

Holiday Gifts from the Kitchen

COOKING WITH LOVE

VOLUME ONE

BY RENEE POTTLE

SEED TO PANTRY, A DIVISION OF HESTIA'S HEARTH LLC

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HOLIDAY GIFTS FROM THE KITCHEN

COOKING WITH LOVE

By Renee Pottle

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Volume One

ALSO BY RENEE POTTLE

I Want My Dinner Now! – Simple Meals for Busy Cooks (2004)

The Happy Lunchbox – 4 Weeks of Menus and Recipes (2005)

225 Ways to Add Heart Healthy Foods to Your Diet (2007)

The New Contented Heart Cookbook – Cholesterol Lowering Recipes (2009)

Homestyle Favorites Made Meatless – Cooking with Meat Substitutes (2010)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Renee Pottle is a Home Economist, health educator, author and cooking coach. She has written several cookbooks and previously was a regular contributor to Pillsbury Fast and Healthy Magazine. Renee is passionate about cooking and healthy nutrition and believes the best gifts come from the heart – and the kitchen.

Renee and her husband make their home in the beautiful Mid-Columbia Valley of Washington state.

You can find her online at SeedtoPantry.com where she writes about canning/preserving and food self-sufficiency, and also at HestiasKitchen.com where she writes about the heart-healthy Mediterranean diet.

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Introduction

Is there anything that says Happy Holidays better than a gift lovingly prepared by you? Even in this age of “got-to-have” electronic gadgets and glittery do-dads, home created gifts are still sought after. It is the very imperfection of a home-made gift that makes it perfect. Children, familiar with the monotony of packaged, standard sized and shaped cookies, delight in irregular sized homemade cookies. Moms and Dads are once more swept back to their youth when you make Nana’s home preserved apple rum butter recipe, ready to spread on fresh apple oatmeal bread, neither of which can be found in any grocery store. These are gifts that say, I love you enough to share my best with you. They are the gifts that help tie family traditions together, generation after generation.

Gifts from the kitchen are also perfect for those last-minute items on your list. No more slogging through the mall looking for an inexpensive but appreciated gift. Now you can deliver a jar of unique pickles to your hairdresser or a box of penuche to the mailman. Or create an herb mix from your garden for your son’s teacher, and bake a collection of adorable mini-breads for the daycare provider. All prepared in the comfort of your own home, all greatly appreciated for their quality and freshness.

So tie-on that apron, grab a bowl and your favorite mixing spoon, and become the most popular gift-giver in the family – today!

Happy Holidays

2013

Herbs, Oils, and Vinegars

Sometimes the littlest touches make the biggest impact. Herb mixes can turn a ho-hum pizza or an everyday bean dish into a delight for the senses. Spicy dry rubs give unique flavor to steaks, pork chops, chicken and fish. Homemade tea mixes turn an afternoon “cuppa” into something extra special. Flavored oils and vinegars make salads and breads sing, and are all welcomed under the tree.



WINE SEASONING SALT

Rub wine salt on steaks or roasts before cooking, sprinkle onto raw slices of ripe tomato or fresh mozzarella, add a pinch to a bowl of soup or stew, or add a quick shake to homemade salad dressings.

2 cups good quality red or white wine

1 cup kosher salt or coarse sea salt

Pour wine into a saucepan over medium heat. Simmer slowly until the wine has reduced to about 3 Tablespoons, stirring occasionally. The wine will be syrupy. Be careful not to let it burn!

Remove pan from heat and add the salt to the saucepan. Stir well to combine. Spread the mixture onto a cookie sheet to dry.

Let the cookie sheet sit on the counter to dry, stirring it every few hours. It will take 1 – 2 days to completely dry.

OR: Carefully dry the salt in a low oven (set your oven to its lowest temperature, usually about 160 degrees), for 1 – 2 hours. Check every 15 – 20 minutes. Do not let salt burn!

SMOKY LIME SALT

Use this flavorful salt to trim cocktail glass rims, sprinkled on roasted vegetables, rubbed into chicken breasts before grilling or as a finishing touch to scrambled eggs.

1 cup kosher salt or course sea salt

1 Tbsp dried lime zest

1 Tbsp Spanish paprika

Combine all ingredients and mix well using a mortar and pestle, coffee grinder, food processor or just your fingers. Be careful not to process the salt too finely.

Store in an airtight container. Salt should keep well for about one year.

MULLING SPICES

Nothing says winter comfort like a hot mug of mulled wine or cider. Forget overpriced and tasteless packaged mixes, you can make your own spice gifts in twenty minutes – with a little planning!

- 12 cinnamon sticks
- 3 Tbsp whole cloves
- 3 Tbsp allspice berries
- 1 Tbsp finely chopped crystallized ginger
- 1 Tbsp star anise
- Dried peel from 3 oranges*

Place cinnamon sticks and star anise in a zip top bag. Wrap the bag in a towel and place on a cutting board. Pound with a heavy pot or mallet to break the spices into pieces.

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. Divide mix into 6 batches. Place each batch in a muslin spice bag, a cheesecloth square or a do-it-yourself tea bag.

To Make Mulled Cider: Combine ½ gallon apple cider and 1 spice bag in a large pot. Bring to boil, reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove spice bag and discard before serving.

To Make Mulled Wine: Combine ½ cup brown sugar and ½ cup water in a large pot. Heat to medium and stir until sugar dissolves. Add a 750 ml bottle of red wine and 1 spice bag. Reduce heat and simmer until wine is hot. Remove spice bag and discard before serving.

*To Dry Orange Peel: Thinly slice orange peel, removing as much of the white

pith as possible. Let peel sit at room temperature for 1-2 days until dry. Or, spread peel on a parchment lined baking sheet. Heat oven to 250 degrees. Dry peel in oven for 15 – 20 minutes or until it starts to curl.

GOURMET ROSE SUGAR

Rose flavored sugar will turn everyday sugar cookies, shortbreads, and pound cake into a gourmet treat. Just be sure to use rose petals that have not been sprayed with pesticides.

1 ½ cups granulated sugar

¾ cup chopped rose petals

Combine all ingredients and mix well using a mortar and pestle, coffee grinder, food processor or just your fingers.

Pour sugar mixture into a glass jar, cover tightly and let sit. After one week, sift the sugar mixture to remove as many petals as possible. Don't drive yourself crazy trying to remove all traces of rose petals, just remove as many as possible.

Store sugar in an airtight container.

If you are unable to find fresh rose petals, use dried petals or dried lavender buds instead.

ORANGE OLIVE OIL

Flavored olive oils add a special touch to stir-fries, salad dressings, roasted vegetables, bread dips, ripe tomatoes, fresh mozzarella..... the list goes on!

3 cups good quality extra-virgin olive oil

Dried peel from one orange*

1 Tbsp coriander seeds

Spread coriander seeds on a parchment lined baking sheet. Heat oven to lowest temperature, usually about 160-170 degrees. Dry seeds in the oven for ½ hour, being careful not to burn them.

Combine all ingredients in an airtight container. Let sit at least one week before using. Oil can be strained if desired. Use oil within 6 months.

*See how to dry your own orange peel on page 10.

CITRUS VINEGAR

Flavored vinegars perk up a bowl of soup or stew and add tang to salad dressings. Give a bottle of citrus vinegar along with a bottle of Orange Olive Oil for a true gourmet experience.

2 cups white vinegar

1 lemon

1 lime

1 small tangerine or mandarin orange

½ tsp paprika

Salt and pepper to taste

Slice fruit. Combine sliced fruit, vinegar, and spices in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil and remove from heat. Pour mixture into a covered container and let sit for 2 – 4 weeks in a cool, dark place. Strain the vinegar and return to a boil. Store in sterilized bottles, tightly capped.

HOME FERMENTED RED WINE VINEGAR

Really good red wine vinegar is comparable to balsamic vinegar in taste and versatility. The problem is finding really good red wine vinegar. Plan far enough in advance, and you can gift your friends and family with extra-special vinegar this year.

1 750ml bottle Red wine

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Bragg's Apple Cider Vinegar*

Several oak chips (can be purchased at a wine or beer supply store)

Pour red wine into a large-mouth, non-metallic container. Add Bragg's Apple Cider Vinegar to the red wine and stir to combine.

