. Bend over 4 inches and secure with elastic band approx 1 inch down. Bend the other end and secure the same way. Tie a ribbon around one end for neck and embroider ears, eyes and mouth. Loosely add strands for whiskers. A couple of strands of thread at the other end for a tail. Add a bar of soap and wrap in cellophane.

- By Marilyn Luscombe

Help your kids say 'thank-you' after the holidays

Why not spend time with your children this holiday season by teaching them to write thank-you notes? It's one of the most important etiquette skills you can teach them. While Grandma may excuse a missing acknowledgement from the grandchild she loves, the person that interviewed your adult child for a job may not be so forgiving. Use these handy tips from the experts at Hallmark (www.hallmark.com)—your children will thank you for it later in life.

- Make it a family activity. Kids want to act like adults so when they see Mom or Dad taking the time to write a note, they'll be more interested in joining in.
- Encourage your kids to suggest a list of people to thank (including Santa).
- Use kid-friendly notes. Letting your little ones select their own notes will increase their enthusiasm for sending them. There are plenty of styles available, from individual thank-you cards to boxed note cards, including those designed for children to complete.
- Offer as much help as your kids need—but no more. Some children are stuck for words and they'll appreciate some suggestions. Others have no trouble expressing themselves.
- Praise your child's effort and let them know how special Uncle Billy or Mrs. Jones will feel to read this note.
- Take a photo and send a picture of the child using the holiday gift they received.

- News Canada

Shell Angel Ornament

By Sandy Kay

An Angel to Watch Over Your Family While You Celebrate

The fairy at the top of the Christmas tree was originally a little figure of the baby Jesus. In late seventeenth century Germany this became a shining angel. Windsor Castle's Christmas trees were topped by a large angel.

In Victorian Britain, little girls would take the angel down after Christmas and dress him in dolls' clothes. Eventually the angel turned into a thoroughly female fairy, complete with wand.

Ever since, Angels have been a part of Christmas decorations, be it tree ornaments or wrapping paper or any decorative motif.

Continue this wonderful tradition and craft this exquisite yet easy-to-make Angel to adorn your Christmas tree using something as simple as a shell.

Skill Level: Easy



What you will need:

- 5" Shell
- 1" Wooden Ball
- Doll Hair
- ¼ yd Silver Wire
- ¼ yd 1" Wired Ribbon
- ¼ yd ¼" Wired Ribbon
- Mod Podge
- Glitter
- Glue Gun

How to proceed:

1. Cover front of shell with Mod Podge. While wet cover shell with glitter. Let dry overnight.

Shake off excess glitter.

2. Hot glue doll hair to top sides & back of wooden ball to form head.

3. Form halo shape out of silver wire, proportionate to the wood ball, leaving ¼ " stem and glue to the back of head.

4. Glue head to the top of the shell with hot glue.

5. With 1" wired ribbon form a loop 5" wide to form wings. Find centre of loop and glue to centre back of shell (top edge).

6. Form a double bow and glue at front of neck. Glue ribbon rose in centre of bow.

7. Form a loop from the remaining silver wire to use as a hanger for the ornament and glue at centre of wings on back of the shell.

Tree Advent Calendar

An Easy-to-make Christmas project you can do with your kids to keep them creatively busy during the Holidays and teach them about an old Christmas tradition.

This fun and easy project will be enjoyed throughout the whole month. Remember that you will want to make this early so that it can be used starting on December 1st.

A good time to make it would be after Thanksgiving dinner is eaten and put away. While you are making the project you could tell the kids a little about the history of where advent comes from.

During the middle ages advent became associated with preparing for the coming of Christ, but it has only been in the last fifty years that advent has been thought of as the time leading up to the birth of Christ or Christmas day.

Advent calendars originated in Germany in the 1800's where little doors were opened to reveal a picture.

Advent calendars quickly became popular throughout most of Europe.



What you will need:

- White pipe cleaners
- Tin can
- Marbles
- White paint
- Paintbrush
- Fishing line
- Scissors
- White ribbon
- Permanent marker
- Snowflake confetti or white paper

And now let's begin crafting!

Directions:

1. Paint the tin can with the white paint.
2. Allow the paint to dry.
3. Apply two more coats of paint allowing it to dry between coats.
4. While the tin can is drying, help the Kids make their tree out of the pipe cleaners.
5. Use one pipe cleaner as the trunk of the tree.
6. For the bottom branch twist a pipe cleaner once around the trunk so that the pipe cleaner is exactly in half around the trunk.
7. Help the child cut about two inches off one pipe cleaner.
8. Find the half-way point of the pipe cleaner and wrap it once around the trunk about an inch and a half away from the first.
9. Repeat this process until you've reach about a half inch from the top of the trunk.
10. Pour marbles into the tin can until you've reached the top.
11. Push the trunk of the pipe cleaner tree into the marbles so that it stands up straight.
12. Help the child tie a bow around the tin can with the white ribbon.
13. String confetti onto fishing line and tie it so that it forms a loop to hang it on the tree like an ornament. Or have the child make his own small snowflakes out of white paper with scissors. String the paper snowflakes onto the fishing line in the same way as the confetti.
14. Use the marker to write a number on each snowflake, 1-24.
15. Let the child hang the snowflakes on the tree and put it where the child can reach it to remove a snowflake for each day.



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To learn more visit www.PairNPhotos.com









winter!



Festive Dinner Table Decor

Decorating your table for Christmas should be fun, not stressful or expensive, so to help you get some good ideas read through this list. You'll have a beautiful table in no time.

Dishes for Christmas

Many people don't want to buy Christmas dishes that are used only once all year and a hassle to store and the holidays are over. Instead buy clear plain plates and bowls. To make them fit the holiday season,

find some Christmas confetti that matches your color scheme in the dining area. Sprinkle them underneath the clear dishes and you have Christmas dishes. This idea also works for just about any other season. Instead of confetti you could also put greeting cards or other fun decorative items underneath.

Reds & Greens

Put a red tablecloth on the table. Arrange different candles in the middle of the table with little bits of holly. Add green napkins and you

have a beautiful table that your guests will love.

Little Packages

Wrap small boxes with lush paper. Put the boxes on each person's plate. Have the tag be the place card. Wrap slightly larger boxes and arrange them in the middle of the table as the centerpiece.

Sheer White

Get some sheer material in a color that matches your theme. Run white lights down the center of the table and put the fabric over the top. Layer the fabric so that it is full. Sprinkle red petals or green leaves on top for a simple yet elegant table runner.

Cranberries and Bells

String cranberries and bells onto wire. Put numerous hurricane lamps down the center of the table and wrap the cranberry and bell wire around them. Make napkin rings in a similar manner. Light the lamps to create a twinkling dinner table.

Monochromatic

Do an all one-color table. Have the candles, napkins, dishes, and tablecloth all in the same color. Sprinkle rhinestones and other glittering objects on the table. Make napkin rings out strings of glittering beads. The effect is dramatic and glamorous. White gives beautiful results.

Gold & Glass

Find different styles of clear champagne glasses. Put a gold table runner on and set out the champagne glasses at even intervals down the center of the table. Fill them with various objects such as small glass ball ornaments. Peppermint candies, marbles, beads, confetti, nuts, and

candies. Put a single cut red rose in each glass. Finish off the look by tying a red bow around the stem of each glass.

Mini Trees

Get various mini trees; decorate them with ornaments garland and lights. Arrange them in the middle of the table as the centerpiece.

Acorns & Pinecones

Get acorns and pinecones. Spray paint or paint them different metallic colors. Randomly place them down the center of the table. Glue a single acorn to a ribbon to make a napkin ring. Use pinecones as place cards by pushing paper in between the pinecone. Put large pillar candles into clear bowls and arrange



into clear bowls and arrange

Winter Magic

Put fake snow down the center of

the table. Sprinkle white glitter on top. Then put luminaries down the center. Light the candles in the luminaries for a winter treat.

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Holiday Entertaining Made Simple!

Every year we, or someone we know, will throw a Christmas or a New Year's Eve party maybe for the first time! It's always a good idea to have some useful tips and these are all the useful tips worth knowing. The biggest tip of all is to know the intended budget, paying

special attention to the budget, your party type, the feel of the party and those in attendance.

Christmas Parties!

There are several kinds of Christmas parties and depending on the kind

being planned makes all the difference. Follow this outline to plan each type successfully!

Religious:

Theme: Picking a theme is the basis of your party. A good example for a religious themed Christmas party would be, "The birth of Jesus".

Food: Religious ideals should be given special attention along with the tastes of everyone in attendance.

If the party is meant for adults and it should be somewhat formal, then the menu will probably consist of traditional ham or turkey as the main course while allowing some of the tastes from the holy land like ancient breads and desserts.

If it's not formal, then choose to emphasize on some of those foreign tastes in the form of dainty appetizers and cater to children's tastes if children will be in attendance.

Décor: Creativity is the key to any décor and with the example of "The birth of Jesus". Tabletop centerpieces for formal gatherings can be mystical too. Decorate tables with biblical ideals such as glowing stars. A little wire, some plastic wrap and battery operated low lights can do wonders.

Children's parties can be decorated with manger scenes strategically placed and edible candy shaped star treats for everyone as centerpieces.

Office:

Theme: An office party can be fun and to avoid upsetting anyone, a theme should actually be avoided.

Food: In the case of a formal office party, traditional foods can be avoided. The main course doesn't

have to be traditional in line with Christmas but should stay inline with a formal dinner with a choice of meats, vegetables and desserts.

If the party isn't formal then attendees can bring a dish, often referred to as "pot luck" and employees can either choose what to bring or opt on their own what to include.

Décor: Because the average office party has no theme, it's usually filled with an elegant table setting with plates and a basic centerpiece of rich colored candles coupled with mistletoe or ivy inline with traditional aspects for the formal event however, the informal party may consist of more generic holiday paper plates and table cloths that match with a few added table toppers around the food like snowmen or symbolic holiday bells.

Private:

Theme: Usually a private party is held in the home of an individual and the theme is largely based on those invited.

A theme can be religious, traditional or individual choice and even a mix. There are several questions to be asked because usually a private Christmas will either serve or not serve alcohol.

Food: A formal Christmas party in this case usually does serve up traditional dinner inline with the observance such as ham, turkey, green bean casserole, sweet potatoes, stuffing/dressing, gravy and bread rolls with either a choice of a holiday cake such as carrot cake, fruit cake or a pies like chocolate silk, pumpkin or spice.

Informal parties for adults can

consist of simple appetizers like party sausages, deli meats and cheeses or a veggie tray while a child's party can consist of decorated cupcakes, veggies with faces or just pizza.

Décor: Depending on the climate, these parties can be held indoor or outdoors using some different creative elements make these a plus.

Adult's formal should be elegant with fabric tablecloths in rich seasonal colors like gold, red, or green with complimenting table settings and accessories.

The sky is the limit with centerpieces derived of candles, natural elements or water features that glow. Informal private parties usually consist of lights strung creatively with little decoration.



A children's party in the home may be more whimsical with one of the highlights of the party to be the making of table toppers to be taken home after the party. Styrofoam balls, buttons, glue and markers provide children the tools to make their very own Frosty the snowman!

New Year's Parties!

Fortunately the same outline can.

be followed for a New Year's party based on the types above with the exception of food. Most people celebrate the New Year with a course of ham, greens and black-eyed peas symbolically but usually one of the big factors in a New Year's party is will there be alcoholic beverages for the party

The basic ingredients for any New Year's party is to pay tribute to the previous year by celebrating the hot tunes of music, the fashion trends that are going bye-bye, in some cases a President leaving office and it's all a matter of personal taste, even with a formal party! While some choose to watch the big ball drop on television while others choose to simply watch the clock for the stroke of midnight, every party is unique.

Invitations!

To wrap it all up you need to know how to handle the invites. Computer generated, store bought, printers derived or simply choose to invite via telephone and those are the basic choices available unless everyone has e-mail!

Formal party invitations are usually either professionally printed which could be costly or store bought and mailed. Informal can be store bough invitations, made using a computer and mailed or simply call up the invited and tell them personally.

The most important ingredient to these parties is fun, be creative. Plan activities or games, weird auctions using fake money and keep the party rolling. Every party can be a success; if you just know where to start and these tips are flawless ... have fun!

