Noreen's Kitchen

Holiday Helper

Holiday Menu Plans and Recipes

Because The Holidays Should Be Happy NOT Horrible!

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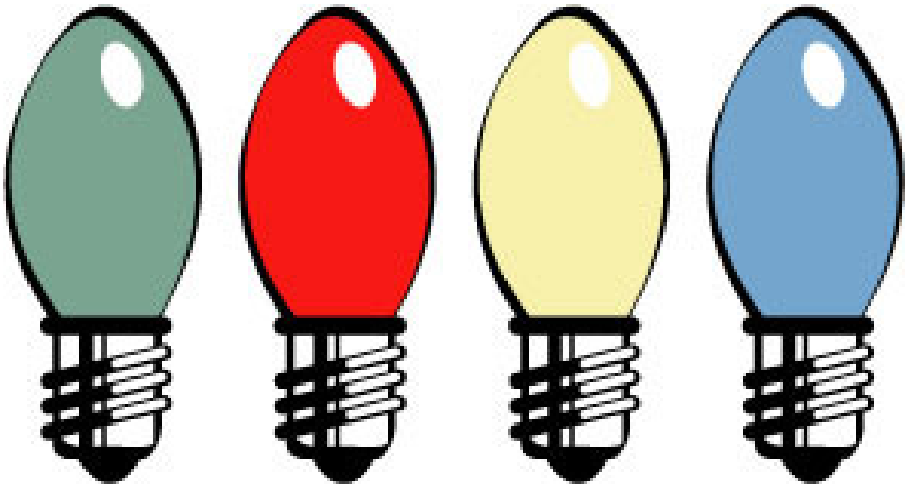


The Holidays are Coming!

The Holidays should not be horrible, they should be happy! This time of year tends to send some people reeling into a spiraling frenzy. There is no need for that, just arm yourself with a bundle of simple yet delicious recipes and a bag of easy tricks and you will be on your way to making memories and having good times with family and friends.

I've said it before and I'll say it again! Cooking is easy. Cooking is not something to be afraid of and certainly not something you should dread. Cooking can be very satisfying. It can help you de-stress and it can help you feel accomplished. The way you need to start is simple. Don't start out by thinking that you can make some big elaborate meal if you don't have the skills to do it. Yes, those things you see chef's making on television are lovely, but if you have never made more than a frozen dinner, they may not be the place to start.

Now with that being said, I know you may have looked at the menu plans in this book and said to yourself "is this chick crazy?" No I'm not. These menu plans look fancy, they taste fancy and they'll impress, even the most discriminating of palettes. However, there are a few tricks and tips that I am going to show you to get you through the big holidays coming up.

So, sit back and relax, read through the menus, read through the recipes and decide which things you would like to prepare for your holiday table. I have included shopping lists and pantry lists and detailed instructions to help you along the way. The best advice I can give you is don't be afraid. Just do it. Make it a couple times before you host guests and you will have the confidence to plan the best holiday ever!

I believe that cooking is a way I can show my family and friends how much they mean to me. If you approach your meal with this attitude, how can you help but succeed. Remember, also that there are no failures, only experiences. It's just a little food, if you mess up, toss it out and try again another time. Also remember that it is not the meal that makes the holiday. You could order Chinese food or Pizza it doesn't matter, the memories that you make together are what make a holiday perfect. I hope you enjoy this book as much as I enjoyed putting it together for you!

Noreen

DEDICATIONS

This book is dedicated to my daughters Molly and Micah whom I wish to never be without and who I hope will grow up and want to create these meals for their families someday. I love you more than life itself

To my husband Rick who has supported and inspired me to keep doing what I wanted to do. You helped me realize more than one dream because you believed in me.

To my mother whose skills in the kitchen have led me to a passion for cooking and food.

To my Mommom and Nanny, grandmothers who left me a legacy of recipes and memories that are recreated each time I cook one of their dishes.

To my good friend Sue, in another life we must have been sisters. Thank you for keeping my words straight. You are truly cherished.

Why I Wrote This Cookbook

In the two years or more that I have been making videos for my YouTube channel, I have had so many people tell me that they didn't know how to cook. Whether it was because their parents weren't home to cook or just didn't cook, or in a few cases, there were some people who shared that they actually grew up in foster or group homes and did not have that type of guidance.