Cover the container tightly with cheesecloth to keep out flies and other particulate. Set out of direct sunlight but where the container will still get good air circulation. It usually takes 2 – 4 weeks to fully ferment wine into vinegar, depending on how warm the air is. Warmer air leads to a shorter fermentation period. Check for complete fermentation to vinegar by tasting. You will be able to detect a pure vinegar taste and no alcohol flavoring when the vinegar is ready.

Stabilize the red wine vinegar by heating to 140 degrees. Watch carefully, and do not heat over 160 degrees. Fill narrow neck bottles. Add a few oak chips to each bottle for additional flavor. Plug bottles with caps, corks, or plastic top tasting corks and finish with heat shrink hoods if desired. Label and date each bottle.

Let vinegar age in a cool, dark place for at least 6 months.

* Unlike most cider vinegars, Bragg's Vinegar contains the vinegar "mother" which will help get the fermentation process going.

CREAMY COCOA MIX

Everyone loves dark, rich, creamy hot cocoa! Use the best quality ingredients you can find for this decadent treat. Package cocoa mix in a 1 quart canning jar or large covered mug and top with a bow and miniature candy canes.

½ cup Dutch processed cocoa

¾ cup powdered sugar

1 ¼ cups non-fat dry milk powder

1 tsp vanilla powder (optional)

½ cup miniature marshmallows (optional)

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and stir to mix well. Spoon into a dry, airtight container.

To use, add 1 cup boiling water to ½ cup cocoa mix. Recipe makes 4 servings.

DILL DIP MIX

Dried dip mixes can be a godsend when unexpected company shows up. Use this mix to make a traditional dip for chips, or sprinkle it on carrots and potatoes before roasting.

¼ cup dried dill weed

¼ cup minced, dried onion

¼ cup dried parsley

2 Tbsp celery seed

1 ½ tsp paprika

1 ½ tsp garlic powder

1 ½ tsp dried thyme

1 tsp salt

Combine all ingredients. Store in an airtight container. Makes 1 cup of mix.

To use, stir 3 Tbsp mix into 2 cups low-fat sour cream or 1 cup low-fat sour cream plus 1 cup low-fat plain yogurt.

GREEK BREAD DIP MIX

Flavorful bread dips are simple to prepare but make a big impact.

- 2 Tbsp dried lemon zest
- 2 Tbsp dried spearmint or garden mint
- 2 Tbsp dried oregano or marjoram
- 2 Tbsp dried parsley
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp white pepper
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp anise seed
- 2 Tbsp onion powder

Combine all ingredients. Store in an airtight container. Makes 1 cup of mix.

To use: sprinkle desired amount of mix in a plate of olive oil (the orange olive oil on page 13 would be a great choice). Dip bread into oil mixture.

PEACEFUL REST HERBAL TEA BLEND

Get away from the hustle and bustle of the season with this calming tea blend.

- ¼ cup dried spearmint or peppermint
- ¼ cup dried lavender
- 1 cup dried lemon balm or lemon verbena
- ½ cup dried catnip
- ¾ cup dried strawberry leaves

Combine all ingredients. Store in an airtight container. Makes 2 cups of mix.

To use; add 2 tsp mix to each cup of boiling water. Or add 2 tsp of mix to each do-it-yourself tea bag.

ENERGY BOOSTER HERBAL TEA BLEND

Didn't grow your own herbs this year? Purchase bulk dried herbs at your local health food store or co-op.

1 cup dried rosehips

½ cup dried lemon balm or lemon verbena

¼ cup dried pineapple sage

¼ cup dried mint

Combine all ingredients. Store in an airtight container. Makes 2 cups of mix.

To use; add 1 tsp mix to each cup of boiling water. Or add 1 tsp of mix to each do-it-yourself tea bag.

PIZZA HERB BLEND

Sprinkle this blend into purchased or homemade pizza sauce, add it to homemade pizza crust, or use it to top an every-day frozen pizza – and make something spectacular.

- 1 Tbsp fennel seed
- 1 Tbsp dried oregano
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp dried basil
- 1 Tbsp instant, minced onion
- 1 Tbsp instant, minced garlic
- 1 ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp ground black pepper
- ½ tsp crushed red pepper flakes

Combine all ingredients. Store in an airtight container. Makes ½ cup of mix.

ITALIAN HERB BLEND

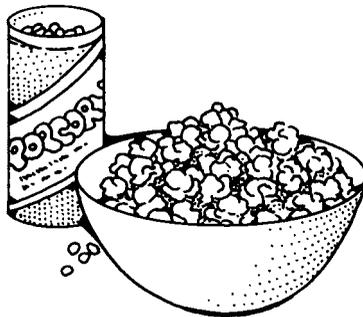
One of the most useful blends around. Your gift recipients will be thrilled to find that this blend has lots more flavor than the everyday purchased kind.

- 2 Tbsp dried basil
- 2 Tbsp dried marjoram
- 1 Tbsp dried oregano
- 1 ½ tsp dried rosemary
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp salt

Combine all ingredients. Store in an airtight container. Makes ½ cup of mix.

Snack Mixes

Popcorn, crackers, granola, nuts.....we can never have too many snacks in the house. That is especially true during the holiday season. Snacks are especially appreciated during the cold days of winter, when friends and family come to call. Wrap these snacks in clear bags tied with a colorful bow, or give them tucked into a purchased tin, load up a pretty antique plate and wrap in plastic wrap, or stack into individual boxes and make a snack “tower.”



DILLY ONION CRACKERS

Homemade crackers are bursting with fresh, tangy flavor, because they are made with wholesome ingredients.

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole wheat or Kamut® flour
- 3 Tbsp granulated sugar
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 Tbsp onion powder
- 1 Tbsp dried chives
- ½ tsp dried dill weed
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- ¾ cup milk

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a large bowl or a stand mixer bowl, combine the first 8 ingredients.

Add olive oil and milk. Stir to mix well. Roll dough out ¼ inch thick. Cut with seasonal cookie cutters or into small squares. Place onto a parchment lined baking sheet and cook for 4 – 6 minutes or until slightly browned. Cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

FETA TOMATO CRACKERS

These crackers go wonderfully with hummus and marinated olives.

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole wheat or Kamut® flour
- 3 Tbsp granulated sugar
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 2 Tbsp tomato paste
- 1 ½ tsp dried basil
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- ¾ cup crumbled Feta cheese
- ¼ cup butter, softened
- ¼ cup water

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a large bowl or a stand mixer bowl, combine the first 8 ingredients.

Cut in Feta and butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add water and stir to mix well. Roll dough out ¼ inch thick. Cut with seasonal cookie cutters or into small squares. Place onto a parchment lined baking sheet and cook for 4 – 6 minutes or until slightly browned. Cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

CHOCOLATE POPCORN

In need of a last minute gift? Flavored popcorn comes to the rescue. Pair it with some creamy cocoa mix and a family friendly movie for a special treat – for any age!

- 12 cups air-popped popcorn
- 2 cups salted peanuts
- 12 oz. bag milk chocolate chips
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- ¼ cup unsalted butter

Preheat oven to 240 degrees.

Combine chocolate chips, corn syrup, and butter in a large saucepan. Slowly bring to a boil, stirring occasionally until the chips have melted and are well combined.

Grease a large roasting pan. Add popcorn and peanuts. Pour chocolate mixture over all. Stir to coat popcorn with chocolate mixture. Bake for 30 – 40 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cool completely on baking sheets. Store in an airtight container.

ROOT BEER POPCORN

Not crazy over root beer? Follow this same recipe using cola or orange soda instead.

12 cups air-popped popcorn

2 cups salted peanuts

2 cans of root beer soda

1 cup granulated sugar

½ cup light corn syrup

½ cup unsalted butter

Preheat oven to 290 degrees.

Combine root beer, sugar, corn syrup, and butter in a large saucepan. Slowly bring to a boil, stirring well combined.

Grease a large roasting pan. Add popcorn and peanuts. Pour root beer mixture over all. Stir to coat popcorn. Bake for 20 – 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cool completely on baking sheets. Store in an airtight container.

WHITE CHOCOLATE PEPPERMINT POPCORN

For the peppermint lovers on your list!