Festive Napkin Folding



Cable Buffet

1. Fold the bottom edge of the napkin up to the top. Next, fold the top layer down to meet the bottom edge.

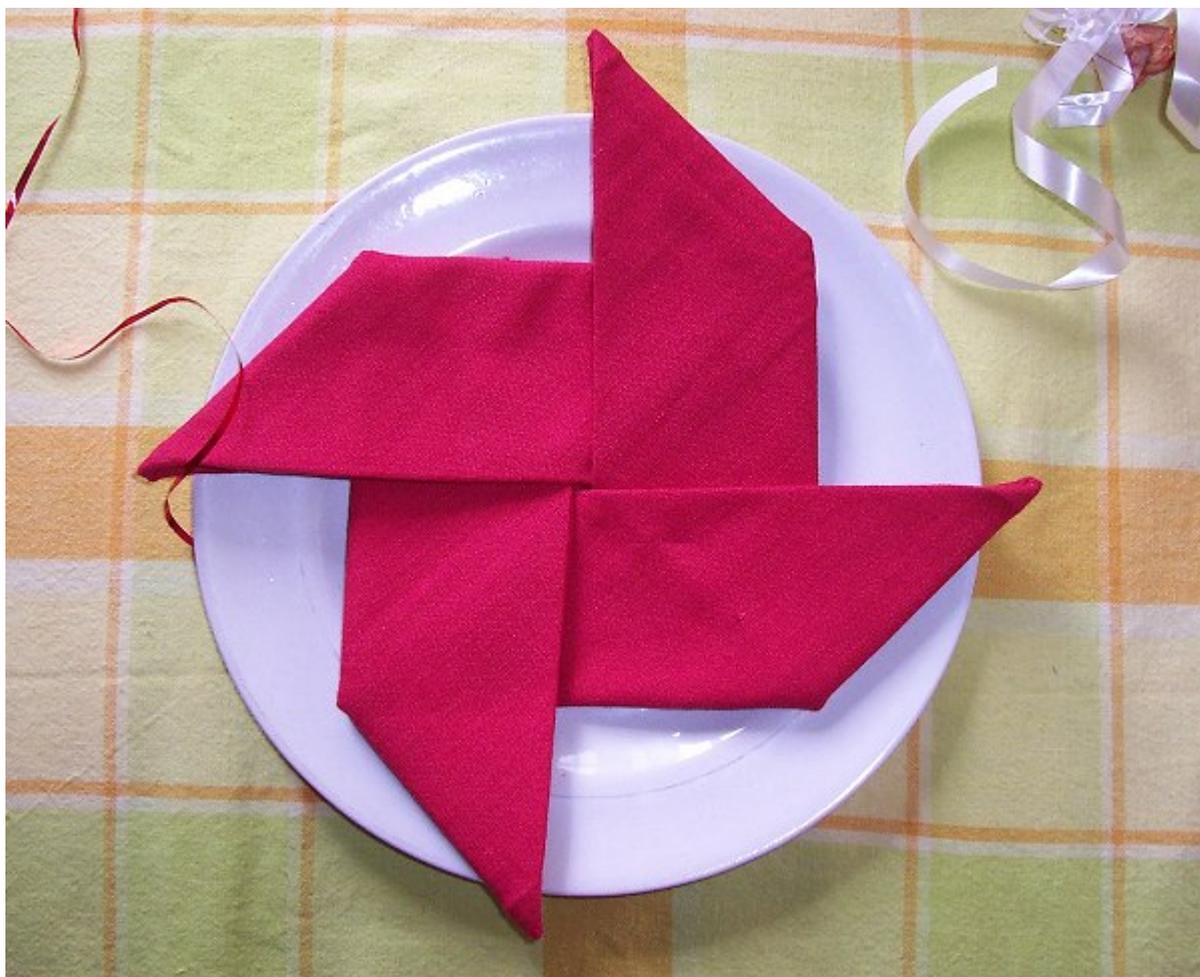
2. Fold all the bottom layers back up a little way and turn the napkin over. To make a longer design you can turn up only the upper bottom layer as in the main picture.

3. Bring the right side of the design into the centre.

4. Carefully bring the left side into the centre.

5. Tuck one half of the napkin deep into the other half, locking the napkin flat. Turn over to insert cutlery into the pocket.





Pinwheel

1. Fold the four corners into the centre.
2. Fold the top edge and the bottom edge into the centre.
3. Bring the left and right sides into the centre.
4. Find each of the loose corners at the centre and gently bring them out to the side to form four points.
5. Fold the bottom left point to the left side and the top right point to the right





Geometric Pockets



1. Starting with the corners of the open napkin at the top and bottom in the form of a diamond, fold the top corner down to the bottom corner. With a finger at the bottom point, fold the left side in to meet the centre line.



2. Fold the right side into the centre. Fold the left point into the centre again.



3. Fold the right point of the design into the centre.



4. Turn the napkin over, still keeping the long point facing you. Bring the bottom point up to meet the top, folding the napkin in half.



5. Tuck the long point into the horizontal fold and reverse.



We are all pressed for time during the holidays – but a successful party shouldn't have to take a great deal of time the day of. Why not dazzle your guests with simple, elegant and impressive appetizers that are easy to make ahead of time?



Trish Magwood, host of Food Network's Party Dish and owner of Dish Cooking Studio, offers up these delectable recipes to make you the perfect host this holiday season – and to save you precious time. Trish also suggests using sake cups for soup and white square shaped platters to best show off your food.

Little Mushrooms Stuffed with Leeks and Chèvre Goat Cheese

1 1/2 lb (750g) white or cremini mushrooms, stems removed and wiped clean
 4 1/2 oz (140 g) chèvre (goat cheese)
 3/4 tsp (4 ml) salt, approx
 1/2 tsp (2 ml) pepper
 1 large leek, white part only
 1 tbsp (15 ml) butter
 2 tbsp (30 ml) white wine or water

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 C).
- Toss mushrooms with 1/4 tsp

(1 ml) each salt and pepper. In a small bowl, mix together goat cheese with remaining salt and pepper.

- Fill centre of each mushroom cap with about 1 tsp (5 ml) of cheese mixture. Transfer to a parchment lined baking sheet. (Can be made up to 1 day ahead, wrap and refrigerate)
- Cut leeks into 2-inch (5 cm) pieces and slice each piece into thin, long strips.
- Melt butter in sauté pan over medium heat. Add leeks and cook for 1-2 minutes or until fragrant and translucent, but not browned. Add wine and cook until wine has mostly evaporated, about 1 minute. Sprinkle with a pinch of salt. Set aside.

• Bake mushrooms until cheese is bubbly and mushrooms are browned, about 15 minutes. Top with leek mixture and return to oven to heat, about 1 minute.

- Serve warm.

(Makes 24 mushrooms)

Fig Arugula and Prosciutto Rolls

12 slices prosciutto
 1/4 cup (50 ml) mascarpone
 6 large fresh figs (or 8 dried), halved

1/2 bunch fresh arugula Freshly cracked black pepper

- On a clean work surface or a sheet of wax paper, lay out 6 slices of prosciutto. Spread each with 1 teaspoon (5 ml) mascarpone.
- On each one, lay 2-3 leaves of arugula on top of mascarpone, with leaves extending beyond prosciutto on both ends.
- Top each with fig half and sprinkle with black pepper.
- Roll tightly, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.
- Slice each roll in half. Stand on cut end on serving platter.

Makes 24 pieces

For more of Trish's delicious recipes and unique entertaining tips, tune into Food Network's Party Dish Thursdays at 10:30 pm ET/PT. For information on how to receive the Food Network in your home, please call your local cable or satellite provider.

Make Food Network your destination for holiday food ideas and tune into the network's holiday programming marathon on Sunday, December 18 from 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. ET.

- News Canada

Crabmeat Alma

1 stick butter
 1/2 cup finely chopped parsley
 1 cup sliced mushrooms
 2 cups light cream
 1/2 cup dry sherry or dry white wine
 salt and cayenne pepper -- to taste
 1 small bunch green onions -- chopped
 1/2 cup finely chopped celery
 3 tablespoons flour
 2 cups grated Swiss cheese
 1 pound crabmeat

Melt butter in a heavy saucepan. Sauté mushrooms and green onions until soft. Blend in flour and add cream. Heat until thickened. Add cheese and heat until it has melted. Add sherry, parsley, salt, and cayenne. Fold in crabmeat. Heat gently for 8 to 10 minutes. Serve with French bread or in patty shells.

Marinated Mushrooms

3/4 c. salad oil
 1/4 c. olive oil
 1/2 c. lemon juice
 2 chopped green onions
 1 clove of fresh garlic, minced
 1 tsp. dry mustard
 1 lb of fresh mushrooms (quartered) or canned mushrooms (drained)
 1 tsp salt
 1/2 tsp of ginger
 1/2 tsp pepper
 2 medium bay leaves
 2 tbsp white wine
 1 tsp sugar
 1/2 garlic powder
 parmesan cheese for sprinkling/topping (optional)

Mix and toss all of the above ingredients together and chill for 5-6 hours.

More Holiday Hors d'oeuvres

Cheese Puffs

1 package refrigerated rolls
 1/4 stick margarine
 1 3 1/2 ounces Bleu cheese

Cut each roll in 4 quarters. Place on a round baking pan. Crumble cheese into melted margarine and pour over rolls. Bake until golden brown.

Makes 40

French Quarter Cheese

1 (8 oz) pkg. cream cheese, softened
 1 garlic glove, minced
 1 tbsp grated onion
 4 tbsp butter
 1/4 c of brown sugar
 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
 1/2 tsp prepared yellow mustard
 1 c finely chopped pecans

Combine cream cheese, garlic, and onion w/ fork. Shape into 6 X 1 inch disk, place on a serving plate, and refrigerate. Combine remaining ingredients in a sauce pan, heating until butter melts. Cover chilled cheese with nut mixture. Serve with sesame or poppy seeded crackers.

Parmesan Cheese Rounds

1 loaf extra-thin sliced white bread
 1 pkg (3oz) softened cream cheese
 1 cup mayo
 1/3 fresh parm. cheese; grated
 1 1/2 tsp minced onion
 1 shot glass

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Take the bread slices and using

the shot glass, cut rounds (each slice of bread should yield about 4-5 rounds). Place rounds on baking sheet. Bake for 5 mins. Combine remaining ingredients and use mixture on the bread. Broil for 1 min until lightly brown.

Easy Baked Onion Rings

1/2 cup chopped onions
 2 tablespoons butter -- melted
 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese
 1 teaspoon chili powder -- divided
 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
 1 8 oz. can refrigerated crescent rolls
 1/4 cup fresh bread crumbs
 2 eggs -- slightly beaten

Preheat oven to 375°. In a small bowl, combine onions, butter, Parmesan cheese, 1/2 teaspoon chili powder, and black pepper. Mix well and set aside. Separate dough into four rectangles; firmly pressing perforations to seal.

Cut each rectangle lengthwise into two strips, forming eight strips. Spoon two teaspoons onions mixture down center of strip. Bring long side of dough together over filling; firmly pinch edges to seal. Twist each filled dough strip; form into a ring. Pinch edges of strips together to seal; set aside. In a small bowl, combine crumbs and remaining chili powder. Dip tops of rings in beaten eggs and then in crumb mixture. Place, crumb side up, on unprepared baking sheet. Bake for 15 minutes, or until golden brown.

Bruschetta

- 1 loaf Italian bread
- 4 Roma tomatoes
- 1/2 cup black olives, sliced
- 1 Tbsp. fresh basil, chopped
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup Feta cheese, crumbled
- Salt and pepper to taste

Slice Italian bread lengthwise and place in the oven and allow to brown on the top. Meanwhile, combine remaining ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Remove bread from the oven and spread tomato mixture over bread. Return bread to the oven for several minutes to warm and allow cheese to melt. Slice and serve.

Italian bread works better with this recipe because it is generally wider than French bread. However, you could experiment with different types of bread to see which you prefer.

Variation: Another topping, that of sautéed mushrooms and chopped onions also tastes great.

Baked Stuffed Mushrooms

- 1 pound large fresh mushrooms
- 1/2 stick butter
- 1/2 teaspoon each: garlic salt & pepper
- 1 teaspoon parsley
- 2 Tbsp. seasoned bread crumbs
- 2 Tablespoons grated mozzarella

Wash mushrooms. Remove stems and chop finely. Sauté these in 2 tsp. butter. Sprinkle with garlic salt and pepper. Add parsley and crumbs to make a stuffing.

Melt rest of butter and put in a baking pan. Stuff caps and place



Bruschetta makes a great appetizer for parties

in dish, sprinkle with cheese and bake at 350 for 10-15 minutes.

Queso

- 1 large brick of Velveeta cheese
- 2 cans of Rotel tomatoes
- 1 lb of ground beef

Preparing the queso:

Slice and cube the box of Velveeta, then place it into a crock pot, heat this on high stirring occasionally until the cheese is melted. Place the ground beef into a skillet and cook over medium heat until browned. Drain the meat well. Open the 2 cans of Rotel tomatoes and place them into a small food chopper, cut until the tomatoes are very fine. Pour the meat and Rotel tomatoes into the crock pot with the melting cheese and continue stirring once in awhile until the cheese is totally melted.

Serving Suggestions:

This cheese dip is wonderful

over tortilla chips, but can be put a top anything that you like cheese on.

Note: If you don't have a crock pot, you can melt the cheese in a large Silverstone sauce pan over medium heat. Keep a very close eye on it though, it will scorch if is not stirred frequently.

Grilled Apples

- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 2 tbsp. packed brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 3 medium cooking apples (about 1 pound), peeled, cut in half and cored

In a small bowl combine butter, brown sugar, lemon juice, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Place apples on cooking grate. Brush with sauce. Grill 30 minutes or until tender, turning and brushing with sauce twice.

'Tis the Season for Colorful Cocktails

Serving just the right party drinks will personalize your celebration, especially if you include special tastes of the season. Ocean Spray, the best-known name when it comes to the "cocktail", is a key ingredient for the tastiest party drinks.