I grew up in a home where, until I was 16, my mother stayed at home. I didn't even know how to use the washing machine until then, but because my dad was out of work, she had to step into the workplace to make sure that we had what we needed. I watched my mom cook every day of my life, until I moved out. I have a great passion for cooking and for food. When I hear people tell me that cooking looks hard or is too much work. It makes me sad.

I want everyone, no matter what skill level, to be able to sit down to a good meal at least once a day. I want everyone to make a promise to themselves, and their families, that eating together will not only make life easier, but also enrich and strengthen them as a family. Cooking is easy and you don't have to be a chef to get dinner on the table. You just have to know a few basic skills and a desire to achieve a satisfying meal.

I have divided the recipes into menu plans. It's a starting place for you to create your holiday masterpiece. I always find planning a meal much easier when I create a menu first. Once your menu is planned, you can write your grocery list and cooking schedule. This will help to alleviate a lot of stress when it comes to entertaining friends and family.

Starting with a holiday book made sense to me because it is this time of year that people seem to stress out the most over cooking. My goal has been to provide you with some good, solid, recipes that are easy to understand and execute. I hope you enjoy them and that they'll help you have a wonderful holiday season.

Happy Eating!

Time Management Tips

The key to a successful holiday dinner is time management! If you follow these steps you will be able to get your dinner on the table with little stress, strain or hair pulling.

1. Make a menu plan. If you don't do anything else, do this! Stick to the plan and you can't go wrong.
2. Get out all of your recipes and take an inventory of what ingredients you have on hand and what ingredients you will need.
3. Make a shopping list and do the shopping for your meal at least 5 days in advance if possible.
4. Make a schedule based on the recipes you choose to prepare. This will help you know what takes the longest and what takes the least amount of time. The biggest challenge, when serving any meal, is to have everything ready at the same time.
5. Prep your ingredients you will need such as celery, onions and herbs one or two days before. Place them in zip top bags or plastic containers in your refrigerator so when you're ready to make a recipe that calls for those ingredients, they're at your fingertips, ready to go.
6. Cranberry sauce can be made up to 5 days ahead, cook it, store it in an airtight container, in the refrigerator and when the day of your celebration arrives, take it out about 1 hour before serving.
7. Make all of your desserts a day before. This will free up oven space as well as save you time.
8. If you're using the "good" china for your holiday meal, take it out a week before. Make sure you have all the service pieces you need. Wash everything, use the dishwasher where possible. Anything you can do ahead of time will save you stress and time later.

9. If you do not need it as a workspace, consider setting your holiday table the night before. It saves a lot of time on a day when you will be doing a lot already.

10. On the day of your big meal. Start the day with a good breakfast. It will help you get off on the right foot.

11. Enlist the help of your family. Assign tasks that need to be accomplished, but that you don't necessarily have to do yourself. For instance, give one of the kids the job of taking out the trash, wiping up the counters or making sure the pets stay out from underfoot.
12. Promise yourself to clean as you go and you'll not be under a pile of dirty dishes. Fill one side of your sink with soapy water so you can quickly rinse out measuring cups and spoons that you may need to use again.
13. Use disposables like paper plates, bowls and aluminum pans for prep work, cooking and easy clean up. In the end, you will spend less time stressing and more time enjoying when you don’t have to go back to a stack of pots and pans to scrub after your feast.
14. Try to make sure the components of your meal are ready 1 hour before you are going to serve. Place the sliced turkey, the veggies, the sweet potatoes etc. in foil pans covered in a warm oven. If you choose to do this with mashed potatoes, just make sure you add a bit more milk because they will thicken up as they sit.
15. When you are ready to serve, lay out your spread with confidence and pride. Sit back and await the Ooohs and Aaahs that your beautifully and easily prepared meal will bring. You won’t believe what a difference a little time management and thinking ahead can do for you!

Traditional Turkey Dinner

Menu

The Perfect Roast Turkey
Savory Baked Stuffing
Classic Mashed Potatoes
Roasted Turkey Gravy
Candied Sweet Potatoes
Broccoli Soufflé
Green Beans with Almonds
Buttery Corn
Cranberry Relish
Buttermilk Biscuits

Dessert

Pumpkin Pie
Pecan Pie

Roasted Turkey

The bird is the prize of the holiday table in some homes. In ours, the turkey is reserved for our Thanksgiving celebration. Browned and beautiful, the perfect bird only takes a few ingredients and some preparation and a watchful eye to achieve the perfect result. This technique will give you a moist tender bird with a crispy skin that will impress everyone at your holiday gathering.