- 12 cups air-popped popcorn
- 1 cup crushed candy canes (about 6 oz. of candy canes)
- 1 lb. white chocolate morsels or white chocolate baking bar
- 2 tsp peppermint extract

Place popcorn in a large roasting pan or soup pot. Slowly melt chocolate in a double boiler, or in the microwave (10 – 15 seconds at a time), stirring often. Add extract to the melted chocolate and stir quickly to combine.

Pour melted chocolate over the popcorn. Quickly add crushed candy canes. Stir to coat popcorn. Cool completely on baking sheets. Store in an airtight container.

MARINATED CHEESE CUBES

Make this recipe in a clear glass jar for a beautiful, gourmet gift.

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

¼ cup flavored vinegar or balsamic vinegar

3 cloves garlic

1 tsp dried parsley

1 tsp peppercorns

½ tsp fennel seed

1 bay leaf

10 – 12 ounces cubed Sharp Cheddar, Edam, Provolone, Aged Mozzarella, Gouda, or Havarti cheese (or any combination)

Place cheese cubes and bay leaf in one large or two small jars. Combine remaining ingredients. Pour over cheese. Cover tightly and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 4 days.

MARINATED OLIVES

Another gourmet snack made from items you will find at the grocery store.

- 6 ounces ripe, black olives
- 6 ounces pitted Kalamata olives
- 6 ounces green manzanilla olives
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp Italian seasoning

Place olives and bay leaf in one large or two small jars. Combine remaining ingredients. Pour over olives. Cover tightly and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 8 hours

SPICY MIXED NUTS

Use pecan halves, walnut halves, cashews, almonds, hazelnuts or any combination.

½ cup unsalted butter

3 Tbsp steak sauce

6 drops hot sauce

½ tsp Cajun seasoning

4 cups mixed nuts

Preheat oven to 200 degrees.

Melt butter in a large saucepan. Add steak sauce, hot sauce, and seasoning. Stir to combine. Add nuts and stir to mix well.

Spoon nuts onto a large baking sheet. Bake for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Let cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

SEASONED ALMONDS

- 4 cups unsalt almonds
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- 2 tsp paprika
- ½ tsp dried thyme
- 1 tsp kosher salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Mix together all ingredients in a large bowl until nuts are well coated. Spread on a parchment lined baking sheet. Cook for 8-10 minutes, turning at least once. Let cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

CANDIED PECANS

Sweet and spicy, these nuts are addictive! Make a double batch; some to keep, some to give.

- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- ¼ tsp each ground cloves and ground allspice
- 4 cups pecan halves

Melt butter in a large skillet. Add sugar and stir over medium heat until dissolved. Reduce heat and continue stirring 2 – 3 more minutes.

Add spices and vanilla to butter mixture. Add pecans. Cook and stir until pecans are lightly toasted and well covered, about 3 more minutes.

Spread pecans on a parchment lined baking sheet and cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

HONEY SNACK MIX

Snack mixes are much welcomed, especially by the kids in the family.

8 cups wheat, corn, and/or rice cereal squares

3 cups small fish shaped crackers

1 ½ cups peanuts or shelled pistachio nuts

½ cup unsalted butter

½ cup wildflower honey

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Combine cereal, crackers and nuts in a large roasting pan.

Meanwhile, melt butter in a small saucepan. Add honey. Cook and stir until mixture is smooth. Pour mixture over cereal and stir to mix well.

Bake for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cool completely and store in an air-tight container.

FAVORITE TRAIL MIX

Not just for hiking, this sweet and salty trail mix makes a great holiday gift too.

- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ¼ cup snipped, dried apricots
- ¼ cup raisins
- 1 cup mixed nuts
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- ½ cup candy coated chocolate drops

Stir to combine. Store in an airtight container.

SAVORY SNACK MIX

You won't find a snack mix with this much flavor at the grocery store!

6 cups wheat, rice, and/or corn cereal squares

1 ½ cups unsalted peanuts or almonds

2 cups chow mein noodles

1 cup small pretzels

⅓ cup olive oil

¼ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese

1 Tbsp seasoned salt

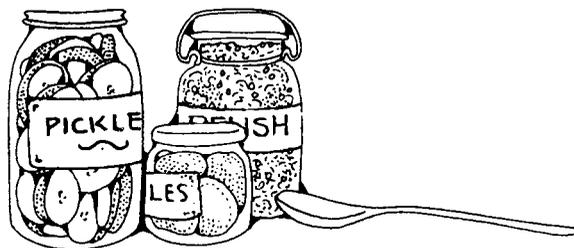
Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

Combine cereal, nuts, noodles and pretzels in a large roasting pan. Drizzle with oil. Gently stir in cheese and salt.

Bake for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cool completely and store in an airtight container.

Preserved at Home

Nothing says family and love like home preserves. Jars of pickles and jams are a modern connection to our mothers, grandmothers, and even earlier generations of men and women who saved the garden harvest with love. But don't despair. Even if you didn't pick enough blueberries for jam this summer, or haven't been able to master Nana's end-of-the-garden relish yet, there are still plenty of last minute, greatly appreciated, preserved gifts you can tuck under the tree.



RUM APPLE BUTTER

The alcohol is cooked out while the rum flavor remains, turning this apple butter into a special treat. Spread it on toasted English muffins, use as a filling for spice cake, or serve with pork chops.

2 lbs. apples (use at least two different varieties of apples for increased flavor)

½ cup water

½ cup dark rum

2 cups granulated sugar

1 tsp ground cinnamon

¼ tsp ground cloves

Wash apples. Core but do not peel. Cut into small pieces. Place in a large saucepot with the water and rum; simmer until apples are soft. Press through a food mill or puree using a food processor.

Return apple pulp to the saucepan. Add sugar and spices. Cook slowly until thick enough to round up on a spoon, stirring frequently to prevent sticking.

Ladle hot apple butter into clean ½ pint canning jars leaving ¼ inch headspace. Cover with two piece canning caps. Process for 10 minutes in a boiling water bath canner, or refrigerate. Makes about 5 - ½ pint jars.

CRANBERRY ORANGE RELISH

Cranberries have been a delicious part of the holiday season since the first Thanksgiving.

1 (12 oz.) bag fresh cranberries

1 large orange

1 cup granulated sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup water

Slice the unpeeled orange into 8 slices. Remove seeds. Chop orange and cranberries in a food processor, $\frac{1}{2}$ at a time until finely chopped but not puréed.

Add all ingredients to a large saucepan. Slowly bring to a boil, stirring constantly until sugar is dissolved. Cook rapidly, almost to gelling point (about 8 minutes). Ladle into clean $\frac{1}{2}$ pint canning jars leaving $\frac{1}{4}$ inch headspace. Cover with two piece canning caps. Process for 15 minutes in a boiling water bath canner, or refrigerate. Makes about 2 - $\frac{1}{2}$ pint jars.

HONEY MEYER LEMON CURD

*Meyer lemons are a cross between a lemon and an orange, retaining the best qualities of each.
This curd is the perfect topping for biscuits, scones, or eaten directly from the spoon!*

¼ cup unsalted butter, softened

½ cup honey

4 large egg yolks

2 large eggs

¾ cup fresh Meyer lemon juice (about 10 lemons)

1 Tbsp lemon zest

Cream the butter and honey in a large bowl until fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time. Beat in egg yolks.

Spoon mixture into a medium sized saucepan. Add lemon juice. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly until mixture has thickened to a jelly-like consistency, about 7 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in zest.

Ladle into 2 – ½ pint jars. Let cool before covering. Store in the refrigerator for 3 – 4 months, or freeze for up to a year.

SWEET HONEY BUTTER

Honey butter is one of those things that we almost never make for ourselves, but are oh, so happy, to receive as a gift! Use the best quality honey and butter you can find for this recipe.

½ lb. (2 sticks) butter

½ cup honey

Dash sea salt

Let butter come to room temperature. Beat with an electric mixer until soft.

Add honey and salt to bowl and continue beating until well combined.

Roll butter in waxed paper and chill until ready to use. Or spoon butter into silicone candy molds for individual butter packets. Chill until hardened.

HONEY PRESERVED FRUIT AND NUTS

Earlier this year we purchased a jar of imported nuts and honey. It was almost too beautiful to eat! I knew then that I had to make my own. Serve this over ice cream or yogurt.