Smirnoff does its part with smooth and fruity vodkas and Captain Morgan packs a punch with sensational spiced rum. 'Tis the season for great taste, so be sure to add these delicious cocktails to your party bar:

The Holiday Cruise



The taste is pure luxury – and as refreshing as a sea breeze. This party drink calls for Smirnoff Vodka shaken with Ocean Spray Ruby Red Grapefruit Cocktail, a

wisp of triple sec, garnished with frozen cranberries and/or cloves.

In a cocktail shaker filled with ice, add 1 oz (30 mL) Smirnoff Vodka, 3 oz (90 mL) Ocean Spray Ruby Red Grapefruit Cocktail and 1/2 oz (15mL) triple sec. Shake and strain into a martini glass. Garnish with 1 tsp (5mL) frozen cranberries and/or 1/4 tsp (1 mL) cloves.

Apple of my eye



Romance, with a touch of temptation, combine when Smirnoff Green Apple Twist Vodka is shaken with Ocean Spray White Cranberry Cocktail, a dash of Goldschlager Cinnamon Schnapps Liqueur, garnished with an apple slice.

In a cocktail shaker filled with ice, add 1 oz (30 mL) Smirnoff Green Apple Twist Vodka, 3 oz (90 mL) Ocean Spray White Cranberry Cocktail and 1/2 oz (15 mL) Goldschlager Cinnamon Schnapps Liqueur. Shake and strain into a martini glass. Garnish with an apple slice or a cinnamon stick.

Festive Punch

A party punch bowl symbolizes good friends and good fun. Festive ingredients in this one include Smirnoff Vodka, Ocean Spray Cocktails, Captain Morgan Original Spiced Rum and a splash of soda water, garnished with fresh fruit.



To a punch bowl, add 1 cup (250 mL) Smirnoff Vodka, 2 cups (500 mL) Ocean Spray Cran-Raspberry Cocktail, 1/2 cup (125 mL) Ocean Spray Ruby Tangerine Cocktail, 2 cups (500 mL) Piat D'Or red wine and 1/4 cup (50 mL) Captain Morgan Original Spiced Rum. Add 1 lemon, 1 lime and 1 orange and 1 apple, sliced. Add 1/4 cup (50 mL) fresh or frozen cranberries and 1/2 cup (125 mL) grapes, sliced in half. Before serving, add 1 cup (250 mL) soda water. Ladle into cups with ice and add fruit as desired.

Makes 10- 5 oz (150 mL) servings

Great Getaway

Leave your troubles behind to explore new and refreshing possibilities with this cocktail

that combines Smirnoff Vodka topped with Ocean Spray Cranberry Cocktail and a splash of Henkes Melon Liqueur, garnished with a melon ball.



To a tall glass, add 1 oz (30 mL) Smirnoff Vodka, 1/2 oz (15 mL) Henkes Melon Liqueur and 5 oz (150 mL) Ocean Spray Cranberry Cocktail. Garnish with a melon ball.

Island Twist



This tropical taste sensation mixes Smirnoff Orange Twist Vodka with Ocean Spray Cranberry Cocktail.

Rim a wide mouth glass with

lime cordial and shredded coconut. Fill the glass with ice. Add 1 oz (30 mL) Smirnoff Orange Twist Vodka, 5 oz (150 mL) Ocean Spray Cranberry Cocktail and 1/2 oz (15 mL) Captain Morgan Parrot Bay Rum. Stir to mix. Garnish with a pineapple spear.

Holiday Breeze

3 oz Ocean Spray Cranberry Cocktail
3 oz Ocean Spray Ruby Red Grapefruit Cocktail
1.5 oz vodka
lemon or lime slice, garnish



DIRECTIONS:
Pour into a glass filled with ice. Garnish with slice of lemon or lime.
Makes 1 serving

- News Canada

Cocktail Party Tips from Martini Club

Christmas crowds, endless line ups and packed parking lots got you down? Go from stressing to sipping in no time flat with this step-by-step guide on how to

leave a lasting impression with friends and family this holiday season.

Step 1: Go shopping

Always choose the best ingredients. According to Michelle Jalsevac, owner of Toronto's 'Miss Martini', "when making a great cocktail it's important to use a quality spirit. Bottle image and marketing campaigns don't always guarantee a great tasting liquid, it's the quality inside that counts...so choose wisely."

Here's your shopping list –

- Liquor Store List:
- Grocery Store List:
- Plymouth Gin Candy Canes
- Cruzan Estate Superfine Sugar
- Dark Rum Bosc Pear
- Cruzan Coconut Tea Rum Egg Nog
- Xanté Peppermint
- Schnapps Maraschino cherries
- Dry Red Wine Large orange
- Apple Sourz Large lemon
- Liqueur

Step 2: Keep it cold

You can never have enough ice. Laura Panter, partner of the Martini club, recommends jazzing up your ice by "adding red berries or cranberry juice for added flavour and festive flare."

Step 3: Create the cocktail

Keep it simple. National home entertaining expert, Paul MacLaren from That's the Spirit.com suggests that when entertaining, "choose basic recipes that won't keep you stuck inside the kitchen all night fussing over complicated ingredients and techniques."

A Christmas Brunch



*Leftover turkey or ham can be used to make a wonderful omelet.
Combine with Mini Quiches for a hearty brunch.*

After a season of cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, and heavy dinners, not to mention lots of fast food inhaled at malls during sale season, you are definitely ready for something different by Christmas morning.

If you have children, you'll be up at the break of dark -- that is, if you've managed to get to bed at all after last-minute assemblies and gift wrapping. If your adult relatives or good friends are

staying over, you'll likely want to sleep in after late-night conversation followed by later-night dishwashing. And if it's just the two of you, you're probably lazing about in bed savoring a long-awaited day off.

So why not celebrate the obvious with a luxurious Christmas Brunch?

The best thing about this is, many of the ingredients will

already be available to you from your previous revelry.

Christmosas

Last night's champagne, if corked properly, is still fizzy; make "Christmosas" by adding orange juice and cranberry juice.

Using Leftover Ham

Christmas ham is lovely if heated

in mulled cider or even tea, and accompanied by eggs. Or, for a real treat, fill crepes with bits of ham, leftover baked or fried apples, Swiss or gruyere cheese, and béchamel sauce; it's a bit of a twist on the classic Croque Monsieur.

Leftovers Omelet

Practically any three ingredients from the Tupperware stacked in the fridge will yield a wonderful breakfast omelet. Turkey, asparagus and cranberries are a good combination, or ham, cheese and broccoli.

pans with pie dough, forming little tart shells. Then add the filling. See Quiche recipes in our article on Pg. 62

Hors d'oevres

Hors d'oevres makings also can be added -- smoked salmon, brie, and stilton cheese, for example. Roast beef can be complemented by cheddar cheese and sautéed onions.

Coffee for the Soul

Instead of store-bought flavored coffee, simply add some grated fresh

More Ideas

You can make a hearty salad using leftover meat, bens, sweet potatoes etc. Or a warm and satisfying soup using leftover veggies and bits of meat from the fridge.

Spread layer upon layer of mashed potatoes, green beans, cooked meat, dips and spreads from last night's dinner in a pie crust and make your own Shepherd's pie.

Meals in a Pot

Make miniature pies in small oven-proof pots to make easy-to-eat 'meals in a pot'.

This will reduce the number of dishes used and the time required in slicing out wedges and arranging on plates and will also be very convenient to eat.

Single Dish Meal

Now is the best time to make a 'single dish' meal for your brunch. Save time by using cooked leftovers and dumping them together to make cassoulet or shepherd's pie or a stew.

Relax!

You can eat at the dining room table or on the couch in front of the Christmas tree if the table is still cluttered. The point of Christmas Brunch is to relax; the only requirements are that you enjoy the meal, and follow it with a long winter's nap.

* * *



Mini Quiches

Make miniature quiches by lining the inside bottom of your muffin

cinnamon and/or other spices of your choice to your freshly-ground beans. The subtle, true flavor and aroma will warm your soul.

Today so few recipes are passed down through generations. Gone are the days of recipe-card swaps and neighborhood potlucks. If you'd like to get a taste of the bygone era, below are four bread recipes that will give you the joy of creating breads that belonged on the Partridge family table.

Peach Bread

1 ½ cups sugar
 ½ cup shortening
 2 eggs
 2 ¼ cups pureed fresh peaches (6-8)
 2 cups all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 1 teaspoon soda
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 1 cup finely chopped pecans

Cream sugar and shortening together. Add eggs and mix thoroughly. Add peach puree and dry ingredients. Mix thoroughly. Add vanilla and chopped pecans and stir until blended. Pour into two loaf pans that have been well-greased and floured. Bake at 325 degrees for an hour. Cool for a few minutes, and then remove from pan.

Makes two 9-inch loaves.

Chocolate Tea Bread

2 cups sifted flour
 1 Tablespoon baking powder
 a cup cocoa
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ¾ cup sugar
 1 egg, slightly beaten
 1 cup milk
 3 Tablespoons melted shortening
 a cup semisweet chocolate pieces

Favorite Holiday Breads

Combine dry ingredients and sift into a large bowl. Beat together egg, milk, and shortening. Add to first mixture and stir only until dry ingredients are moistened. Fold in semisweet chocolate. Pour into greased loaf pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Makes one loaf.

Orange Walnut Bread

2 ½ cups flour
 1 ¼ cups sugar
 2 teaspoons baking powder
 ½ teaspoon baking soda
 ½ teaspoon salt
 2 eggs, beaten
 ¼ cup (½ stick) margarine, melted
 ½ cup orange juice
 2 Tablespoons grated orange peel
 2 Tablespoons water
 1 cup chopped walnuts

Mix flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Combine eggs, margarine, orange juice, orange peel, and water; add all at once to flour mixture. Stir quickly until dry ingredients are moistened. Stir in walnuts, turn into greased and floured loaf pan. Bake at 350 degrees one hour. Cool in pan 10 minutes. Remove from pan and cool on wire rack.

Makes one loaf.

Spoonbread

2 cups milk
 1 cup water
 1 cup cornmeal
 2 Tablespoons margarine
 1 teaspoon salt

3 eggs

Combine all but eggs together, cook at medium heat until thick. Stir a lot. Remove from the heat and beat the eggs until thick. Stir ¼ of the hot mixture into the eggs, stir. Add to the remaining hot mixture, stir again. Pour into a greased casserole dish and bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes or until knife inserted comes out clean.

Peach and Pecan Bread

1 (16 oz.) can sliced peaches
 6 tbsp. butter or margarine, melted
 2 eggs
 1 tbsp. lemon juice
 2 c. all-purpose flour
 ¾ c. sugar
 3 tsp. baking powder
 1 tsp. salt
 ¾ c. chopped pecans
 2 tbsp. peach preserves

Drain peaches reserving ¼ cup syrup. Finely chop 1 cup peaches; set aside. In blender combine remaining peaches, butter, or margarine, eggs, reserved peach syrup, and lemon juice. Cover; blend just until smooth. Stir together dry ingredients. Add egg mixture; stir just until moistened. Fold in reserved peaches and nuts. Turn into a greased 8x4x2 loaf pan and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Spread with peach preserves. Cool in pan 10 minutes; remove and cool on rack.

Serve warm. Store in tightly wrapped container.

Pumpkin Bread

2/3 c shortening
 2 2/3 c sugar
 4 eggs
 1 can (16 oz) pumpkin
 2/3 c water
 3 1/3 c all-purpose flour
 2 tsp baking soda
 1 1/2 tsp salt
 1/2 tsp baking powder
 1 tsp ground cinnamon
 1 tsp ground cloves
 2/3 c coarsely chopped nuts)
 2/3 c raisins

Heat oven to 350. Grease bottoms only of 2 loaf pans, 9x5x3 inches, or 3 loaf pans, 8 1/2x4 1/2x2 1/2 inches. Mix shortening and sugar in large bowl. Add eggs, pumpkin and water. Blend in flour, baking soda, salt, baking powder, cinnamon and cloves. Stir in nuts and raisins. Pour into pans.

Bake until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, about 1 hour 10 minutes; cool slightly. Loosen sides of loaves from pans; remove from pans. Cool completely before slicing.

To store, wrap and refrigerate no longer than 10 days.

Banana Bread

3 ripe bananas (4 if small)
 1 cup sugar
 1 egg
 1/4 cup butter (melted)
 1 1/2 cup flour
 1 tsp. baking soda
 1 tsp. salt

Mash bananas with fork in a shallow bowl. Stir in sugar, egg and melted butter. Stir in dry ingredients. Pour into buttered 9 inch loaf pan. Bake at 325 for 50 minutes.

Favorite Holiday Breads

Cranberry Raisin Bread

75g dried cranberries
 150g raisins
 300ml strong cold tea
 100g caster sugar
 250g self raising flour
 1/2 tsp baking powder
 1/2 tsp mixed spice
 1 egg
 25g flaked almonds

Place the cranberries raisins tea butter and sugar in an ovenproof bowl and place in the simmering oven for 20 to 30 minutes until you can smell the fruit and the sugar and butter have melted. Cool until hand hot. Grease and baseline a loaf tin 225 x 125 x 70 mm or 1 1/2 litre capacity.

Sift the flour baking powder and spice into a large mixing bowl. Stir in the eggs and the fruit mixture. Turn quickly into the prepared tin and scatter the almonds over the top.