Ingredients

When choosing a turkey allow for ½ pound per person you will be serving plus extra if you would like to have leftovers.

10 to 15 pound turkey
1 Stick butter softened
2 Apples Cut in Half
1 Heart of celery cut into chunks
5 Whole carrots peeled and cut Into chunks
2 Large onions quartered
1 Orange quartered
2 Lemons quartered
1 Bunch fresh parsley
1 Bunch fresh sage
1 Bunch fresh thyme
1 Tablespoon cracked black pepper
1 Tablespoon kosher or sea salt
Water or apple cider

Directions

1. Remove one rack from the oven and place the remaining rack on the lowest setting.
2. Preheat oven to 450 degrees
3. Wash turkey and remove the giblet packet from the cavity. Wash both cavities well with cool running water. Dry well with paper towel.
4. Place Turkey in a roasting pan with a rack in the bottom.
5. Stuff Turkey cavity with a variety of the apple, celery, carrot, orange, lemon onion, and herbs. Place one half of an apple in the neck cavity and cover with the skin.
6. Tuck wing tips under the bird so they are snug and do not wiggle around.
7. With your hands. Spread the softened butter all over the turkey skin, making sure to get good coverage.
8. Slip your fingers gently between the skin and the breast meat and loosen the skin, rub more butter under the skin.
9. At this time you may arrange some sage leaves in a pretty pattern under the skin. It will cook into the skin and look beautiful when finished. It will also flavor the breast meat.
10. Sprinkle the turkey with salt and pepper.
11. Pour 1 Cup of water or apple cider into the bottom of the pan.
12. Place turkey in oven and allow to roast at 450 degrees for 30 minutes.

13. After 30 minutes reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees. Allow to roast for 15 minutes per pound or until a meat thermometer reads no less than 160 degrees.
14. Once the internal temperature reaches the correct level. Remove turkey from oven and cover with aluminum foil and allow to rest for at least 30 minutes.
15. Carve turkey prior to serving. Cut off legs and thighs, remove breast meat from bone and slice.
16. Arrange turkey on platter for serving.
17. Enjoy!

Turkey Roasting Time Chart

Size of Turkey	Unstuffed
4 to 6 pounds (breast)	1 to 2 hours
6 to 8 pounds (breast)	2 to 3 hours
8 to 12 pounds	2 to 3 ½ hours
12 to 14 pounds	3 ½ to 3 ¾ hours
14 to 18 pounds	3 ¾ to 4 hours
18 to 20 pounds	4 to 4 ½ hours
20 to 24 pounds	4 ½ to 5 hours

Use a meat thermometer to test the internal temperature. Place the thermometer in the thickest part of the breast or the thickest part of the thigh deep enough to touch the bone. When the temperature reaches 160 degrees, your turkey is done. Remove from oven, tent with aluminum foil and allow to rest for at least 30 minutes before carving.

Savory Baked Stuffing

Stuffing, dressing or whatever you call it, this is a traditional side dish for your roast turkey dinner. Not always considered safe to "stuff" your bird due to internal temperature and bacteria issues, this is a great alternative to get stuffing next to your drumstick! This stuffing can be baked in the oven to achieve a crusty top, or it can be placed in your crock pot and set to cook for the afternoon if your oven space is at a premium. This is also a good solution to time management. Many of the recipes you choose for your meal can me made in advance and kept warm or placed covered in the oven prior to your guest's arrival. You should be free to enjoy the special time you have prepared and not be chained to the kitchen.

