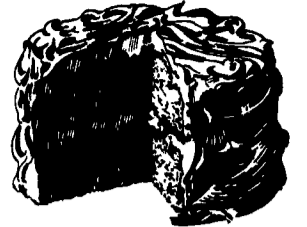


Home On The Range



Food For Entertaining And Gift Giving

Parties to prepare, finger foods to take along, and food gifts to send. These are the recipes we need again and again.

Here are some special favorites from readers and from the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program that will help make your holiday baking easier and more enjoyable.

The closer you get to Christmas Day, the busier you'll get. Many of these recipes can be made ahead of time so start early.

Make an extra batch to give to a friend or to store in your freezer for last-minute guests.

If you give food gifts, package it creatively. A basket lined with a festive napkin or a colorful tin or holiday bag lined with red or green tissue paper is a good choice. Or deliver your gift in the container in which it is made, tied together with ribbons and bows. Write out the recipe on a fancy card and tie it to the package with a ribbon. Make sure you include instructions on reheating and storing.

RICOTTA BALLS

1/2 pound butter
2 cups sugar
3 eggs
1 pound ricotta cheese
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 teaspoon salt
4 1/2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
Cream together butter and sugar. Add eggs, ricotta cheese, vanilla, and salt. Sift together flour, baking soda and baking powder. Add dry ingredients to mixture; mix well in electric mixer. Drop on cookie sheets. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes. Make approximately 5 1/2 dozen. Frost with icing.

Ricotta Balls Icing:

1 pound confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 heaping tablespoon shortening
Pinch salt
Few drops milk for smooth consistency

Frost cookies when cool. If desired, separate icing and add food coloring. Great Christmas cookie — soft and delicious.

Jennie Maulfair
Lebanon

ALMOND CHRISTMAS BALLS

1 cup butter
2 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup confectioners' sugar
1 cup ground almonds
1 teaspoon vanilla
Candied cherries
Cream butter; add sugar. Add remaining ingredients except cherries. Mix well. Shape into a small ball using a teaspoon of dough. Place a cherry in the center and roll into a ball. Bake on greased cookie sheet at 325 degrees for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and roll in confectioners' sugar. Makes 4 dozen cookies.

Ruth Ann Zimmerman
Romulus, N.Y.

CRUSTLESS ITALIAN TARTS

3 eggs, beaten
1 pound ricotta cheese
1 cup shredded Provolone cheese
1/2 cup buttermilk baking mix
1/2 cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes
1/4 cup dairy sour cream
1/4 cup butter, melted
2 tablespoons chopped chives
1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning
1/4 teaspoon pepper
Chives, if desired
Sun-dried tomatoes, if desired
Place all ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Mix until well combined. Fill buttered microwaveable muffin cups three-fourths full. Microwave at 50 percent power 6 to 7 minutes, or until knife inserted near center comes out clean. Turn after half the cooking time. Cool in pan 10 minutes. Carefully remove and cool completely on wire rack. Garnish with chives and tomatoes. Refrigerate, wrapped in plastic wrap, up to 5 days. To reheat, microwave at 50 percent power approximately 45 seconds per tart.

Tarts may be frozen up to 1 month. Thaw in refrigerator overnight.

To bake in oven, preheat oven to 375 degrees. Fill buttered 2 1/4 -inch muffin cups three-fourths full. Bake 20 to 25 minutes. Cool in pan 10 minutes. Carefully remove and cool completely on wire rack.



For gifts or to serve guests, these star-shaped Herb-Cheddar Biscuits, Blue Cheese Walnut Bread, and Crustless Italian Tarts are sure to please your friends and family.

ENGLISH TOFFEE BARS

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Grease 13x9x2-inch pan. To one half basic dough, mix 1/2 cup brown sugar and 1/2 cup quick oats. Dough will be crumbly. Pat firmly and evenly into prepared pan. Bake 15 minutes or until no imprint remains when lightly touched with finger. Remove from oven; immediately sprinkle 1/2 cup semi-sweet chocolate pieces evenly over crust. Place baking sheet over pan so contained heat will soften chocolate pieces. Spread softened chocolate over crust; sprinkle with 1/2 cup chopped nuts. While warm, cut into 1 1/2 -inch diamond shapes. Makes 2 1/2 dozen.