Bake for about 1 hour or until a skewer inserted in the centre of the loaf comes out clean. Turn the loaf out of the tin while it is still hand hot. Serve sliced and spread with butter.

Gingerbread

350g plain flour
 2 level tsp ground ginger
 2 level tsp ground cinnamon
 225g butter
 225g soft brown sugar
 100g golden syrup
 100g black treacle
 300ml milk
 2 level tsp bicarbonate of soda
 2 eggs

Line the small roasting tin with foil and lightly grease it. Sieve together the flour and spices.

Stand the milk in a measuring jug on top of the oven to warm. Melt the sugar syrup treacle and butter in a large saucepan. Stir well over a gentle heat. Remove from the heat and stir in the flour and spices.

Add the bicarbonate of soda to the warm milk. Stir the milk into the syrup mixture and beat well with a wooden spoon. Beat the eggs together in a basin. Stir into the gingerbread mixture. Pour into the prepared tin.

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes until risen firm to the touch and slightly shrunken from the sides of the tin.

Pannetone

1 level tbsp active dried yeast
 150ml warm milk
 450g strong plain white flour
 1 egg
 4 egg yolks
 2 level tsp salt
 75g caster sugar
 finely grated rind of 1 lemon
 finely grated rind of 1 orange
 175g unsalted butter softened
 75g chopped mixed candied orange and citron peel
 125g raisins

Line a 150mm deep cake tin with a double layer of non stick baking parchment. Dissolve the yeast in 4 tbsp warm milk. Cover and leave in a warm place near the oven for 10 minutes until

frothy. Stir in 125g flour and the remaining warm milk. Cover and leave to rise for 30 minutes. Beat the egg and egg yolks together. Sift the remaining flour and salt onto the yeast mixture. Make a well in the centre and add the sugar beaten eggs and grated citrus rinds. Mix to an elastic dough adding a little more flour if necessary but keeping the dough quite soft. Work in the softened butter.

Cover and leave to rise at room temperature for 2 to 4 hours until doubled in volume. Meanwhile chop the candied peel. Knock the dough down and knead in the chopped peel and raisins. Place in the prepared tin and cut an X on the top with an oiled scalpel or very sharp knife. Cover and leave to rise until the dough is about 25mm above the top of the cake tin. Bake one hour until

well risen and golden. Leave in the tin for 10 minutes then transfer to a wire rack to cool. Serve cut into horizontal slices. To store, wrap the whole Pannetone in cling film or foil. Keep in the refrigerator.

Bring to room temperature to serve.

This classic Italian favourite is really a cross between a bread and a cake and because of the high butter content it keeps well. Pannetone is normally eaten with coffee or a glass of dessert or fortified wine. It is delicious served slightly warm.

Makes 10 slices

Pao de Mel (Honey Bread)

3 cups (750 ml) all-purpose flour

1 cup (250 ml) sugar
3 Tbs (45 ml) cocoa powder
1 cup (250 ml) honey
1/4 tsp (1 ml) ground cloves
1/4 tsp (1 ml) ground nutmeg
3 Tbs (45 ml) butter or margarine
1 cup (250 ml) milk
1 tsp (5 ml) baking powder
Your favorite chocolate or sugar frosting

Combine all ingredients in a large mixing bowl and stir until well combined. Pour into a greased 9 x 12 inch (22 x 30 cm) baking pan and bake in a preheated 325F (160C) oven for about 20 minutes, or until done (test with a toothpick).

When cool, cut into 2 inch (5 cm) squares and glaze with a chocolate or sugar frosting.

Makes one 9 x 12 inch (22 x 30 cm) cake.

* * *

What to gift to a Cook who has everything

When you invite a good cook over for dinner, you always worry whether they will like the food. But the truth is that every good cook likes good food, it does not need to be fancy. The feeling is the same when deciding what to gift a cook for Christmas.

A good cook generally has the best of everything that is needed in the kitchen. Still there are a lot of items to gift to your epicurean friends that will always be welcome, items that are consumed or wear out regularly in the kitchen.

Celebrating Christmas suggests some exciting ideas which are sure to please:

1. Potholders, tea towels and mittens: These almost always get burnt, soiled or torn in the best managed kitchens and new ones are always welcome. Just make sure, you do not gift something so fancy and expensive that they end up in the kitchen showcase instead of the kitchen counter!
2. Peppermills: All pepper grinders eventually get worn out and instead of ground pepper start delivering whole pepper corns. A new one is always welcome in any kitchen.
3. Wooden spoon and spatula sets often get discolored and tend to chip. They also sometimes get difficult to clean after having stirred a particularly pungent gravy and cannot be used for anything else.

A new set will always delight your chef friends!

4. Oven proof sets of china or terra-cotta bowls are always welcome for anything from soups to salsas. All chefs are always in need of additional bowls when they throw a party and will always thank you for your thoughtfulness when they have friends over for a party.

5. A bottle of an exotic fruit conserve or a exotic sauce like an Indian tandoori sauce will always be appreciated by a good cook who likes to try something new for every party. And you will have the good fortune to enjoy the new cuisine they whip up the next time you are invited over!

Serve delicious Quiches to family and friends as entrées, appetizers or informal breakfast dishes.

Bacon and Onion Quiche

325g shortcrust pastry
300g onions
200g smoked bacon
80g gruyere cheese
250ml milk
250ml double cream
2 egg yolks
2 whole eggs
50g butter
Nutmeg, salt and pepper

Line a 25cm tart ring with the pastry and bake at 375F/190C for 15-18 minutes. Remove when it is golden brown and there is no moisture left on the base and set aside to cool. Slice the onions finely and stew them in the butter in a heavy frying pan over gentle heat. Cut bacon into thin 3cm long lardons. Put in a little pan and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil and drain. Add bacon to the softened onions and cook for few minutes. Season with a little pepper.

Serves 6

Chicken Pecan Quiche

1 c. flour
1 1/2 c. sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
3/4 c. chopped pecans
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. coarse pepper
1/3 c. vegetable oil
3 eggs, beaten
8 oz. sour cream
1/4 c. mayonnaise
1/2 c. chicken broth
2 c. chicken, cooked and cooled
1/2 c. cheddar cheese, shredded
1/4 c. onion, minced



Quiches for Christmas

1/4 tsp. dill weed
1/4 c. pecans, chopped

Combine first five ingredients. Stir in oil and set aside 1/4 of mixture. Put remaining in bottom of 9" pie plate. Bake 10 minutes at 350 degrees. Combine rest of ingredients and put into crust. Sprinkle remaining 1/4 of mixture on top and bake at 325 degrees for 45 minutes.

Serves 6

Seafood Quiche

1 unbaked pastry shell, regular size baking shell
1/2 lb. sliced Swiss cheese
1/2 c. sm. shrimp
4 oz. frozen canned crabmeat

Line pastry shell with double slices of cheese. Cover cheese with a layer of shrimp and a layer of crabmeat. Beat together: 2 beaten eggs, 1 c. whipping cream, 1/2 tsp. flour, 1/4 tsp. salt and 1/4 tsp. pepper.

Combine the above with:

1 tbsp. sherry wine
1 tbsp. melted butter

Pour mixture over seafood. This may now be refrigerated or frozen. To serve: Bake for 40 minutes at 375 degrees until light brown. Quiche should stand for at least 20 minutes before serving.

Mini Quiche Appetizers



Make any of the above as small appetizers for parties by lining muffin cups with pastry and filling them with the stuffing.

Deep-fried turkey, a concept that started in the south, is gradually rising in popularity nationwide. It's a perfect twist for holiday feasts.

Since deep-frying turkey requires special equipment and lots of oil, families and groups of neighbors often get together to share the costs and the feast. To get you started, we have several deep-fried turkey recipes for you. For a Deep-Frying Turkey experience that is fun and produces delicious results follow these guidelines:

Equipment

You'll need a 40 or 60 quart pot with basket, burner and propane gas tank, a candy thermometer to measure oil temperature and a food thermometer to determine doneness of turkey. For added safety, have a fire extinguisher, oven mitts and pot holders nearby. To add flavor with different marinades and seasonings, you may want to purchase an injector.

Location

Place the fryer on level dirt or a grassy area. Never fry a turkey indoors, in a garage or in any other structure attached to a building. Avoid frying on wood decks, which could catch fire, and concrete, which can be stained by the oil.

The Turkey - Size Matters

Smaller turkeys, 8 to 10 pounds and turkey parts such as breast, wings, drumsticks and thighs, are best for frying. Size does matter as a 12-14 pound turkey is the maximum size bird that can be

Southern Deep-Fried Turkey



successfully deep-fried. In addition to the obvious safety concern of lowering and lifting a big turkey into a vessel of boiling oil, larger birds simply cook longer. The extra cooking time results in over-exposure to the skin, which will likely be over cooked.

If a larger bird (over 15-pounds) has been purchased, follow these steps for the best results. Detach the dark meat (leg and thigh portions) from the breast and fry

the two turkey parts separately. Fry the leg/thigh sections first in oil that has been preheated to 365-375 degrees F. Cook to an internal temperature of 180 degrees F. Remove the dark sections and reheat the oil to 365-375 degrees F. Then fry the turkey breast to an internal temperature of 170 degrees F.

Other Ingredients

You'll need approximately 5 gallons of a high-smoke point

oil; more for larger turkeys.

Cooking Preparation

To determine the correct amount of oil, place the turkey in the fryer basket and place in the pot. Add water until it reaches 1 to 2 inches above the turkey. Remove the turkey and note the water level, using a ruler to measure the distance from the top of the pot to the surface of the water. Pour out the water and dry the pot thoroughly. Be sure to measure for oil before breading or marinating the turkey.

Heat the oil to 365-375 degrees F. Depending on the amount of oil used, this usually takes between 45 minutes and 1 hour.

While the oil is heating, prepare the turkey as desired. Do not stuff turkeys for deep frying.

Frying the Turkey

Once the oil has come to temperature, place the turkey in the basket and slowly lower into the pot.

Whole turkeys require approximately 3 minutes per pound to cook. Remove turkey and check internal temperature with meat thermometer. The temperature should reach 170 degrees F in the breast and 180 degrees F in the thigh.

Turkey parts such as breast, wings and thighs require approximately 4 to 5 minutes per pound to come to temperature.



Additional Safety Tips

1. Never leave the hot oil unattended and don't allow children or pets near the cooking area.
2. Allow the oil to cool completely before disposing or storing.
3. Immediately wash hands, utensils, equipment and surfaces that have come in contact with raw turkey.
4. Turkey should be consumed immediately and leftovers stored in the refrigerator within two hours of cooking.

The oils used to fry turkey are critical to the success of the product.

Oil Selection

Only oils that have high smoke points should be used. Such oils include peanut, canola and sunflower. Peanut oil has abundant flavor and is the top choice of many cooks. Canola oil is low in saturated fats and would be appropriate to combine

with peanut oil if fat and cholesterol are a concern.

Oil Filtering

These high smoke-point oils allow reusing the oil with proper filtration. Depending on the recipe used, remember to filter the oil...not just strain it. The first step is to strain the cooled oil through a fine strainer. If a breading, spice or herb rub are used in the preparation of the turkey, it will be necessary to further filter the oil through fine cheesecloth.

Southern Deep Fried Turkey Recipe

Ingredients:

- 10 to 12 Pound WHOLE TURKEY, non self-basting
- 2/3 Cup vinaigrette
- 1/3 Cup dry sherry
- 2 Teaspoons lemon pepper seasoning salt
- 1 Teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 Teaspoon onion powder
- 1 Teaspoon cayenne pepper
- As needed peanut oil

Remove the giblets and neck, rinse the turkey well with cold water and pat dry thoroughly with paper towels. Take care to dry both inside cavities. To allow for good oil circulation throughout the cavity, do not truss or tie legs together. Cut off the wing tips and plump little tail as they may get caught in the fryer basket.

In a medium bowl, mix vinaigrette, dry sherry and seasonings together. Strain the marinade.

Place the marinade in an injection syringe. Inject the marinade in the turkey breast, thighs and legs.

Place the bird in a large plastic bag, refrigerate and marinate for at least 2 hours. Turn the bag and massage the turkey from time to time.

Drain the turkey from the marinade and discard marinade. Place the turkey in the fryer basket or on a rack, neck down.

Place the OUTDOOR gas burner on a level dirt or grassy area. Never fry a turkey indoors, in a garage or in any structure attached to a building.

Do not fry on wood decks, which could catch fire, or concrete, which could be stained by the oil. (Safety tip: have a fire extinguisher nearby for added safety.)

Add oil to a 7-10 gallon pot with a basket or rack. At the medium-high setting, heat the oil to 375

degrees F, (depending on the amount of oil, outside temperature and wind conditions, this should take about 40+ minutes).

When the oil temperature registers 375 degrees F on a deep-fry thermometer, slowly lower the turkey into the hot oil. The level of the oil will rise due to the frothing caused by the moisture from the turkey but will stabilize in about one minute. (Safety tips: to prevent burns from the splattering oil wear oven mitts/gloves, long sleeves, heavy shoes and even glasses. It is wise to have two people lowering and raising the turkey.)

Immediately check the oil temperature and increase the flame so the oil temperature is maintained at 350 degrees F. If the temperature drops to 340 degrees F or below, oil will begin to seep into the turkey.