1 cup unsalted nuts (almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecans, pistachios, macadamias or a combination)

¼ cup dried cherries or cranberries

1 ½ cups honey

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spread nuts on a large baking sheet. Toast in the oven for up to 10 minutes, watching carefully to prevent scorching.

Let nuts cool. Combine with dried fruit and spoon into clean, decorative jars. Slowly pour honey over nut mixture being careful not to get bubbles.

Store at room temperature for one month, or refrigerate for up to 6 months.

CRANBERRY-APPLESAUCE

Sweet, tart, and bursting with flavor, this seasonal sauce will add an extra touch to the Christmas goose, turkey or ham.

6 large apples, about 8 cups

1 cup fresh cranberries

½ cup granulated sugar

½ cup water

Wash, core and chop apples. Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 10 – 15 minutes or until cranberries have popped and apples are tender.

Remove from heat and cool slightly. Puree in a food processor or blender. Ladle into clean pint or half-pint canning jars leaving ½ inch headspace. Cover with two piece canning caps. Process for 15 minutes in a boiling water bath canner, or refrigerate. Makes about 2 ½ pints.

PICKLED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

This recipe is so popular in my family that one relative requests several jars each year. I'm sure your family will welcome a jar too!

2 lbs. (about 6 cups) fresh Brussels sprouts

4 garlic cloves

2 ½ cups water

2 ½ cups cider vinegar (5% acidity)

3 Tbsp canning salt

1 tsp cayenne pepper

4 tsp dill seed

Trim Brussels sprouts of old foliage and check to make sure that there aren't any insect holes. Cut large sprouts in half.

Steam the Brussels sprouts in the microwave or on the stove top until tender, but still bright green. Rinse with cold water to stop the cooking process. Pack into four, pint-sized canning jars. Peel 4 garlic cloves and place one in each jar with the sprouts.

In a saucepan, combine the water, cider vinegar, canning salt, cayenne pepper, and dill seed. Bring to a boil and let boil for 5 minutes.

Ladle the vinegar mixture over the Brussels sprouts leaving ¼ inch headspace. Cap, using the two-piece canning lids and process in a boiling water bath canner for 15 minutes.

Let sit at least 3 weeks before opening for full flavor development.

BREAD AND BUTTER PICKLES

Everyone's favorite, bread and butter pickles are quick and easy to prepare.

About 6 lbs. of English cucumbers, thinly sliced

2 large onions, thinly sliced

¼ cup pickling salt

4 cups cider vinegar

2 ½ cups granulated sugar

2 Tbsp mustard seed

2 tsp ground turmeric

2 tsp celery seed

2 tsp peppercorns

Combine cucumber and onion slices in a large bowl. Sprinkle with salt and cover with ice cubes. Let sit 2 hours. Drain and rinse well. Combine remaining ingredients in a large saucepan or stockpot. Bring to a boil. Add drained cucumber and onion slices and return to a boil. Pack into clean, pint jars leaving ½ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Process for 10 minutes in a water bath canner. Makes 6-8 pints.

SPICED CANDIED APPLE RINGS

Sometimes food nostalgia drives my canning obsession. Spiced, candied apple rings fall into this category. These apple rings are a throwback from childhood and taste just as good as I remember.

- 5 lbs. of 2 ½ inch diameter apples
- 4 ½ cups granulated sugar
- 2 ¼ cups water
- 1/3 cup red hot cinnamon candies
- ½ cup cider vinegar
- 1 sliced lemon
- 1 Tbsp whole cloves
- 1 Tbsp whole allspice
- ½ Tbsp ground mace

Peel and core apples. Slice into ½ inch rings. Add apple rings to a large pot filled with 8 cups of water and 2 Tbsp of vinegar (prevents the apples from browning).

In another large pot (6-8 quarts) combine sugar, water, cinnamon candies, vinegar, lemon, and spices. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Stir constantly until sugar dissolves. Reduce heat and simmer 3-5 minutes (the candy should be dissolved by this point). Drain the apple rings.

Gently stir the apple rings into the syrup and simmer for 5 minutes or so. Fill clean pint canning jars with the apple rings. Strain the hot syrup to remove the whole spices and lemon. Pour the strained syrup over the apples leaving ½ inch headspace. Wipe the jar lips with a moist paper towel, add lids, and process in a water bath canner for 10 minutes.

The apples will continue to absorb the red coloring as they sit, but if you really want a bright red ring add a few drops of red food coloring to the syrup mixture. Like any pickled product, the rings will be better after sitting for 3 weeks. Makes 5-6 pint jars.

PEPPER MUSTARD

Flavored mustard is a true treat. Package this recipe with pretzels and a light ale for the mustard lover in the family.

8 oz. Dijon-style mustard

1 Tbsp crushed green, white, or pink peppercorns

½ tsp dried tarragon

¼ tsp ground allspice

Sea salt to taste

Stir all ingredients together. Spoon into a glass jar, cover and chill for at least 2 days before using.

RED WINE MUSTARD

Spicy and sharp with mellow undertones, this grainy mustard is sure to please.

- ½ cup mustard powder
- 3 Tbsp crushed brown or white mustard seeds
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 tsp salt

Mix all ingredients together until well combined. Let sit about 15 minutes or until mustard is the consistency of catsup.

Mustard will mellow somewhat as it ages. For less sharp mustard, keep at room temperature. Chilling the mustard will retain the hot, sharp flavor.

OLIVE TAPANADE

Tell someone you love them with homemade tapenade and a fresh baguette.

½ lb. imported black olives, pitted

1 ½ Tbsp capers

½ tsp dried oregano

½ tsp dried rosemary

1 tsp Dijon style mustard

2 Tbsp lemon juice

2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Black pepper to taste

Puree first 6 ingredients in a food processor. Add lemon juice, olive oil and pepper until smooth paste. Conversely, grind garlic and olives (may have to do in batches) in a mortar/pestle. Stir in remaining ingredients. Spoon into a glass jar. Keep refrigerated.

Breads from Scratch

Homemade breads will please the whole family. Make them early and store in the freezer until ready to give. Make them at the last minute for a gift that looks like you spent the whole day cooking – no one will believe that they are truly quick and easy! Bake the breads in miniature gift pans, muffin tins, or empty cans and gift each family with a bread variety.



ORANGE SPICE MINI-FRUITCAKE

Don't let the long list of ingredients scare you off. Real, homemade fruitcake is a treat that even self-proclaimed fruitcake haters will enjoy.

4 cups dried fruit (I used a combination of dates, golden raisins, currents, cranberries, apricots, and candied orange peel)

1 ½ cups candied cherries, halved

¼ cup Triple Sec or orange juice

1 cup butter, softened

1 cup brown sugar

5 eggs

¼ cup molasses

¾ cup orange juice

3 cups all-purpose flour

2 tsp baking powder

½ tsp ground mace

½ tsp ground cinnamon

½ tsp ground allspice

¼ tsp ground cloves

2 cups chopped pecans

Combine fruit with Triple Sec or orange juice. Cover and let sit 4 – 24 hours at room temperature.

In a large bowl, beat butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, beating well after each. Add molasses and orange juice. Beat well to combine.

Stir in flour, baking powder, and spices. Add the fruit/liquor mixture and nuts. Mix well to combine.

Fill greased pans with batter and bake at 300 degrees for 45 – 55 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from oven and let cool for 10 minutes in pan.

Remove from pan and cool completely on wire rack.

Cut squares of cheesecloth and foil to wrap each fruitcake. Fill a small bowl with Triple Sec or orange juice. Soak cheesecloth in liquor/juice and completely wrap the fruitcake. Enclose each cake in foil.

Label each cake and store in a cool place for at least one week and up to 3 months. Check cheesecloth every week or so to make sure it hasn't dried out, and re-soak as needed.

NOTE: I like to make mini fruitcakes which are about the size of large muffin cups. You could also make micro-mini cakes using regular muffin cups, bite -sized mini cakes using mini muffin cups, fruitcake loaves using regular loaf pans, or even one large fruitcake using a 10 – 12 cup Bundt pan. The oven temperature should remain the same but the cooking time will change (probably about 18 minutes for bite-sized cakes to 1 ½ hours or so for one large cake.

BLOOD ORANGE – CARDAMOM SCONES

Blood oranges have a sweet flavor and beautiful red color. Pair with homemade honey butter for the perfect gift!