Contributor writes: The English Toffee Bars and Greek clove crescents are two of 11 special holiday recipes to bake from one basic dough. They have been our favorites for at least 35 years.

Louise Graybeal
Renick, W.V.

MACADAMIA NUT FUDGE

2 cups sugar
2 squares unsweetened chocolate
Dash salt
1 cup light cream or half and half
2 tablespoons light corn syrup
1/4 cup butter

Butter loaf pan; set aside. Combine sugar, chocolate, and salt in 3-quart mixing bowl or casserole. Stir in cream and corn syrup; add butter. Microwave, covered, on high 5 minutes. Mix well. Microwave, uncovered, 10 to 14 minutes, or until soft ball stage is reached. Cool mixture without stirring to 120 degrees on edges. Add vanilla and nuts. Beat until mixture is thick and creamy and starts to lose its shine. Quickly spread in pan. (If fudge is too thick to spread, stir in a few drops of cream). Cool completely. Cut into 1-inch square pieces. Store in airtight container in cool, dry place for up to two weeks.

BLUE CHEESE WALNUT BREAD

3 1/2 cups buttermilk baking mix
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup finely crumbled blue cheese
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1 tablespoon chives
1 1/2 cups milk
1 egg, beaten

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine baking mix and sugar in large mixing bowl. Stir in cheese, nuts, and chives. Combine milk and egg. Stir into dry mixture just until blended. Spoon batter into four buttered 5 1/4 x 3 1/4 -inch loaf pans. Bake 40 to 45 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes. Remove from pan and cool completely on wire rack.

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Featured Recipe

Whenever a recipe calls for whipping cream you know it's special. The latest collection of recipes from American Dairy Association brings together the best whipping cream creations you'll find — from creamy pasta entrees and tender biscuits to flavored whipped cream toppers. Tips for whipping cream also are included. To order send a stamped, self-addressed business-size envelope to: Whipping Cream Tips and Recipes, Middle Atlantic Milk Marketing Association, P.O. Box 19464, Towson, MD 21206.

Here is a recipe from the brochure.

Whipped Cream Cake 12 servings

2 cups sifted cake flour
1 cup granulated sugar, divided
2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup whipping cream
1/2 cup water
1 teaspoon almond extract
3 egg whites, at room temperature
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
1/2 cup red raspberry or strawberry preserves
Confectioners' sugar

Preheat oven to 350° F. Butter and flour two 9-inch round cake pans. Sift together flour, 3/4 cup granulated sugar, baking powder and salt; set aside. Beat whipping cream on high speed until stiff peaks form, scraping bowl occasionally. Gradually add water and almond extract, stirring until smooth. With clean beaters, beat egg whites and cream of tartar until foamy. Gradually beat in 1/2 cup granulated sugar until stiff but not dry. Fold egg white mixture into whipped cream mixture. Sprinkle flour mixture, a few tablespoons at a time, over whipped cream mixture, folding in by hand until blended. Pour into prepared pans and bake 25 to 30 minutes. Cool in pans 10 minutes. Remove from pans and cool completely on wire racks. To assemble, place 1 layer on serving plate; spread with preserves. Top with second layer and sprinkle lightly with confectioners' sugar.

Serving size: 1/12 of cake

Calories per serving: 238

Protein 3 g, fat 8 g, carbohydrates 40 g

Calcium 58 mg, riboflavin (B₂) .14 mg

Recipe Topics

If you have recipes for the topics listed below, please share them with us. We welcome your recipes, but ask that you include accurate measurements, a complete list of ingredients and clear instructions with each recipe you submit. Send your recipes to Lou Ann Good, Lancaster Farming, P.O. Box 609, Ephrata, PA 17522. Recipes should reach our office one week before publishing date.

December

25- Christmas Dinner

January

1- Soups & Stews
8- Breakfast Favorites
15- Pasta Dishes