Fry about 3-4 minutes per pound, or about 35-42 minutes for a 10-12 pound turkey. Stay with the cooker at all times as the heat must be regulated.

When cooked to 170 degrees F in the breast or 180 degrees F in the thigh, carefully remove the turkey from the hot oil.

Allow the turkey to drain for a few minutes. (Safety tip: allow the oil to cool completely before storing or disposing.)

Remove turkey from the rack and place on a serving platter. Allow to rest for 20 minutes before carving.

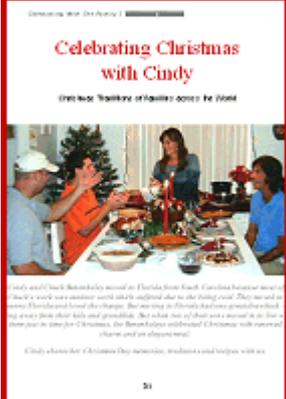
NOTE: Use only oils with high smoke points, such as peanut, canola or safflower oil. To determine the correct amount of oil, place the turkey in the pot before adding seasoning and add water until turkey is covered. Measure the amount of water and use a corresponding amount of oil. Dry the pot thoroughly of all water.

Recipe Source: Recipe by The National Turkey Federation

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Would you like to see your family featured in the 2006 issue?



Contact
admin@
celebrating-christmas.com



Easy Gingerbread Houses

By Belinda J Mooney

The holiday season is families, spending time together and making memories. Making gingerbread houses is one of those holiday events that young and old can enjoy together.

You can use any candies or decorations you want. These listed are suggestions.

Easy Gingerbread Cottages by Nestle©

Supplies

- sturdy piece of cardboard,
- Double-sided tape
- Tape
- 1 pint milk carton, emptied
- 1 box of 2 1/2 inches x 5 inches graham crackers

- 1 16-oz can of frosting. White for snow and any colors you choose.
- 1 14-oz. bag of coconut
- A variety of candy.

Some Suggestions for Candies are:

NESTLÉ JINGLES
 SPREE Candy Canes
 Mini Chewy SWEETARTS in Holiday Dispensers
 Giant SWEETARTS
 SNO-CAPS
 WONKA GOBSTOPPERS
 WONKA NERDS Ropes

Instructions

Tape carton opening shut. Tape the carton to the base.

For the sides, carefully break 4 graham cracker sheets, into fourths, for a total of 12 pieces. Set aside.

For the roof, break each graham

cracker sheet in half along the scored line, 2 pieces, one for each side of the roof. Set aside.

Frost the entire carton. Place 3 of the smaller graham cracker pieces, horizontally, onto each side. Place 2 of the larger graham cracker pieces on each side of the top of the carton, to create the roof.

Using the frosting as "glue", place SNO-CAPS in rows to create snow covered roof shingles. Wrap the NERDS Rope around the edges of the side of the carton and secure with frosting. Place 3 red Mini Chewy SPREE in the center above the NERDS Rope.

For the front of the cottage, use 5 green Mini Chewy SPREE to create a round wreath below the center of the NERDS Rope. Break off 2 rounded ends of unwrapped SPREE Candy Canes and put them together to create a horse shoe shape for the front door.

Unwrap SPREE Candy Canes and break them into 2-3/4" lengths. You will need four of these pieces. With frosting, glue one SPREE Candy Cane piece under the roof and one at the base of the cottage on both sides (the sides which do not have the NERDS ROPE decoration). Secure 2 to 3 red Mini Chewy SPREE to each side to represent windows.

Landscaping:

Frost the board. Use candies to create trees, a cobblestone walk our snowmen.

Sprinkle some shredded coconut "snow" around and your cottage is ready for visitors!

Recipe by Nestle used with permission.

Celebrate the Season with Pomegranates



For a long time now, Pomegranates have come to be associated with the Holidays; maybe because the beautiful red fruit looks beautiful and cheery nestled among greenery and decorates any mantle, table or wall easily.

Make the most of this pretty fruit with ideas for natural décor, delightful recipes for the whole family and some more useful tips.

Add Natural Beauty to Holiday Decorations

Pomegranates add rustic beauty and rich symbolism to holiday decorations and blend harmoniously with any setting. Fresh whole California pomegranates add a creative touch to centerpieces, wreaths and garlands, on mantels, bookshelves and windowsills. For decorating, select pomegranates for color, size and general appearance.

Fill a complementary bowl with pomegranates, each one is an original work of art. For a more luxurious arrangement, surround candles with fresh pomegranates. Fresh pomegranates keep well for several weeks at room temperature. You can also buy pomegranates ahead and store

them in plastic bags in the refrigerator for up to three months. To dry them, arrange a single layer of fruit on a rack in a cool, dry place for several weeks. Fresh pomegranates are available October –December each year and are widely available at local grocery stores and supermarkets.



For a more luxurious arrangement, surround candles with fresh pomegranates.

Delightful Recipes for the Season

Pomegranate-Honey Roasted Game Hens

1 cup 100% POM Wonderful pomegranate juice
1/2 cup plus additional 3 tablespoons honey
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon allspice
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
6 cloves garlic, smashed
3 game hens; split in half
Salt and pepper

Garnish: 1/2 cup arils from 1 California pomegranate
Chopped, roasted pistachio nuts.

Mix pomegranate juice, 1/2 cup honey, and next 5 ingredients; pour over hens. Cover and marinate 8-12 hours; turning occasionally. Drain hens. Simmer remaining marinade, covered for 10 minutes and reserve. Season hens with salt and pepper. Bake at 450 degrees F., basting frequently with reserved marinade, until hens are just firm to the touch, about 25 minutes.



Remove from oven, cover with tea towel and let birds rest for 5 minutes. Brush each half with 1/2 tablespoon honey. Garnish with pomegranate arils and chopped pistachios.

Pomegranate Ginger Orange Relish

This relish is excellent served over turkey, pork or lamb.



Arils from 2 medium pomegranates (about 1 1/2 cups)
 1 tablespoon finely chopped orange zest
 1 tablespoon orange juice
 1/2 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
 1 tablespoon honey
 1/2 teaspoon salt

Gently mix all ingredients together. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until serving.

Makes 1 1/2 cups

Crimson California Pomegranate Jelly

Time to Table: 20 Minutes Prep.
 2 Hours Cooling

Makes 4 & 1/2 Cups

Juice from 4-6 large California Pomegranates* or 2 cups POM Wonderful 100% pomegranate juice
 1/4 arils from 1 large Pomegranate
 2 tablespoons of lemon juice
 1 packet liquid fruit pectin or half of a 1 3/4 oz. package powdered fruit pectin
 4 cups granulated sugar

Score 1 fresh pomegranate and place in a bowl of water. Break

open pomegranate under water to free the arils (seed sacs). Arils will sink to the bottom of the bowl and membrane will float to the top. Sieve and put arils in separate bowl. Reserve 1/4 cup of the arils from fruit and set aside. Prepare fresh pomegranate juice.*

In a 6-quart saucepan or Dutch oven, combine pomegranate juice, lemon juice and pectin. Over high heat, bring mixture to a boil. Stir in sugar all at once, and then stir constantly. Heat mixture again until it comes to a full rolling boil; boil 1 minute over medium-high heat. Remove from heat and skim foam from jelly with a spoon. Discard foam. Immediately ladle jelly into clean jelly jars with lids, or refrigerator containers with tight-fitting lids. Sprinkle reserved arils over the top of each container of jelly.



Cover tightly. Let stand 45 minutes to cool, then refrigerate for 1 1/4 hours. If not using immediately, refrigerate for up to 4 to 6 weeks or freeze for up to 1 year.

* For 1 cup of juice, cut 2-3 California pomegranates in half and juice them with a citrus strainer or juicer. Pour mixture

through a cheesecloth-lined strainer or sieve. Set the juice aside.

Pomegranate-Marinated Rack of Lamb



2 racks of lamb
 6 large cloves garlic, chopped finely
 1 1/2 tablespoons chopped, fresh thyme
 Juice from 2 large California pomegranates* or 1 cup 100% POM Wonderful pomegranate juice
 3 tablespoons olive oil
 Salt (to taste)
 Freshly ground black pepper
 Pomegranate arils for garnish

To prepare lamb, lightly score fat in a diamond pattern; rub each rack with half the garlic and half the thyme. Put lamb in a heavy duty resealable bag. Scrape up off the work surface any garlic and thyme that didn't adhere to the lamb; add it to the bag. Pour pomegranate juice into bag; seal. Marinate lamb in the refrigerator overnight, turning occasionally.

To cook lamb, remove lamb from bag, reserving marinade; pat dry. Bring to room temperature. Meanwhile, strain reserved marinade; reduce over medium-high heat by about half and reserve. Rub each rack with half the olive oil; season well with salt and pepper. Arrange racks in a shallow roasting pan, fat side up. Roast at 500 degrees

F. until the internal temperature reads between 125 and 130 for medium rare, about 25 minutes.

Baste lamb with reserved reduced marinade twice toward the end of cooking. Remove lamb from oven; cover with a tea towel. Let rest 10 minutes. Carve into chops. Drizzle each chop with a scant teaspoon of remaining reduced marinade. Garnish chops with pomegranate arils.

For more appetizer, entree and dessert recipes, please visit www.pomegranates.org and www.pomwonderful.com

More tips on Pomegranates

How to Select a Pomegranate:
Picked when ripe, pomegranates

are ready to enjoy when you see them in stores. The heavier the fruit, the juicier it will be.

How To Open A Pomegranate:
Score the pomegranate so that it opens easily and submerge in a bowl of water. Break open the pomegranate underwater to free the arils (seed sacs) which will sink to the bottom of the bowl while the white membranes float. Discard membranes, sieve and put the arils to one side.

Which Part Do I Eat? The glistening red arils inside the pomegranate are delicious and heavy with juice. Each aril contains a tiny edible seed. The white membrane is bitter and not recommended for eating.

How to Juice a Pomegranate: Cut

the fresh pomegranate in half as you would a grapefruit. A hand press citrus juicer is recommended. If you use an electric juicer, be careful not to juice the white membrane, so that the juice remains sweet. Strain the juice through a cheese cloth lined strainer or sieve.

How to Store Pomegranate Arils:
Arils can be preserved by placing in an air-tight container and either refrigerating or freezing them. Arils will keep for a few days if refrigerated or if frozen, will last for several months.

How to Store Fresh Pomegranates: Fresh unopened pomegranates can last for many weeks, even months, when kept in a non-humid environment. Refrigeration is optional.



An Italian Christmas

Three classic Italian recipes to help you add a dash of Italian spice in your holiday celebration.

Spaghetti Bolognese

3 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion finely chopped
1/8 celeriac root finely chopped
1 carrot finely chopped
1 clove garlic crushed
salt pepper
450g lean minced beef
2 teaspoons flour
4 tablespoons red wine
400g canned tomatoes
1 tablespoon tomato puree
150ml stock
1 bay leaf
450g spaghetti
50g grated Parmesan cheese

Bolognese Sauce:

Heat the oil fry the chopped vegetables and the garlic crushed with salt than add the minced beef and fry until golden brown.

Dust with flour and stir well. Add the wine and bring to the boil. Break up the tomatoes with a wooden spoon and add them with their juice to the pan.

Add the tomato puree stock bay leaf and seasoning. Simmer covered over a gentle heat for 50 minutes stirring from time to time. Remove the bay leaf before serving.



Spaghetti

Meanwhile cook the spaghetti in plenty of boiling salted water for 10 to 12 minutes until tender. Drain.

To Serve:

Put Spaghetti in a hot dish and pour the Bolognese sauce over it. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese if desired

Spaghetti with Meatballs and Tomato Sauce

450g spaghetti

1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
Freshly grated Parmesan to serve

Meatball sauce:
1 thick slice of white bread
4 tbsp milk
340g lean minced beef
3 tbsp chopped parsley

3 cloves of garlic crushed
Salt and pepper
1 egg beaten
3 tbsp olive oil
1 1/2 x 400g tins chopped tomatoes
2 tbsp tomato puree
1/2 tsp sugar
1 glass of red wine or water

1 tsp dried oregano

First make the sauce. Remove crust from the bread and tear into small pieces. Soak in the milk for 10 minutes then add the minced beef half the parsley and half the garlic salt and pepper.

Mix well kneading with your hands to break up the bread. Add just enough egg to bind. Roll heaped teaspoonfuls of the mixture into small balls.

Heat the oil over a medium heat in a frying pan large enough to take



the meatballs in a single layer. Fry the meatballs briskly until browned all over.

Add all the remaining ingredients including the rest of the parsley and garlic. Stir gently to mix without breaking up the meatballs.

Cook until simmering then reduce heat to low and cover. Simmer for 30 minutes. Adjust seasoning adding a

hint more sugar if the sauce seems on the sharp side. Reheat when needed adding a splash of water if the sauce is too thick. Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil and add the spaghetti. Boil until al dente then drain. Return to the pan and toss with a tablespoonful of olive oil. Divide between four large bowls or plates and top with meatballs in their sauce.