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 Tbsp granulated sugar
- 1 Tbsp blood orange zest
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp ground cardamom
- 6 Tbsp butter
- ¼ cup fresh squeezed blood orange juice
- ¼ cup low-fat sour cream
- 1 egg

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Combine flour, sugar, orange zest, baking powder and soda in a large bowl. Cut in butter until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add orange juice, sour cream and egg. Stir until combined.

Turn out onto a floured surface and knead until ingredients are well mixed. Shape dough into an 8 inch circle. Cut into 8 wedges. Bake on a parchment lined baking sheet for 12 - 15 minutes or until done.

Remove from oven and let cool completely on a wire rack

GINGERBREAD SCONES

The kids may opt for gingerbread men cookies, but the adults will choose these scones!

2 cups all-purpose flour

2 tsp baking powder

¼ tsp baking soda

1 tsp each ground ginger and ground cinnamon

½ cup butter

¼ cup molasses

½ cup milk

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, and spices in a large bowl. Cut in butter until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add molasses and milk and stir to combine.

Turn out onto a floured surface and knead until ingredients are well mixed. Shape dough into a 10 inch circle. Cut into 8 wedges. Bake on a parchment lined baking sheet for 10 – 12 minutes or until done.

Remove from oven and let cool completely on a wire rack. These scones would make a wonderful gift along with a jar of lemon curd.

PEANUT BUTTER BANANA BREAD

Two great flavors combined into one!

3 medium (ripe) bananas

¼ cup butter

¼ cup peanut butter

½ cup granulated sugar

1 egg

¼ cup orange juice

1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour

1 ½ tsp baking powder

½ tsp baking soda

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Mash bananas with a fork. Set aside. Beat butter, peanut butter, sugar and egg together until light and fluffy. Beat in orange juice.

Add flour, baking powder and soda. Stir until well mixed. Fold in mashed banana. Spoon batter into a greased 9 x 9 x 3 inch loaf pan or into several mini-loaf pans. Bake for 30 – 50 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Remove from oven and let cool for 10 minutes before removing from baking pan.

PINEAPPLE ZUCCHINI BREAD

Is your freezer full of shredded zucchini from garden overload? Turn it into delicious holiday gifts.

1 ½ cups granulated sugar

2 eggs

1 cup safflower oil

2 cups shredded zucchini, pressed dry

1 cup currants

1 (8 oz.) can crushed pineapple, drained

2 tsp vanilla

3 cups flour

2 tsp baking soda

½ tsp baking powder

½ tsp ground allspice

½ tsp ground cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Cream sugar, eggs, and oil together. Add zucchini, currants, pineapple and vanilla. Stir in remaining ingredients. Mix until well combined.

Spoon mixture into 2 greased, 9 x 5 x 3 inch loaf pans or into several mini-loaf pans. Bake for 30 – 60 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Remove from oven and let cool for 10 minutes before removing from baking pan.

CARROT BREAD

This recipe has been a family favorite for more than thirty years. It's sure to become a favorite for your family too.

- 2 cups flour
- 1 ½ cups granulated sugar
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 cup safflower oil
- 3 eggs
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 2 cups grated carrots

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Combine flour, sugar, baking soda and cinnamon in a large bowl. Add oil, eggs, and vanilla. Stir until combined. Fold in grated carrots.

Spoon mixture into a greased, 9 x 5 x 3 inch loaf pan or into several mini-loaf pans. Bake for 30 – 60 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Remove from oven and let cool for 10 minutes before removing from baking pan.

APPLE OATMEAL BREAD

This old-fashioned bread will bring to mind a Victorian holiday feast.

1 ½ cups all-purpose flour

1 tsp baking powder

1 tsp baking soda

1 tsp ground cinnamon

½ tsp ground allspice

½ cup firmly packed brown sugar

1 cup rolled oats

1 cup chopped walnuts (optional)

2 eggs

¼ cup milk

¼ cup safflower oil

1 ½ cups coarsely shredded fresh apple (about 2 apples)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, spices, brown sugar, oats and walnuts in a large bowl. Add oil, eggs, and milk. Stir until well combined. Gently fold in shredded apple.

Spoon mixture into a greased, 9 x 5 x 3 inch loaf pan or into several mini-loaf pans. Bake for 30 – 60 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Remove from oven and let cool for 10 minutes before removing from baking pan.

CRANBERRY PUMPKIN BREAD

Two favorite holiday flavors in one loaf. This moist and tangy bread will satisfy everyone on your list.

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 ½ cups granulated sugar
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 2 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground mace
- 1 tsp ground allspice
- 1 cup safflower oil
- 1 (15 oz.) can pumpkin puree
- 4 eggs
- ¼ cup water
- 2 cups chopped fresh cranberries

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Combine flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and spices in a large bowl. Add oil, eggs, water and canned pumpkin. Stir until well combined. Gently fold in cranberries.

Spoon mixture into 2 greased, 9x 5 x 3 inch loaf pans or into several mini-loaf pans. Bake for 30 – 60 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan.

GRISSINI

Crunchy, homemade Italian breadsticks are fun to make and even more fun to eat.

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 tsp salt

1 tsp granulated sugar

1 tsp instant dry yeast

3 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, plus additional for brushing

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup lukewarm water

Sesame, fennel, flax, caraway or other seeds (optional)

Combine flour, salt, sugar and yeast in a medium bowl. Make a well in the center and add the olive oil and water. Mix the liquid ingredients into the flour mixture to make a soft dough.

Turn dough out onto a floured work surface and knead until smooth, about 10 minutes. Shape dough into a ball, place in a greased bowl, cover and let rise until doubled in size, 1 – 2 hours.

Roll dough into a 4 x 14 inch rectangle. Brush with additional olive oil and sprinkle with seeds – as many as desired. Cut dough, using a pizza cutter, into $\frac{3}{8}$ inch strips. Twist each strip and place on a parchment lined baking sheet.

Lightly cover with a clean dish towel or plastic wrap and let rise for about an hour.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Bake for 20 – 25 minutes or until lightly browned, turning grissini once during baking.

ROSEMARY FOCACCIA

This recipe should be made shortly before “gifting” to remain fresh.

- 1 pkg. active dry yeast (2 ¼ tsp)
- 1 tsp granulated sugar
- ¾ cup lukewarm water
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp dried rosemary
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus additional for brushing

Dissolve the yeast and sugar in the water in a bowl. Let sit until foamy.

Meanwhile, combine flour, salt, and herbs in a large bowl. Add the yeast mixture and the oil. Stir until well combined, adding more flour if necessary. Knead dough for 10 minutes or until smooth and elastic. Shape dough into a ball, place in a greased bowl, cover and let rise until doubled in size, 1 – 2 hours.

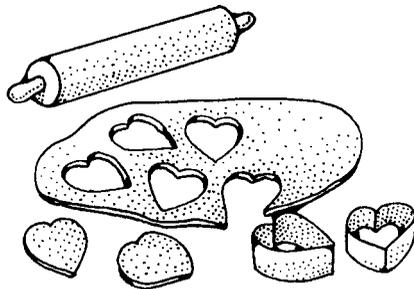
Deflate dough, knead for another few minutes and roll out to form a 10 inch circle. Cover and let rise for 15 minutes. Oil fingers and make impressions with them in the dough. Continue rising for another hour.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Brush dough with olive oil and sprinkle with kosher salt if desired. Bake for 15 – 20 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool for at least 15 minutes. Cut into wedges and serve.

Cookies

Everyone loves cookies, especially during the holiday season. Are there any two words that go together better than Christmas and cookies? If you aren't sure what to give this year, cookies are the one gift that everyone will appreciate.



PFEFFERNEUSSE

These traditional German cookies combine all the best flavors of the season; molasses, allspice, anise and pepper.

¾ cup molasses

¾ cup honey

½ cup butter

2 eggs, slightly beaten

4 ¼ cups all-purpose flour

½ cup granulated sugar

1 ½ tsp baking soda

1 tsp ground allspice

1 tsp ground mace

½ tsp ground black pepper

½ tsp anise seed

Powdered sugar

Add molasses, honey, and butter to a medium saucepan and cook over low heat until the butter has melted. Set aside and let cool to room temperature. Stir in the beaten eggs.

