

Home on the Range

Christmas Dinner Ideas

Christmas dinner is probably the most important meal that you prepare all year. You'll want it to be a show-stopper.

You can try traditional recipes, but how about trying something different — perhaps a bit more elegant.

An easy-to-prepare beef tenderloin roast makes a spectacular holiday meal. Roasting requires only three pieces of equipment: a shallow open roasting pan, a rack for the pan, and a meat thermometer. Once in the oven, roasts don't need much attention so there's ample time to prepare other meal components or to sip a cup of holiday eggnog with family and friends.

In this elegant but easy holiday recipe, a beef tenderloin roast is rubbed with a savory combination of garlic, basil, rosemary, and black pepper — all standard cupboard ingredients that come together to make a special combination. After rubbing, the roast is placed on the rack in a shallow open roasting pan (without covering it) and cooked until the meat thermometer registers 140 degrees for medium-rare or 155 degrees for medium doneness. Make sure to insert the thermometer into the thickest part of the roast, not resting in fat.

One important thing to remember about roasts is that they should be removed from the oven prior to reaching the desired internal temperatures. Roasts need a standing time before you carve them (this allows the juices to set up and makes them easier to carve). During this time the temperature will continue to rise about 5 degrees.

While the tenderloin roasts, you can make Holiday Rice. French-style green beans, chopped red bell pepper, and slivered almonds give this cooked rice dish a festive flavor and flair. Serve the meal with a salad of mixed greens tossed with a tangy vinaigrette dressing. For dessert, offer guests a sliver of chocolate cake or truffles and coffee.

BABY CAKES

BUTTER SHORTBREAD

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup butter, softened
½ cup sugar
Colored sugar, sprinkles or colored jimmies, if desired
Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Place flour, butter, and sugar in a heavy-duty plastic zip-type food storage bag. Securely seal bag. Knead bag with hands to blend ingredients thoroughly. Open bag; scrape dough together with rubber spatula to remove from bag. (If necessary, refrigerate to firm dough for ease in handling). Shape into 1-inch diameter balls. Place 2 inches apart on unbuttered cookie sheets. Flatten to approximately ¼-inch thickness with a fork, cookie stamp or by pressing with fingers. Sprinkle with sugar, sprinkles or jimmies. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until lightly browned around edges. Let stand on cookie sheet 5 minutes. Remove from oven; transfer to wire racks. Cool completely.

Variation: Pat dough into two 7-inch diameter cookies on unbuttered cookie sheet. If desired, sprinkle with mini semisweet chocolate chips, colored sugar, sprinkles or jimmies. Bake at 325 degrees 35 to 40 minutes or until lightly browned around the edges. While still warm, cut each into 8 pie-shaped wedges. Let stand on cookie sheet 10 minutes. Transfer wedges to wire racks. Cool completely on wire racks.

Stephanie Goodheart
Armstrong Co. Dairy Princess

PUMPKIN DROP BISCUITS

1 cup whole wheat flour
1 cup unbleached flour
2 tablespoons sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder
½ cup cooked mashed pumpkin
1 cup nonfat buttermilk

Combine the flours, sugar, and baking powder, and stir well. In a separate bowl, combine the pumpkin and buttermilk, and stir until blended. Add the pumpkin mixture to the flour mixture, and stir just until the dry ingredients are moistened.

Coat a baking sheet with non-stick cooking spray. Drop heaping tablespoonfuls of dough onto the sheet, placing the biscuits one-half-inch apart for soft biscuits, or 1½-inches apart for crusty biscuits.

Bake at 375 degrees for about 18 minutes, or until lightly browned. Transfer to a serving plate, and serve hot.

B.J. Light
Lebanon



For an easy and elegant holiday meal, serve Herbed Tenderloin and Holiday Rice. While the beef tenderloin cooks, there's time to prepare rice accompaniment.

SALAD IN THE PINK

20-ounce can crushed pineapple
6-ounces strawberry gelatin
16-ounces whole berry cranberry sauce

1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
3 tablespoons lemon juice
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
2 cups sour cream
½ cup chopped pecans

Drain pineapple; reserve juice. Combine reserved rice, 1 cup water and gelatin in saucepan. Heat to boiling, stirring to completely dissolve gelatin. Remove from heat. Stir cranberry sauce, lemon peel and juice, and nutmeg into gelatin mixture. Chill until slightly thickened. Fold sour cream, pecans, and pineapple into cranberry mixture. Pour into 2-quart mold or 13x9-inch pan. Chill until firm.

HOLIDAY RICE

2 tablespoons butter
¼ cup chopped onion
¼ cup coarsely chopped red bell pepper

1 clove garlic, crushed
9-ounce package frozen French-style green beans, defrosted, drained

3 cups hot cooked rice
½ cup slivered almonds, toasted

In large skillet, heat butter over medium heat until melted. Add onion, bell pepper, and garlic. Cook 5 minutes or until tender, stirring occasionally. Add beans; continue cooking 2 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Reduce heat to low. Stir in rice and almonds; cook 2 minutes or until heated through, stirring occasionally. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

CHRISTMAS DELIGHT BALLS

½ cup butter
1 egg
1 cup sugar
1 cup chopped dates or raisins
3 cups rice crispy cereal
½ teaspoon vanilla
½ cup nuts
Dash salt

Cook first four ingredients in a saucepan for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Cool slightly, add remaining ingredients, and mix well. Form into small walnut-size balls and roll in confectioners' sugar. For variety, color some flaked coconut red and some green to roll the balls into.

Melissa Burdick
Crawford Co. Dairy Maid

NO-BAKE FRUIT CAKE

1 box graham crackers
1 box dark raisins
1 box white raisins
8-ounce package dates, chopped
1 box figs, chopped
1 fruit cake mix, candied
1 pound English walnuts, chopped

1 ½ package mini-marshmallows
1 package maraschino cherries
1 can condensed milk

Crush graham crackers and mix together all ingredients. Grease a tube cake pan and press mixture into pan. Chill. Slice to serve.

Josephine Matenus
Dallas

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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 24- Fireside Treats

31- Best Breakfast Ideas

January 7- Your Favorite Soup

14- Bread and Bread Rolls



Featured Recipe

Armstrong Dairy Princess Stephanie Goodheart and Crawford County Dairy Maid Melissa Burdick want to remind readers to use real dairy products in holiday recipes. Here are two recipes from Melissa.

CHEESE FUDGE

½ pound Velveeta cheese
½ pound butter
½ cup cocoa powder
½ teaspoon vanilla
2 pounds confectioners' sugar
½ cup nuts (optional)

Heat cheese and butter until soft enough to combine. Add remaining ingredients. Stir and knead until thoroughly mixed. Spread in a large flat buttered pan and allow to cool and become firm. Cut in 1-inch squares.

Yield 3 pounds.

CREAM CHEESE SPRITZ

1 cup butter
3-ounces cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
1 egg yolk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups flour
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon baking powder

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cream butter and cream cheese in a large mixing bowl. Gradually add sugar and beat until well blended. Beat in egg yolks and vanilla. Combine flour, salt, and baking powder. Gradually add to creamed mixture. Fill cookie press. Use attachment to form cookies on an unbuttered cookie sheet. Bake 10 to 14 minutes. Cool completely on wire racks.

Note: Before baking, dough may be tinted. Sprinkle with colored sugar or a cinnamon-sugar mixture or decorate cookies with frosting after baking.