Serves 4 generously

Struffoli (Honey Balls)

For Pastry

2 1/2 cups Flour
1/2 tsp Baking Powder
4 Eggs
1 Tbs. Oil
Vegetable Oil for Frying

For Honey Syrup

3/4 cup Honey
1/3 cup Sugar
1/3 cup Water
1 Tbs. Lemon Juice
Multi Colored Candy Decorettes



Spaghetti with Meatballs and Tomato Sauce

Bread

Sift flour and baking powder together. Make a well in the center of your flour. Beat eggs and oil together and pour into well. Stir with a fork until dough is soft and can be handled.

On floured board, knead until your dough is smooth and elastic.

Divide dough into ten equal pieces and cover with a towel. Roll the pieces one at a time, into an 18 inch string then cut into 36 small pieces. Place on a lightly floured cookie sheet.

In a heavy saucepan heat 3 inches of oil to 375 degrees on a deep fry thermometer. Fry a few at a time until golden brown. Drain on a paper towel.

Honey Syrup

In a heavy saucepan combine honey, sugar, water and lemon juice. Cook, stirring constantly over medium heat until the sugar dissolves. Reduce heat to low and continue to cook for 15 minutes uncovered and without stirring until thickened. Add the fried pastry and stir to coat evenly.

After coating the pastry pile them on a platter in a cone shape. Sprinkle with candy decorettes. (or powdered sugar)

DATE BREAD

(Makes One loaf)

1 cup chopped dates
1 1/2 cups sifted flour
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1 1/2 teaspoons soda
3 tablespoons butter
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup boiling strong coffee
Grated rind of 1 orange
1/4 cup rum
2 tablespoons cointreau or other
orange flavored liqueur
2 eggs, well beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/2 cup each: granulated, brown
sugar

Place dates, nuts, and butter in a large mixing bowl. Add coffee and rum; mix thoroughly and let stand for 20 minutes.

Combine eggs, vanilla, and sugars; stir into date mixture in thirds, alternately with flour sifted with soda and salt, and orange rind. Mix just enough to blend.

Pour into a greased, wax paper-lined, and again greased 9 by 5 by 3-inch loaf pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Turn out on cake rack. While cake is still hot, dribble cointreau on top.

- Recipe by Sandra Stallmann

RASPBERRY EGGNOG MOUSSE

10 ounces of raspberries thawed
Fresh squeezed lemon juice (this will enhance the flavor of the raspberries)
1 1/2 cups eggnog (any brand)
6 oz. vanilla pudding mix (not instant) (I use Watkins)
3/4 teaspoon nutmeg
2 teaspoons cornstarch

Delightful Recipes for the Holidays

The Annual 'Holiday Recipes Contest' for the year 2004 received entries as creative as never before. We had a great time trying them out and deciding upon the best recipes to be featured in this magazine. The contest for 2005 will begin on November 15th and all readers are encouraged to participate.

1/4 cup kahlua liquor (or for nonalcoholic use 1/4 of espresso coffee,liquid)
Sprinkle of cinnamon
1 pint of whipping cream

In a sauce pan combine raspberries, fresh squeezed lemon juice and cornstarch. Stir constantly over medium heat until thickened then cool.

In another sauce pan combine pudding, eggnog, nutmeg and mix. Cook until thickened. Remove from the heat and stir in kahlua. Cool then chill. Beat until smooth then fold in the whipped cream.

Spoon 1/2 mousse into dessert dish then top with raspberry sauce then mousse again. Garnish if desired with raspberries and mint sprigs if using kahlua in the recipe or if using espresso garnish with espresso beans and raspberries.

Sprinkle with a little cinnamon! Refrigerate.

If you don't want to use individual dessert dishes this looks beautiful in a trifle bowl!

Serves 6-8.

- Recipe by Lilly Petronka

YUMMY SWEET POTATO DISH

2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled, sliced and cooked. set aside in a bowl to cool
2 navel oranges, peeled, sliced set aside (i slice like pinwheels for decoration)

In a 2 qt pot put in:

1/2 teaspoon fresh grated orange peel
2/3 cup orange juice
1/3 cup brown sugar (golden or dark)
3 tablespoons butter
2 teaspoons arrowroot (for thickening)
1 teaspoon cinnamon
dash of nutmeg and a dash of pumpkin pie spice

Over medium heat blend the contents together melting and bring to a light boil. stir until thickened. In a baking dish layer orange slices and cooled sweet potatoes. pour the thickened sauce evenly over the dish.

Optional items:

Raisins, coconut, marshmallows, walnuts or pecans

Add additional items to taste and put into an oven set at 350

degrees for approx. 20 minutes or until heated through.

- *Recipe by Deidre Chaney*

Holiday Peppermint Bark

3 (3.5 oz. each) White Chocolate Bars, chopped
20 hard peppermint candies, unwrapped

LINE baking sheet with wax paper.

MICROWAVE chocolate in medium, microwave-safe bowl on MEDIUM-HIGH (70%) power for 1 minute; stir. Microwave at additional 10- to 20-second intervals, stirring until smooth.

PLACE peppermint candies in heavy-duty plastic bag. Crush candies using rolling pin or other heavy object. While holding strainer over melted chocolate, pour crushed candy into strainer. Shake to release all small candy pieces; reserve large candy pieces. Stir chocolate-peppermint mixture.

SPREAD mixture to desired thickness on prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle with reserved candy pieces; press in lightly. Let stand for about 1 hour or until firm. Break into pieces. Store in airtight container at room temperature.

- *Recipe by Michele Dipert*

Onion Casserole

2 big onions sliced and sauted in 1/2 cup of butter
2 cups grated swiss cheese

Mix and heat in small saucepan- 1 can of cream of chicken soup, 1/2 cup milk and 1 tsp. soy sauce.

Layer onions and swiss cheese in casserole dish (usually two layers). Top with buttered bread crumbs. Pour heated soup mixture over all of this and bake for about 30 mins. at 375 degrees.

- *Recipe by Cindy Benenhaley*

Graham Cracker Cookies

1 stick of butter*
1 stick of margarine*
2/3 cup of sugar (either white or brown, according to preferred taste)
1 cup of pecans, chopped
Graham crackers

Line pan with foil. Place crackers on cookie sheet. Boil first four ingredients (butter, margarine, sugar, and pecans) for two minutes. Pour over crackers. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes at 350 degrees. Cool for 5 minutes on cookie sheet. Then cool on wire rack. Break into pieces. Makes a tasty treat!

*Note: Some may prefer to use two sticks of butter, but, at least for my taste, I've found that one stick of butter and one stick of margarine works best.

- *Recipe by Roy E. Perry*

Rum Balls

5 c. vanilla wafers, finely crushed (I use the food processor to save time)
1 c. pecans or walnuts, crushed

1 c. powdered sugar
2 heaping tbsp. of cocoa
2 heaping tbsp. of honey
1/4 c. rum

Powered sugar, or a combination of crushed vanilla wafers, nuts, and powered sugar for rolling

In a small bowl, mix the rum and honey. Set aside. In a medium sized bowl, thoroughly mix the first four dry ingredients. Add the rum and honey to the dry ingredients and mix thoroughly. Shape into spoon sized balls. Roll in powdered sugar, or in a combination of wafers, nuts, and sugar. Store in a tightly-sealed container.

SUBSTITUTIONS

Light corn syrup for the honey.
Melted chocolate for the cocoa.

- *Recipe by Audrey Larson*

Butterscotch Chocolate Rice Krispie Surprise

Krispie Surprise

1/2 cup corn syrup
1 pkg. butterscotch chips
4 cups rice krispies
1 cup marshmallows

Melt corn syrup, butterscotch chips, and marshmallows, mix in rice krispies. Place in 9x13 pan chill in freezer for 20 min.

Sauce

1 cup of chocolate chips
1 tbsp cinnamon
1/4 butter
1 1/2 coconut

Melt all four in sauce pan, and spread over rice krispies.

- *Recipe by Laurie Lewicki*

Ooey Gooey Chocolate Peanut Butter Pie

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

½ cup crushed peanuts
½ cup flour
1 stick of margarine

Mix ingredients and pour into a greased 8x8 inch pan. Bake for 25 minutes.

¼ cup butter
¼ cup milk
1 envelope instant hot cocoa
¼ cup sugar
1 ½ cups light brown sugar

Melt ingredients in a pan and bring to a boil. Boil for 2 minutes.

Add 1 tsp vanilla extract and ¾ cup of creamy or crunchy peanut butter. Mix until well blended and pour immediately onto buttery crust. Mixture will melt into each other. Allow to cool completely. Serve alongside a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Makes 4 servings.

- Recipe by Tishanna Defoor

Spaghetti Pie

½ Pound of Spaghetti (Do not break spaghetti – boil whole)
1 Large Bag of Fresh Spinach (trimmed and cleaned)
6 Large Eggs – Beaten
1 Small Jar of Sun-dried Tomatoes (drained and chopped)
1 Can of Sliced Black Olives
1 Heaping Cup of Parmigiano Cheese
1 Bag of Sorrento Shredded Cheese
Tomato/Basil Flavored
1 Heaping Tablespoon of

chopped Garlic
1 Teaspoon of red pepper flakes (add more or less to taste)
1 Teaspoon of black pepper
1 Teaspoon of oregano
1 Teaspoon of parsley
½ Cup of Pine Nuts (toasted)

To Prepare:

Preheat oven at 450 degrees. Prepare a large Bundt Pan by spraying generously w/ PAM.

Cook the Spaghetti according to package. Place Spinach in a colander.

When Spaghetti is cooked, pour over colander w/ spinach and rinse w/ cold water and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl combine Eggs thru Parsley. Using your hands mix in Spinach, Spaghetti and Pine Nuts.

Take combined ingredients and place in Bundt Pan. Use your hands to evenly spread and level in pan.

Bake at 450 degrees for 1 hour and 30 minutes until top is golden and mixture is firm.

Shut oven and let stand inside for approximately 1 hour.

Slip out of Bundt Pan and let cool for another 20 to 30 minutes. Refrigerate by covering w/ paper towel and cling wrap.

Note:

To serve take out of refrigerator and let stand for 15 minutes cut like a cake and serve.

- Recipe by Susan Orrico

Happy Holidays Gourmet Hot Cocoa

Ingredients:

8 cups dry instant skim milk
4 ¾ cups powdered sugar (note: can use 1/2 Splenda & 1/2 icing sugar)
1 ¾ cups cocoa
1 1/2 cup Light non-dairy creamer
1 small package Low-fat instant chocolate pudding mix
1 box of 12 candy canes, pulverized

Method:

Combine above ingredients in a large mixing bowl and fold together well; or, place into a food processor and mix to make it fine powder.

To Serve:

Mix 2 tablespoons in a mug of hot water, top with marshmallows

-and/or-

Add a Candy Cane for a stir stick.

-or-

For Adults:

Prepare mug of hot chocolate, and add .5 oz. Peppermint Schnapps and stir

-or-

Mix 1 tablespoon into a cup of hot coffee for a very special pick-me-up-treat!

- Recipe by Terry Tribe Johnson



Truffles

The best gifts from your kitchen

A batch of truffles never fails to tempt gift-receivers at Christmas time, no matter what their age. Although, it is more than possible that you have your own time-tested, favorite recipe for making truffles, how about giving a twist to the usual chocolate truffles by adding some surprise flavors such as coffee or coconut or trying out a whole new version of Chocolate Truffles? Our recipes here will get you started.

Mocha Truffles

2 pkgs. semisweet chocolate chips (12 oz each)
1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened

3 Tbs. instant coffee granules
1 lb. dark chocolate confectionery coating
white confectionery coating

1. In a double boiler, or microwave-safe bowl, melt chocolate chips
2. Add cream cheese, coffee and 2 tsp. water
3. Mix well.
4. Chill until firm enough to shape into 1-inch balls.
5. Place on a waxed paper-lined sheet, and chill for 1-2 hours, or until firm.
6. In a double boiler or microwave-safe bowl, melt dark chocolate confectionery coating
7. Dip balls into chocolate and

place on waxed paper to harden.
8. If desired, melt white confectionery coating and drizzle over truffles.

Makes 60 pieces

Creamy Mocha Truffles

Tip: If the warmth of your hands makes the truffle mixture stick to them, rinse your hands with cold water, shake off the excess and continue rolling.

1/3 cup heavy (whipping cream)
1/2 stick (1/4 cup) butter or margarine (not spread), cut up
1 Tbs. instant espresso crystals
2 cups (12 oz) semisweet

chocolate chips
1/3 cup white-chocolate vanilla chips

For Decoration: white-chocolate (vanilla) chips and chocolate coffee beans and/or unsweetened cocoa powder and confectioners' sugar

1. Have ready a glass pie plate of 8 or 9-inch baking dish, cookie and paper candy cups.

2. Heat cream and butter in a small saucepan over medium heat, or in a medium bowl in microwave on high, until cream simmers and butter melts. Whisk in espresso crystals until completely dissolved.

3. Add semisweet and white-chocolate chips. Stir over low heat or microwave on medium stirring often, until melted and smooth.

4. Pour into pie plate or dish and chill 2 hours or until the consistency of soft fudge. (If mixture gets too firm, let stand at room temperature until the right consistency.)

5. Line cookie sheet with waxed paper. Roll heaping teaspoonfuls truffle mixture into 3/4-inch balls (they don't have to be perfectly round). Place on lined sheet and chill 1 hour or until firm.