Add flour, sugar, baking soda and spices to a large bowl and stir to mix well.

Pour liquid mixture into flour mixture. Stir to combine. Chill for at least 2 hours. (This step is to help make the dough more manageable.)

Remove the dough from the refrigerator. Roll into small balls and place on a

parchment lined cookie sheet. Bake for 10 minutes at 350 degrees.

Remove from oven. Immediately roll cookies in powdered sugar and let cool.
Makes about 7 dozen cookies.

SOFT CARROT RAISIN COOKIES

Sweet with orange and raisins, these unusual cookies will be gobbled down quickly.

¾ cup butter

¾ cup granulated sugar

1 cup grated carrots

1 egg

¼ cup orange juice

2 tsp grated orange zest

1 tsp vanilla

2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour

2 tsp baking powder

¾ cup raisins

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add carrots, egg, orange juice, orange zest, and vanilla. Mix well to combine.

Gently stir in flour and baking powder until just mixed. Fold in raisins. Drop by teaspoon onto a greased baking sheet. Bake 12 – 15 minutes.

CRUNCHY SURPRISE BARS

These bars are decadent, delicious, chewy and salty-sweet.

1 cup granulated sugar

1 cup butter, softened

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup molasses

1 egg

1 tsp vanilla

2 cups all-purpose flour

12 oz. chocolate morsels

1 cup raisins

1 cup peanuts

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup peanut butter

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Cream butter, sugar, molasses, egg, and vanilla until fluffy. Stir in flour and 1 cup of chocolate morsels.

Press dough in an ungreased 9 x 13 inch pan. Bake until golden brown, about 25 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine remaining morsels, raisins, peanuts, and peanut butter in a saucepan. Heat over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until morsels are melted. Spread mixture over crust in pan. Chill at least 2 hours. Cut into bars.

CHOCOLATE WINE BROWNIES

Deep, dark chocolate and red wine pair up in this sinfully delicious, but low-calorie, treat.

- ½ cup whole wheat flour
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup mini chocolate morsels
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup plain yogurt
- ¼ cup merlot or other red wine

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a large bowl combine flours, cocoa, baking powder, sugar, and chocolate morsels.

Add the eggs, yogurt, and wine. Stir till well mixed.

Spoon into a greased 8 x 8 inch baking dish. Bake for 20 – 25 minutes or until the edges have pulled away from the side of the pan. Cool. Cut into 16 pieces.

CREAM CHEESE MINT BROWNIES

Top these minty brownies with crushed candy canes for an even more festive look.

¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

1 ¾ cups granulated sugar

1 ¼ cups all-purpose flour

½ cup safflower oil

½ cup water

2 eggs

1 tsp vanilla

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a 9x13 inch baking dish.

In a large bowl combine flour, cocoa, baking soda, and sugar.

Add the eggs, oil, water and vanilla. Stir till well mixed.

Spread evenly into the prepared pan. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the cake comes out clean. Remove from oven and cool completely.

CREAM CHEESE ICING

8 oz. cream cheese, softened

¼ cup butter, softened

1 ½ tsp peppermint extract

3 cups powdered sugar

Green food coloring

Beat the cream cheese, butter and extract in a large bowl until fluffy. Add sugar, one cup at a time, beating until smooth. Stir in food coloring until you reach desired color.

Spread icing over brownies. Sprinkle with crushed candy canes or miniature chocolate morsels (optional). Allow to set for several hours before cutting.

Makes 2 dozen brownies.

CRANBERRY BISCOTTI

Biscotti cookies are an tasty treat, especially for those looking for a less sweet cookie.

1 cup dried cranberries

2 eggs

¾ cup granulated sugar

½ cup safflower oil

2 Tbsp orange zest

1 ½ tsp baking powder

1 tsp vanilla

1 tsp almond extract

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 cup chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place cranberries in a small bowl. Cover with boiling water and let sit for 10 minutes. Drain and set aside.

Stir to combine eggs, sugar, oil, orange zest, baking powder, vanilla, and almond extract in a large bowl. Add flour, nuts and cranberries and stir to mix well.

Turn out onto a floured surface and knead until smooth. Divide dough in half. Form each half into a 2 inch diameter log. Place logs on a parchment lined baking sheet. Bake until lightly brown, about 30 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool for 15 minutes.

Cut logs with a serrated knife into ½ inch thick slices. Slices can either be cut straight across or cut on the diagonal. Place slices, cut-side down, on the baking sheet. Bake about 20 more minutes, turning slices once after 10 minutes.

Cool completely on a wire rack. Makes about 3 dozen.

GRAM'S PUFFED RICE SQUARES

My husband's grandmother used to make this chewy puffed rice treat for all the neighborhood children. Much to our delight!

- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup light corn syrup
- ¾ cup peanut butter
- 4 cups puffed brown rice cereal (not crispy)
- 1 cup chocolate morsels (optional)

Combine the milk, sugar and corn syrup in a saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat and continue cooking until mixture reaches the soft-ball stage (234 degrees). Remove from heat and quickly stir in the peanut butter until well combined.

Pour mixture over puffed rice. Stir to mix well and press into a greased 8 x 8 inch pan. Quickly spread chocolate morsels over rice mixture. Wait a few minutes until mostly melted and spread chocolate to cover the mixture.

Cool and cut into squares. Makes 16 squares.

DICKENS' BISCOTTI

For some reason this recipe just reminds me of Victorian London. A great cookie to serve with a cup of tea maybe?

- ¼ cup butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 3 eggs
- ½ tsp vanilla
- ¼ tsp almond extract
- 1 ½ tsp anise seed
- ½ tsp fennel seed
- ¾ cup chopped pistachios
- 1 cup snipped, dried apricots

Cream butter and sugar in a large bowl until fluffy. Add baking powder and soda, beat until combined. Add eggs, one at a time, vanilla and almond extract. Stir in flour, seeds, nuts and apricots. Cover and chill for 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Divide dough in half. Form each half into a 2 inch diameter log. Place logs on a parchment lined baking sheet. Bake until lightly browned, about 30 minutes. Remove from oven and cool completely.

Cut logs with a serrated knife into ½ inch thick slices. Slices can either be cut straight across or cut on the diagonal. Place slices, cut-side down, on the baking sheet. Bake at 325 degrees about 10 more minutes, turning slices once after 5 minutes.

Cool completely on a wire rack. Makes about 4 dozen.

Biscotti can also be drizzled with a simple orange icing or melted white chocolate.

LEMON POPPY SEED BISCOTTI

Homemade biscotti is just a touch softer than the purchased kind, leaving you with the same excellent taste and texture, but no broken teeth!

- ¼ cup butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 eggs
- ½ tsp vanilla
- Zest from 1 large lemon
- 3 Tbsp poppy seeds
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- White baking chocolate (optional)

Cream butter and sugar in a large bowl until fluffy. Add baking powder and soda, beat until combined. Add eggs, one at a time, vanilla, lemon juice and lemon zest. Stir in flour and seeds. Cover and chill for 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Divide dough in half. Form each half into a 2 inch diameter log. Place logs on a parchment lined baking sheet. Bake until lightly browned, about 30 minutes. Remove from oven and cool completely.

Cut logs with a serrated knife into ½ inch thick slices. Slices can either be cut straight across or cut on the diagonal. Place slices, cut-side down, on the baking

sheet. Bake at 325 degrees about 10 more minutes, turning slices once after 5 minutes.

Cool completely on a wire rack. Dip bottoms or ends in melted white chocolate if desired. Makes about 4 dozen.

MOCHA NUT BISCOTTI

As you can tell, I have a thing for biscotti. It's fun to prepare, more fun to eat, and greatly appreciated under the tree.

- ¼ cup butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 3 eggs
- ½ tsp vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup Dutch-processed cocoa
- 1 ½ tsp espresso powder
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- ¾ cup mini chocolate morsels

Cream butter and sugar in a large bowl until fluffy. Add baking powder and soda, beat until combined. Add eggs, one at a time and vanilla. Stir in flour, cocoa, espresso powder, nuts, and chocolate morsels. Cover and chill for 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Divide dough in half. Form each half into a 2 inch diameter log. Place logs on a parchment lined baking sheet. Bake until lightly browned, about 30 minutes. Remove from oven and cool completely.