6. To decorate with white chocolate and chocolate coffee beans: Melt white-chocolate chips according to package directions. Scrape into corner of a gallon-size zip top bag. Snip tip off corner and squeeze chocolate through opening over truffles. Top each with a coffee bean

while chocolate is wet.

Refrigerate until set. If coating with cocoa or confectioners' sugar; Place coating(s) on waxed paper. Roll truffles in coating to cover. Place a fresh sheet of waxed paper on cookie sheet, add truffles and refrigerate until firm.

7. Place each truffle in a paper candy cup. Refrigerate in a single layer in airtight containers.

Makes 36

Chocolate Coconut Truffles

16 ounces high-quality semisweet chocolate, preferably Belgian or French, plus 12 ounces additional chocolate for dipping truffles
1/2 cup heavy cream, warmed
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 stick (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter, softened and cut into chunks
2 tablespoons rim (optional)
3/4 cup shredded unsweetened coconut

Melt the 1 Pound of chocolate slowly in the top of a double boiler. Cool slightly, then combine with heavy cream and vanilla. Stir in the butter rum, if desired, and refrigerate until firm but still pliable, about 20 minutes.

Transfer to a pastry bag fitted with a large straight tip and pipe into teaspoon-size mounds on a sheet of waxed paper; alternately, spoon out the teaspoon-size mounds. refrigerate until firm. Working quickly to prevent melting, roll the chocolate into balls, then chill again until firm. In a food processor fitted with a

metal blade, pulse the coconut briefly to make it a little finer so that it will adhere better to the truffles. When firm, roll each truffle in the coconut, pressing firmly to make sure the coconut sticks. At this point you can refrigerate the truffles for as much as a day, until you are ready to dip them.

Melt the dipping chocolate in the top of a double boiler over hot, but not boiling, water. Using a wire dipping spoon or a regular teaspoon and your fingers, dip each truffle briefly into the melted chocolate. Remove to a cake rack set over a cookie sheet until dry, and refrigerate until firm. You may scrape up any chocolate that has dripped to be returned to the dipping pot.

The truffles will keep for a several weeks if refrigerated in covered container.

Makes 70 to 75 Truffles

Triple-Chocolate Mocha Truffles

12 ounces semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
1/2 of an 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened and cut up
4 teaspoons instant coffee crystals
1 teaspoon water
1-1/3 cups milk chocolate pieces (8 ounces)
2 tablespoons shortening
2 ounces white chocolate, coarsely chopped

In a heavy medium saucepan, melt semisweet chocolate over very low heat. Remove from heat and stir in the cream cheese until combined.

Stir together the coffee crystals and water. Add the coffee mixture to the chocolate-cream cheese mixture and stir until smooth. Cover and chill for about 2 hours or until firm.

Use 2 spoons to shape the mixture into 1-inch balls. Place on a waxed-paper-lined baking sheet or tray. Cover and chill for 1 to 2 hours or until firm.

In a heavy medium saucepan, melt milk chocolate and shortening over low heat, stirring until smooth. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature.

Use a fork to dip truffles into milk chocolate mixture, allowing excess chocolate to drip back into saucepan. Return truffles to baking sheet; chill for about 30 minutes or until firm.

In a heavy, small saucepan, melt the white chocolate over low heat, stirring until smooth. Drizzle over tops of truffles. Chill for a few minutes until set. Store in refrigerator. Let stand at room temperature for about 30 minutes before serving.

Makes about 30 truffles.

Coconut Rum Truffles

6 oz. chocolate chips
1 c. powdered sugar
1/4 tsp. rum flavoring
1 tsp. vanilla
1 tbsp. water
12 oz. vanilla chips or white almond bark
1 tbsp. butter flavored Crisco, not margarine
Flaked coconut, toasted

Melt chocolate chips; blend with powdered sugar, flavorings and water to form stiff dough. Should be able to handle - not sticky or

dry. Roll out flat and cut in small squares approximately 1 x 1 x 1 inch. Melt vanilla chips and Crisco together. Dip squares in melted vanilla chips and set on waxed paper. Immediately sprinkle on toasted coconut.

Makes about 20 truffles.

Chocolate Rum Truffles

14 ounces semisweet or bittersweet chocolate squares
1 cup heavy or whipping cream
5 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened, cut up (no substitutions)
2 tablespoons dark rum
2/3 cup shredded coconut
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa
1/2 cup finely chopped toasted walnuts or pecans
1/2 cup chocolate wafer crumbs

1. Line 2 cookie sheets with foil. Chop chocolate into uniform small pieces.

2. Bring cream just to boil in medium saucepan. Reduce heat to low; add chocolate and stir until completely smooth. Remove from heat and stir in butter and rum until butter melts. Pour into jelly roll pan and refrigerate until firm, 30 minutes.

3. Spoon chocolate by rounded teaspoonfuls onto prepared cookie sheets. With palms of hands, quickly shape into balls (they will be roughly shaped).

4. Place coconut, cocoa, nuts and wafer crumbs in each of 4 shallow bowls. Roll one quarter of the balls in each coating. Store truffles in airtight container and refrigerate up to 2 weeks.

Makes 6 dozen.

Quick Chocolate Truffles

8 oz. bittersweet chocolate
1 oz. unsweetened chocolate
1/2 cup whipping cream
1/4 cup unsalted butter
Cocoa powder

In a heavy saucepan on low heat, melt chocolates, cream, and butter, stirring occasionally. Pour into a small bowl; cool. Refrigerate 2 hours, until mixture hardens.

Using a melon baller, quickly form chocolate mixture into 3/4-inch balls. Refrigerate until cold. Roll balls in cocoa powder. Store in an airtight container.

Note: If you like you can add 3 tablespoons of rum or another liqueur or flavoring to the truffle mixture after the chocolates, cream, and butter have melted.

The truffles will keep up to 2 weeks in the refrigerator.

Makes about 32 truffles.

Giving Truffles as Gifts

Truffles make wonderful gifts. You can place each truffle in an individual paper cup and then place a batch of them in any container – a basket, a large coffee mug, a bowl etc. and wrap with cellophane in holiday prints. Tie a cheery red bow and you are done.

You can also fill them in a jar. Decorate the jar with holiday prints using markers. Add a gift tag to the neck of the jar with your greetings and message inside it. And of course, you can always pack them in an attractive box or tin tied with a wide red or plaid ribbon.

Shortbread

Recipes

Cookies & Party Foods

It is the luxurious taste of real butter that sets melt-in-your-mouth shortbread apart from the ordinary. At holiday time, most of us envision the traditional shortbread combination of butter with vanilla, granulated sugar and other key ingredients, blending together to create the world's best Christmas cookies. But what if you could combine these shortbread classic ingredients to savouries like cheese and herbs and sour cream, to make the world's best party foods too?

The Ultimate Melt-In-Your Mouth Shortbread

2 cups unsalted Gay Lea butter, softened (500 ml)
 1 cup fruit or granulated sugar (250 ml)
 1 tsp vanilla extract (5 ml)
 3 cups all purpose flour (750 ml)
 1 cup cornstarch or rice flour (250 ml)
 1 tsp salt (5 ml)

Pre-heat oven to 325°F (160°C). Using an electric mixer, beat Gay Lea butter until very creamy. Gradually beat in sugar, beating until very light and fluffy.

In a separate bowl, combine

flour, cornstarch and salt. In four additions, using a wooden spoon, stir into butter mixture, stirring well between each addition. Transfer batter to floured surface; knead gently for 3 minutes until shortbread holds together well. Divide into three balls. Wrap each ball with plastic wrap; flatten into discs and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Remove plastic wrap from one piece of dough. Flour work surface well and knead dough lightly for 30 seconds. Re-flour surface and top of dough. Roll out dough until 1/4" (about .5 cm) thick, constantly rotating to make sure it's not sticking to the surface and lightly dusting the top of the dough with flour.

Cut out rounds, using a fluted or round cookie cutter. Transfer to parchment paper-lined cookie sheets. Chill for 30 minutes or up to 8 hours. Repeat with remaining chilled dough. Re-roll scraps only once, dusting with flour as necessary.

Prick each cookie twice with tines of fork. Bake in centre of oven for about 15 minutes or until dough is firm and underside is lightly golden. Cool on pan on rack. Transfer to racks to cool completely.

Makes 4-1/2 dozen cookies.

Variations:

Lemon Ginger Shortbread: Add 3 tbsp (45 ml) finely grated lemon rind and 1/2 cup (50 ml) of finely chopped crystallized ginger along with flour mixture.

Orange Shortbread: Add 3 tbsp (45 ml) finely grated orange rind along with flour.

Roll Around Shortbread Ornaments



3/4 cup Unsalted Gay Lea butter, softened (175 ml)
 1 cup granulated sugar (250 ml)
 1 egg 1
 2tsp vanilla (10 ml)
 2-1/2 cups all purpose flour (625 ml)
 1/2 tsp baking powder (2 ml)
 1 cup miniature chocolate chips, chopped glaceed fruit, or chopped multi coloured candy coated chocolates (250 ml)

Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Using electric mixer, beat butter with sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla. In separate bowl, stir together flour and baking powder.

Using wooden spoon, gradually stir flour mixture into butter mixture, adding chips or candies at very end.

Using rounded tablespoonfuls of dough, shape into balls. Place on parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Chill for at least 1 hour or for up to 1 day. Bake in centre of oven for 10 minutes.

Cool for 3 minutes. Sift icing

sugar into shallow bowl. Immediately roll each cookie in icing sugar to coat well.

Makes about 5 dozen cookies.

Rosemary Swiss Shortbread Bites



- 1/2 cup Gay Lea butter, softened (125 ml)
- 1 tsp granulated sugar (5 ml)
- 1 cup shredded Swiss cheese (250 ml)
- 1 cup all purpose flour (250 ml)
- 2 tsp crushed dried rosemary (10 ml)
- 1/2 tsp paprika (2 ml)

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Using electric mixer, beat together Gay Lea butter and sugar. Beat in Swiss cheese. In separate bowl, mix together flour, rosemary and paprika. Using wooden spoon, stir flour mixture into butter mixture.

Divide dough in half. On lightly-floured surface, shape dough into two 7-inch (18 cm) logs. Cut into 1/2-inch (1 cm) coins. Transfer to parchment paper lined baking sheet. Bake in centre of oven for 14 to 16 minutes or until golden. Cool on pan on racks.

Makes about 36 shortbread.

Gay Lea has produced Shortbread Inspirations a

booklet featuring more than 10 sweet and savoury shortbread recipes, alongside innumerable baking tips and entertaining ideas.

Shortbread Inspirations is available now online at gayleafoods.com, or in stores where Gay Lea butter is sold.

Sensational Shortbread Cookies

Prep Time: 20 minutes, Total Time: 3 steps, 40 minutes

- Ingredients:
- 1 cup butter, softened
 - 1/2 cup superfine sugar
 - 2 cups flour
 - 1/2 tsp grated orange peel
 - 1 Terry's Chocolate Orange, separated into 20 segments, cut in half.

1. PREHEAT oven to 350°F (180°C). Beat butter and sugar in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until light and fluffy. Gradually add flour, beating until well blended after each addition.



2. ROLL dough into 20 balls,

each about 1-1/2 inches in diameter; flatten with palm of hand. Top each with 1 chocolate piece; wrap dough around chocolate to completely enclose chocolate. Place, 2 inches apart, on ungreased baking sheets. Flatten slightly.

3. BAKE 20 min. Remove from oven. Immediately place 1 of the remaining chocolate pieces on each cookie. Transfer cookies to wire racks; cool 10 min. before serving.

Makes 20 cookies or 20 servings, 1 cookie each.

Source: www.kraftcanada.com

- News Canada

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Chocolate Yule Log with Marzipan Snowman

A very easy to make, traditional Yule Log recipe using store-bought Swiss rolls. Makes a terrific centerpiece on the dinner table or a great entrée for a dessert party.

Delight your guests by placing a marzipan snowman with each log serving!

Ingredients

For the Yule Log:

2 Chocolate Swiss Rolls (store bought)
6 Ounces of Margarine
Chocolate icing sugar
White icing sugar to dust

For the Snowmen:

2 pound sweet Marzipan
Liquid food color (light blue and yellow)

Making the Yule Log

Place one swiss roll onto a cake board. Cut the other swiss roll into half diagonally, and place one half either side of the first swiss roll.

In a bowl place the soften margarine, gradually mix in the icing sugar until the margarine taste has gone.

Secure the swiss rolls together with a little of the butter cream, and spread the remaining butter cream over the swiss rolls until well coated.

Use a back of a fork to make a log effect pattern and dust with icing sugar to give a snow like effect add decorations for the finishing touch.

Making the Snowmen

Roll the marzipan into small

balls. If desired, roll the balls in confectioners sugar to give a “frosted” effect. Using a toothpick as a ‘spine,’ stack the balls to make the snowman.

Alternatively, you can use a snowman mould to make the snowmen. Now tint some marzipan with light blue color (two drops should be enough for half pound).

Roll the colored marzipan with a rolling pin and cut into a small disc. Now mould the disc with your fingers to make a snowman cap.

Similarly, cut a small strip from the colored marzipan to make the snowman’s scarf. Use some yellow colored marzipan to make the snowman’s nose. Make his eyes and buttons with m&m’s.

To serve, cut a piece of the Yule Log and place in a plate along with a snowman. Decorate with a sprig of Holly leaf for that special holiday effect!



Sweet Treats for Holidays

Whip up these delightfully sweet treats that will have kids as well as adults asking for more. And if you manage to save some of them from the ever-willing crowd of little 'helpers' in the kitchen, place them in pretty baskets and tins, wrap with cellophane and bows and give as gifts.

Healthy Granola Bars



1 cup butter, softened 250 ml
 1 cup packed brown sugar 250ml
 1/2 cup corn syrup 125 ml
 3 cups Robin Hood or Old Mill Quick Oats 750 ml
 1 cup Robin Hood All-Purpose Flour 250 ml
 1/2 tsp baking soda 2 ml
 1tsp ground cinnamon 5 ml
 1cup crisp rice cereal 250 ml
 3/4 cup dried cranberries 175 ml
 3/4 cup chopped dried apricots 175 ml
 1/4 cup each sunflower, flax and sesame seeds 50 ml

1. PREHEAT oven to 350°F (180°C). Grease a 15"x 10"x 1" (37 cm x 25 cm x 2.5 cm) jellyroll pan.

2. HEAT butter and brown sugar together in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring until smooth. Stir in corn syrup.

3. COMBINE remaining ingredients in large bowl. Pour sugar mixture on top. Mix well, until all ingredients are moistened. Press firmly into prepared pan.

4. BAKE at 350°F (180°C) for 20 to 25 minutes, or until light golden. Cool completely then cut into bars.

Preparation Time: 20 minutes,
 Baking Time: 25 minutes,
 Makes: about 21 bars, Freezing: excellent

Tips:

- Replace all-purpose flour with Whole Wheat Flour.
- Under bake for a chewy texture. Bake longer for crisper bars.
- Vary the dried fruit and seeds to suit your own tastes, keeping the total amount the same as in the recipe.

Savoury Corn Muffins

1 cup Robin Hood All Purpose Flour 250 ml
 1 cup Purity corn meal 250 ml
 3 tbsp granulated sugar 45 ml
 2 tsp baking powder 10 ml
 1/2 tsp salt 2 ml
 1/2 tsp dried basil leaves 2 ml
 1 egg



1 cup milk 250 ml
 1/4 cup Crisco Vegetable or Canola Oil 50 ml
 1 cup cooked corn kernels 250 ml
 1/3 cup chopped black olives 75 ml
 1/4 cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes 50 ml

1. PREHEAT oven to 400°F (200°C). Grease muffin cups or line them with muffin papers. 2. COMBINE first 6 dry ingredients.

3. BEAT egg, milk and oil in large bowl. Add dry ingredients, mixing lightly just until blended. Stir in corn, olives and sun-dried tomatoes. Spoon into prepared muffin cups, filling about 3/4 full.

4. BAKE in centre of preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes or until toothpick inserted in centre comes out clean.

Preparation Time: 20 minutes,
 Baking Time: 20 minutes,
 Makes: 10 large or 12 medium muffins, Freezing: excellent

sugar into shallow bowl. Immediately roll each cookie in icing sugar to coat well.

Makes about 5 dozen cookies.

Old Fashioned Oatmeal Raisin Cookies



1 cup Crisco Golden Shortening 250 mL
 1 cup packed brown sugar 250 mL
 2 eggs
 2 tbsp water 30 mL
 3 cups Robin Hood or Old Mill Quick Oats 750 mL
 1 cup Robin Hood All-Purpose Flour 250 mL
 1 tsp baking soda 5 mL
 1/2 tsp salt 2 mL
 1 1/2 cups raisins 375 mL

1. **PREHEAT** oven to 375°F (190°C).

2. **CREAM** shortening, sugar, eggs and water in a large bowl on medium speed of electric mixer until light and creamy, about 2 minutes.

3. **COMBINE** oats, flour, baking soda and salt. Add to creamed mixture on low speed mixing

until blended.

4. **STIR** in raisins. Drop dough by tablespoonfuls onto ungreased baking sheet.

5. **BAKE** at 375°F (190°C) for 8 to 12 minutes or until light golden. Cool 5 minutes on sheet then remove to wire rack and cool completely.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes,
 Baking Time: 12 minutes,
 Makes: about 4 dozen cookies,
 Freezing: excellent

Tips:

- Replace raisins with your favourite chopped dried fruit.
- Replace all-purpose flour with Robin Hood Whole Wheat Flour.
- Under bake for chewy cookies; bake a little longer for crisp ones

Goopy Pecan Tartlets



Pastry:

1 cup all purpose flour 250 mL
 1/4 cup Go South! pecans 50 mL

1 tbsp granulated sugar 15 mL
 1/4 tsp each salt and cinnamon 1 mL
 1/2 cup cold unsalted butter, cubed 125 mL
 4 oz cold cream cheese, cubed 100 mL
 3 tbsp cream 45 mL

Filling:

1/2 cup packed brown sugar 125 mL
 1/2 cup corn syrup 125 mL
 1 egg
 2 tbsp butter, softened 30 mL
 1 tsp each vanilla and vinegar 5 mL
 2 tsp orange zest 10 mL
 48 Go South! pecan halves, toasted 48
 1/2 cup melted bittersweet chocolate 125 mL

In food processor, blend together flour, pecans, sugar, salt and cinnamon until finely ground. Pulse in cubed butter and cream cheese until pea-sized crumbs form. Add cream and pulse just until dough comes together.

Divide dough in half and flatten each slightly to form a disc. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or up to 2 days. In medium bowl, whisk brown sugar, corn syrup, egg, butter, vanilla, vinegar and orange zest together until smooth. Set aside.

Roll out dough on lightly floured surface to 1/8-inch [3 mm] thickness. Use 3-inch [7.5 cm] round cookie cutter, cut out 12 circles, re-rolling scraps. Press gently into 12 tartlet or mini muffin pans. Repeat with remaining pastry. Place a pecan half in the bottom of each shell.

Spoon filling over pecans almost to edge of shells.

Bake in bottom third of a 400°F [200°C] oven until filling is bubbling and pastry is golden, about 8 to 10 minutes. Let sit one minute before removing tarts from pan with spatula. Cool on baking rack; drizzle with chocolate before serving.

Makes about 48 tartlets.

Delicious Pumpkin Pie



Crust:

1 envelope ROBIN HOOD Flaky Pie Crust Mix or CRISCO No Fail Pastry for single-crust pie

Filling:

2 eggs
 1 can (14 oz/398 mL) pumpkin purée
 1 cup packed brown sugar (250 mL)
 1 tsp ground cinnamon (5 mL)
 1/2 tsp salt (2 mL)
 1/2 tsp ground ginger (2 mL)
 1 cup light (10%) cream or evaporated milk (250 mL)
 Whipped cream to garnish

Crust:

1. PREHEAT oven to 450°F (230°C).

2. PREPARE pastry according to package directions for unbaked 9-inch (23cm) pie shell using half the dough. Save remaining half of pastry for another pie.

Filling:

3. In large bowl, whisk eggs well. Add remaining ingredients, stirring with a whisk until well blended. Pour into prepared pie shell.

4. BAKE on lower oven rack (one rack below centre) at 450°F (230°C) for 15 minutes, then reduce temperature to 350°F (180°C) and bake for 30 to 35 minutes longer or just until knife inserted in centre comes out clean. Cool completely before slicing. Serve with whipped cream.

Preparation Time: 40 minutes

Baking Time: 50 minutes

Makes: 1 pie, about 6 servings

Freezing: not recommended

Tips:

- For an attractive presentation sprinkle a little candied ginger on the whipped cream.

- Replace cinnamon and ginger with 1 1/2 tsp (7 mL) pumpkin pie spice.

- Recipe can be doubled for 2 pies.

- Be sure to use pure pumpkin purée not pumpkin pie filling.

Chocolate Cranberry Fudge Cake



For cake:

2/3 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
 1/2 cup butter or margarine
 1 ounce unsweetened chocolate
 1 cup Ocean Spray Whole Berry Cranberry Sauce
 1/2 cup sugar
 2 large eggs
 1 tsp vanilla
 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
 1/2 tsp baking powder

For glaze:

1/4 cup whipping cream
 1/2 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
 1/4 cup Ocean Spray
 Jellied Cranberry Sauce

DIRECTIONS:

Cake:

Heat oven to 325°F(160°C). Line an 8-inch (20 cm) round cake pan with foil. Coat foil with cooking spray. Dust pan with flour.

Microwave chocolate chips, butter and unsweetened

chocolate in large microwave-safe bowl on high for 1 minute. Stir until smooth. Stir in cranberry sauce and sugar, mixing well. Add eggs, vanilla, flour and baking powder, stirring until well mixed. Pour batter in prepared pan. Bake for 40 minutes or until center is set and a toothpick comes out clean. Cool in pan 30 minutes. Refrigerate one hour.

Glaze:

Microwave cream and chocolate chips together in medium microwave-safe bowl for 1 minute on high. Stir until smooth. Add cranberry sauce, mixing well.

Turn cake out onto flat serving plate. Remove foil. Spread glaze over top allowing some to drip down sides of cake. Chill about 1 hour. Store at room temperature.

Makes 10 servings.

Cranberry Brie Appetizer Bites

3/4 cup Ocean Spray Whole Berry Cranberry Sauce
1 tsp lemon juice
1/2 tsp finely shredded lemon peel
24 wonton wrappers
1 8 ounce brie round

Place cranberry sauce in a saucepan. Cook over medium heat until hot, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat; stir in lemon juice and lemon peel.

Meanwhile, heat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray 24 miniature muffin cups with nonstick



cooking spray. Press 1 wonton wrapper gently into each sprayed cup, allowing ends to extend above cups. Spray edges of wonton wrappers with nonstick cooking spray. Bake for 12 to 14 minutes.

Cut brie into 24 cubes, about 3/4-inch each. Place 1 cube in each cup; place sheet of aluminum foil over each pan to prevent excessive browning. Return to oven. Bake 3 to 5 minutes longer or until brie is soft. Remove from oven; top each with about 1 teaspoon (5 mL) cranberry mixture.

Makes 24 appetizers.

Cranberry Brie en Croûte

Prep time: 10 minutes.
Cook time: 30 to 35 minutes.

Makes 10 servings.

1 pkg Ziggy's Whole (450 g)
Double Cream Brie
1/4 cup PC Cranberry (50 mL)
Orange Sauce

1 sheet PC Butter Puff (half 450 g Pastry, thawed pkg)
1 egg beaten
1 PC French Baguette

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).

2. On top of baking sheet, unroll pastry and parchment so parchment lines baking sheet. Carefully cut away and discard top rind of Brie, about 1/8-inch (3 mm); place Brie in centre of puff pastry. Top Brie with sauce. Bring one corner of pastry up over Brie and brush this section of pastry with egg. Bring opposite corner of pastry up to overlap first corner; brush with egg. Bring remaining two corners of pastry up over top, overlapping sides. Gently press pastry overlap to seal in Brie. Brush whole package with egg. With sharp knife, make four 1/2-inch (1 cm) vents in top of pastry.

3. Bake in centre of oven for 20 to 25 minutes or until pastry is golden. Let stand for 10 minutes.



4. Garnish with orange slices and cranberries, if desired. Serve with sliced baguette. Serve with additional cranberry sauce, if desired.

- News Canada



Down-home Texas Pecan Pie with Bourbon Laced Whipped Cream

Every family will love this easy-to-make Pecan pie for dessert this Christmas.

You can also serve with a scoop of vanilla ice-cream and hot chocolate syrup but serving it with bourbon laced whipped cream will make it a true Southern-style treat.

PECAN PIE

Ingredients:

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup dark corn syrup
- 1 cup white sugar
- 2 tablespoons sifted all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups chopped pecans (Leave some pecans halved)
- 1 unbaked 9 inch deep pie shell

Directions:

1. In a medium-sized bowl, stir together eggs, syrup, sugar, flour, and vanilla until well blended.
2. Stir in pecans.
3. Pour mixture into pastry shell.
4. Bake in a pre-heated 350 degree F (175 degree C) oven 50 to 55 minutes, until a knife inserted half-way between center and edge comes out clean.
5. Cool and serve with whipped cream.

Variations:

*Add 4 ounces sweet baking chocolate and reduce sugar to 1/2 cup.

* Add 2-3 tablespoons Jack Daniels liquor or Amaretto liqueur

Makes

1 - 9 inch pie

Note: This pie can also be baked in small fluted foil pans to make 8 to 10 individual pies. Or make tiny individual pies in muffin tins.

BOURBON LACED WHIPPED CREAM

Ingredients:

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 teaspoons confectioners' sugar
- 1 tablespoon bourbon

Directions:

1. Beat or whisk the cream, sugar, and bourbon until soft peaks form.
2. Transfer to a serving bowl and serve with pie, if desired.

* * *

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O' Christmas Tree



This beautifully decorated Christmas tree was chosen best among all the entries received for the Dot Com Women 'Christmas Tree Decorating' contest. This tree has been decorated by Linda Slater who lives in Naples, Florida in the USA.

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