Cut logs with a serrated knife into ½ inch thick slices. Slices can either be cut straight across or cut on the diagonal. Place slices, cut-side down, on the baking

sheet. Bake at 325 degrees about 10 more minutes, turning slices once after 5 minutes.

Cool completely on a wire rack. Makes about 4 dozen.

AUNT J'S FILLED CHOCOLATE COOKIES

This family recipe has been a favorite for more than fifty years. With a record like that, you know it has to be good!

- 1 egg
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup butter
- ½ cup milk
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 Tbsp baking cocoa
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp cream of tartar
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 cup chocolate morsels

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a large bowl, beat egg, sugar, butter and milk together till fluffy. Stir in remaining ingredients. Drop chocolate cookie dough onto greased baking sheets by rounded tablespoons, about 2 inches apart. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until set. Remove to a wire rack and let cool completely. Once cool, make a cookie “sandwich” with the coconut filling.

COCONUT FILLING

1 cup flaked coconut

½ cup granulated sugar

1 Tbsp flour

½ cup milk

Combine all ingredients and cook over medium heat until thickened. Cool.

OLD-FASHIONED SHORTBREAD

Since there are so few ingredients in this recipe, it is important to use the very best quality ingredients you can find. This bread would be lovely made with Rose Sugar.

1 cup salted butter

2 tsp vanilla

½ cup granulated sugar

2 cups all-purpose flour

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Grease two 8 or 9 inch cake pans or shortbread molds.

Beat together butter, sugar, and vanilla. Beat in flour. The mixture will be quite dry. Beat or knead until it comes together.

Divide dough in half. Press each half into one greased pan. Prick the dough all over with a fork. Bake until light brown, about 35 minutes.

Remove from oven and remove shortbread from pan. Cut each into 12 wedges. Allow shortbread to completely cool. Makes 2 dozen.

Candy

Are visions of sugarplums dancing in your head? Satisfy children of all ages with these old-fashioned candies that will have you re-calling Christmases past.



HOMEMADE MARSHMALLOWS

It's rare to get so much delight from so little work! This super-simple recipe will make everyone on your gift list happy.

1 ½ pkgs. unflavored gelatin

½ cup cold water

¾ cup granulated sugar

½ cup light corn syrup

½ tsp vanilla

2 Tbsp powdered sugar

2 Tbsp cornstarch

In a large bowl, or the bowl to a stand mixer, combine gelatin and ¼ cup cold water. Let sit.

Meanwhile, combine ¼ cup cold water, granulated sugar, and corn syrup in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat until candy thermometer reaches 240 degrees. Remove from heat.

Turn mixer on low speed and slowly pour sugar mixture into the gelatin mixture, then turn mixer speed to high. Whip until mixture is thick, about 15 minutes. Add vanilla during last minute of mixing.

Grease an 8 x 8 inch pan. Mix the powdered sugar and cornstarch together and sprinkle in the greased pan to coat. Pour the marshmallow mixture into the pan, spreading with a greased spatula. Sprinkle additional sugar/cornstarch mixture over the top of the marshmallows. Let marshmallows sit overnight, uncovered.

Turn the marshmallows out onto a cutting board and cut into desired sizes or shapes using a pizza cutter or cookie cutters. Lightly dust all sides of the marshmal-

lows in the sugar/cornstarch mixture. Store in an airtight container for 3 – 4 weeks.

Orange Flavored Marshmallows: Follow above directions except: do not add vanilla. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp of orange oil and 2 drops of yellow food coloring + 1 drop red food coloring during the last minute of mixing.

Mocha Flavored Marshmallows: Follow above directions except: Add $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp espresso powder and 2 Tbsp cocoa to the water, sugar, corn syrup mixture. Then follow directions as given.

Candied Apple Flavored Marshmallows: Follow above directions except: Add $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cinnamon oil, $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp apple oil, and 2 drops of red food coloring instead of vanilla.

FROSTED COFFEE FUDGE

For coffee lovers with a sweet tooth!

3 cups granulated sugar

2 Tbsp instant coffee

Dash salt

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup light cream

1 Tbsp light corn syrup

2 Tbsp butter

1 tsp vanilla

1 cup chocolate morsels

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped walnuts

Combine sugar, coffee, salt, milk, cream and corn syrup in a large saucepan. Butter the top inside lip of the pan to prevent the mixture from boiling over.

Bring mixture to a boil over low heat, stirring constantly. Continue cooking without stirring until mixture reaches the soft ball stage, about 240 degrees. Remove from heat; add butter and vanilla but do not stir. Cool, without stirring until outside of pan feels lukewarm.

Beat until candy begins to thicken; pour into a greased 8 x 8 inch pan.

Melt chocolate in microwave (carefully!). Spread over fudge. Sprinkle with nuts.

PENUCHE

Penuche, also known as brown sugar fudge, seems to primarily be a New England delicacy. It's sure to become a delicacy in your house too, no matter where you live.

2 cups brown sugar

1/3 cup milk or cream

1 Tbsp butter

3/4 cup nuts, chopped (optional)

1 tsp vanilla

Put sugar, milk and butter into saucepan. Boil with as little stirring as possible until it makes a soft ball (235 degrees).

Remove from heat. Add nuts and vanilla. Beat until thick and pour into greased cake pans.

ALMOND BUTTER CRUNCH

Crunchy, chewy, rich, buttery, sweet and chocolaty – what's not to love!

1 cup butter

1 cup granulated sugar

3 Tbsp water

1 Tbsp light corn syrup

½ cup coarsely chopped almonds

4 oz. milk chocolate, chopped

½ cup finely chopped almonds

Melt butter in a medium saucepan. Add sugar, water and corn syrup. Cook over medium heat to soft crack stage, 290 degrees.

Remove from heat. Quickly stir in coarsely chopped nuts. Spread on a buttered baking sheet. Immediately sprinkle with chocolate.

Let chocolate stand for a few minutes until soft. Spread evenly. Sprinkle with fine nuts. Chill to firm. Break into pieces.

BROWN SUGAR TOFFEE

Another take on toffee, using a different cooking technique.

- 1 cup butter
- 1 ¼ cups brown sugar
- 3 Tbsp milk
- 1 Tbsp molasses
- ½ cup chopped walnuts (optional)
- 1 cup chocolate morsels (optional)

Line a 9 x 13 inch pan with foil; grease foil.

Butter the sides of a 2 quart saucepan. In the saucepan melt the butter over low heat. Stir in brown sugar, milk, and molasses. Cook over medium-high heat to boiling, stirring constantly.

Reduce heat to medium and continue cooking, stirring often, until 290 degrees. Pour mixture into greased pan. Let cool slightly and then sprinkle with chocolate morsels. Let morsels melt, and spread to cover toffee. Sprinkle with nuts.

When firm, lift out of pan and break candy into pieces.

PEANUT BRITTLE

This recipe is a family favorite. The trick is to spread it as thin as possible.

2 cups granulated sugar

1 cup corn syrup

1 cup water

2 cups Spanish peanuts

½ tsp salt

1 Tbsp butter

1 tsp baking soda

Heat and stir sugar, syrup, and water until sugar dissolves. Cook over medium heat to soft ball stage (235 degrees).

Add peanuts and salt. Cook to hard crack stage (305 degrees), stirring often. Remove from heat.

Quickly stir in butter and soda. Pour onto 2 large, buttered, cookie sheets, spreading with a spatula. Cool slightly and pull with forks. Break up when cold.

COGNAC CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES

Melt in your mouth smooth, with a decidedly adult flavor.

- 6 oz. semi-sweet chocolate
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 Tbsp cognac
- 2 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder

Break chocolate into small pieces. Combine chocolate and cream in a saucepan over low heat. Stir until cream boils. Remove from heat and stir until the chocolate melts. Stir in the cognac.

Pour mixture into a bowl. Press plastic wrap directly on to the surface of the chocolate. Chill until firm, about 2 hours. Shape into 1 inch balls. Roll in cocoa.

PECAN RUM BALLS

Looking for a rum ball recipe that doesn't use trans-fats laden cookies? Your search is over.

1 cup pecans, finely chopped (almost ground)

2 cups grated bittersweet chocolate

1 ½ cups powdered sugar

4 Tbsp dark rum

Cocoa powder, chocolate sprinkles, or additional chopped pecans

Combine nuts, chocolate and powdered sugar. Add rum, 1 Tbsp at a time, to moisten the mixture. Shape into small balls. Roll in cocoa, sprinkles or nuts. Chill.

NEEDHAMS

Needhams are a true Maine treat remembered from my childhood. They don't seem to be made commercially anymore, but you will find them at bake sales all over the state during the holidays.

- 1 baking potato
- 2 lbs. powdered sugar
- ½ cup butter, melted
- 2 (7 oz.) bags flaked coconut
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 1 (12 oz.) pkg. chocolate morsels
- 4 squares unsweetened baking chocolate

Peel potato and cut into small squares. Cook in boiling water until done. Drain and mash or put through a ricer. Measure $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of mashed potato and spoon into a large mixing bowl.

Add powdered sugar, butter, coconut and vanilla to bowl. Mix well to combine.

Press mixture into a greased jelly roll pan. Cover and chill overnight.

Cut into small squares or rectangles.

Melt chocolate morsels and unsweetened chocolate together, either in a double boiler or very carefully in the microwave. Stir well.

Dip each piece of the candy in chocolate to coat. Set on waxed paper or parchment paper to harden. Store Needhams in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

CREAM MINTS

This is a great recipe to make when family is over – to make use of all those strong arms for beating the mints! If that isn't possible, use a hand mixer, just be careful as the mixture sets up quickly.

2 cups granulated sugar

½ cup corn syrup

½ cup water

⅛ tsp cream of tartar

Flavored oil

Food coloring

Cook the sugar, corn syrup and water until sugar dissolves, stirring occasionally. Cook to thread stage (232 degrees) without stirring. Remove from heat and add cream of tartar. Beat with a wire whip until creamy. Add a few drops of flavored oil and food coloring. Drop from teaspoon onto waxed paper. (Keep pan over hot water if necessary.)

ORANGE JELLY CANDY

These soft confections will remind you of old-fashioned gum drops. Make them in several flavors by varying the extract and food coloring.

- ¾ cup apple juice
- 2 pkgs. powdered fruit pectin
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- ½ tsp orange extract or ⅛ tsp orange oil
- Red and yellow food coloring
- Additional granulated sugar or sanding sugar

Grease an 8 x 8 inch baking dish and set aside. In one saucepan, combine the juice, pectin and baking soda. In another saucepan, combine the sugar and corn syrup.

Bring both mixtures to a boil, stirring occasionally to prevent scorching. Boil both mixtures for 1 minute. Slowly pour the pectin mixture into the sugar mixture, stirring constantly. Continue boiling for 1 minute.

Remove from heat. Stir in the flavoring and food coloring. Pour into greased pan. Let sit at room temperature for 3 hours or until set.

Sprinkle waxed paper or parchment paper with sugar. Invert pan onto sugar. Cut jellies into squares with a pizza cutter or shapes using small cookie cutters. If cutters stick, dip in warm water. Roll jellies in additional sugar and let dry on a wire rack overnight. Store in an airtight container.

HARD CANDY

Be careful, once you start making this candy you might just become addicted. It is lots of fun to make different flavors and colors for holiday gifts.

1 cup granulated sugar

½ cup water

¼ cup light corn syrup

¼ tsp flavored oil

¼ tsp food coloring

Combine sugar, water and corn syrup in a medium saucepan. Butter the top inside lip of the pan to prevent the mixture from boiling over.

Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring until sugar melts. Increase heat to medium-high and cook until a candy thermometer reaches 310 degrees. Remove from heat, stir in oil and food coloring, and immediately pour onto a greased baking sheet or silicone candy mold.

Spread over sheet and score with a sharp knife if desired. Let stand until dry. Break along scored lines, or break into pieces, or remove from mold. Dust candy with a little bit of powdered sugar if sticking is a problem. Makes about ½ pound.

Note: Oils come in several flavors. Some of my favorites are cinnamon, orange, spearmint, and anise. You will find flavored oils at your local hobby shop or online. Flavored extracts can be used instead, although you will have to use a much greater amount, and the flavors will fade after a few weeks.

Food Mixes in a Jar

Mixes in a jar satisfy many gift-giving wants and needs; they are convenient for the recipient, attractively appetizing, and provide a good dose of creative fun for the giver. What more could you ask for?



HOLIDAY PEA SOUP MIX

The combination of yellow and green split peas makes this mix especially attractive. However, you can use all green, all yellow, or even red lentils for some of the peas.

½ cup green split peas

½ cup yellow split peas

⅓ cup pearly barley

1 Tbsp Spanish paprika

3 Tbsp instant, minced onion

2 Tbsp dried parsley

1 bay leaf

Layer ingredients, in order given above, into a 1 pint jar. Be sure to pick over split peas before putting in jar, removing broken peas and/or small rocks.

Attach the following instructions to jar:

To cook: Combine soup mix with 8 cups of water or chicken broth in a large saucepan. Add 2 cups of chopped ham or chicken and 1 (15 oz.) can of chopped tomatoes if desired. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 45-60 minutes or until peas and barley are tender. Add salt and pepper to taste.

SEASONED RICE MIX

Do you have any dried garden vegetables on hand? If so, add 1 – 2 tablespoons to this mix for an even tastier treat.

3 cups long grain rice

¼ cup dried parsley

2 Tbsp chicken or vegetable bouillon powder

2 tsp instant, minced onion

¼ tsp dried thyme

Layer ingredients, in order given above, into a 1 quart jar

Attach the following instructions to jar:

Stir all ingredients together. **To cook:** Boil 2 cups water. Add 1 cup of rice mix and 1 Tbsp butter or olive oil. Stir, cover, and reduce heat. Simmer for 20 minutes or until rice is tender. Makes about 4 servings.

SWISS STYLE MUESLI MIX

My favorite morning cereal mix – in a jar!

2 Tbsp dried, non-fat milk

2 Tbsp brown sugar

2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats

½ cup wheat flakes

¼ cup dried cranberries or dried blueberries

½ cup chopped hazelnuts or almonds

½ cup golden raisins

Layer ingredients, in order given above, into a 1 quart jar

Attach the following instructions to jar:

Stir all ingredients together. Serve ½ cup portions with milk. Top with fresh fruit if desired.

ROCKY ROAD BROWNIE MIX

The perfect mix to make with the kids during winter break.

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ tsp baking soda
- ½ cup chocolate morsels
- ½ cup chopped almonds or peanuts
- ½ cup miniature marshmallows

Layer ingredients in order given above into a 1 quart jar

Attach the following instructions to jar:

To Cook: Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Combine 3 eggs and ½ cup safflower oil in a large bowl. Add contents of jar. Stir until well mixed. Spoon mixture into a greased 8 x 8 inch pan. Bake for 35 minutes. Cool. Makes 16 brownies.

BLOND BROWNIES MIX

My mother made these often when I was a child. They are quick and easy to make, and delicious to eat!

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp vanilla powder
- 1 cup chocolate morsels
- ½ cup chopped walnuts

Layer ingredients, in order given above, into a 1 quart jar

Attach the following instructions to jar:

To Cook: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine 1 egg and ⅓ cup safflower oil in a large bowl. Add contents of jar. Stir until well mixed. Spoon mixture into a greased 8 x 8 inch pan. Bake for 25 minutes. Cool. Makes 16 brownies.

SPICE CAKE MIX

This no-frosting spice cake is perfect for those who desire a less sweet taste of the season.

1 ¼ cups all-purpose flour

1 cup packed brown sugar

¼ cup cornstarch

1 tsp baking soda

1 teaspoon each ground cinnamon and ground allspice

½ tsp ground cloves

1 cup cinnamon flavored cooking morsels (place in a sandwich bag)

Layer ingredients in order given above into a 1 quart jar, except the cinnamon morsels. Put morsels in a sandwich bag, and then place on top of the other ingredients in the jar.

Attach the following instructions to jar:

To Cook: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine ⅓ cup safflower oil, 1 Tbsp vinegar, and 1 cup water in a large bowl. Add contents of jar. Stir until well mixed. Spoon mixture into a greased, 8 x 8 inch pan. Sprinkle with cinnamon morsels. Bake for 30 minutes or until a pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool.

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