Ingredients

Serves 6 to 8

1 bag stuffing cubes or 8 cups cubed, toasted bread
1 Stick Butter
2 Cups Chopped Onion
2 Cups Chopped Celery
1 Cup Chopped Carrot
1 Cup Chopped Parsley
4 Cups Chicken Stock
2 Eggs Lightly Beaten
1 Tablespoon Poultry Seasoning
1 Teaspoon Salt
1 Teaspoon Cracked Black Pepper

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large skillet, melt butter.
3. Sautee onion, celery and carrot until soft and onion is translucent.
4. Add in parsley, poultry seasoning, salt and pepper.
5. Add in stuffing cubes or 8 cups of cubed toasted bread, stir to combine. Making sure the bread is well incorporated with vegetables
6. Pour most of the stock into the pan and stir allowing the bread to absorb the liquid.
7. Add eggs to mixture and stir well.
8. Transfer stuffing to a baking pan.
9. Pour remaining stock over the mixture. Use a fork or spoon to ensure the liquid is absorbed by the bread.
10. Cover the pan with aluminum foil. Place on a baking sheet.
11. Place pan in oven and bake for one hour.
12. After an hour, remove foil and bake for an additional 20 minutes to ensure a crunchy top.

Classic Mashed Potatoes

The ultimate comfort food side dish is mashed potatoes. The recipe is simple and the taste is outstanding. Now, I know that everyone can mash a potato, but there a couple things I like to do differently. If you are new to the kitchen or just learning how to cook, this recipe is definitely something you can start with. In the end you will have a wonderful accompaniment to any roasted meat dish.

Ingredients

Serves 4 to 6

2 to 3 lbs of red skin potatoes

4 tablespoons butter

½ cup half and half or milk

½ cup sour cream or ½ brick cream cheese

1 teaspoon sea salt

1 teaspoon cracked black pepper

¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg

Directions

1. Wash and cut potatoes into evenly sized pieces and place in a large stockpot.
2. Fill stockpot with water to cover the potatoes by at least 1 inch.
3. Place a generous amount of salt in the water to help flavor the potatoes.
4. Cook over medium high heat and allow to simmer until potatoes are soft when pierced with a fork but not mushy. Approximately 20 minutes.
5. Drain potatoes in a colander.
6. While potatoes are draining, place butter and half and half or milk into the pot and return to the burner over low heat. Stir until butter is melted
7. Add potatoes back to the pot and mash until few lumps remain.
8. At this point you may wish to whip the potatoes with a hand mixer.
9. Add in sour cream or cream cheese, salt, pepper and nutmeg and whip on high speed until potatoes are silky and smooth and all of the ingredients have been well incorporated.
10. If you choose not to whip the potatoes, simply add in the remaining ingredients and stir well until everything is combined and well incorporated.
11. Serve and enjoy!

Roasted Turkey Gravy

Gravy is intimidating for some people. It really couldn't be easier. With a few simple steps and guidelines, you will have delicious gravy to go over your turkey and potatoes this holiday. The first step is to brew up some stock while you are roasting the bird. The secret to good stock is inside the turkey.

Ingredients

For Turkey Stock

1 Turkey neck and gizzards

2 Ribs of celery, cut into chunks

2 Carrots, peeled and cut Into chunks

1 Large onions, quartered skins left on

1 head of garlic, top sliced off

1 lemon, quartered

1 Handful of fresh parsley

A few stems of fresh thyme

1 Tablespoon peppercorns

1 Tablespoon kosher or sea salt

Water to cover

For Turkey Gravy

4 Cups turkey stock

1 Teaspoon Kitchen Bouquet (optional)

½ Teaspoon sea salt

½ Teaspoon cracked black pepper

½ to ¾ Cup Wondra flour

Directions

For Turkey Stock

1. In a 4 quart stock pot, combine, turkey neck, giblets, celery, carrots, onion, garlic, lemon parsley, thyme, peppercorns and salt.
2. Fill with cool water to cover.
3. Place on stove over low heat.
4. Allow to simmer during the time that you are roasting the turkey. Don't allow the pot to dry out. If the water level seems to be depleting, add some more water. Keeping a lid on the pot will help you avoid this problem.
5. Allow the stock to simmer no less than 2 hours for a full rich flavor.
6. When you are ready to make your gravy. Take the roasting pan the turkey was cooked in and remove any herb stems or vegetables that were roasted with the turkey.

7. Place the roasting pan over a stove burner turned to medium heat.
8. Pour 2 cups of water into the roasting pan and allow to come to a boil. During this time, using a wooden spoon, stir and scrape the browned bits from the bottom of the pan.
9. When the bottom of the pan feels smooth and the browned bits have been loosened, remove pan from heat and pour the pan drippings into the pot with the simmered stock.
10. Strain the stock through a wire sieve or strainer into a bowl or glass container.

For Gravy

11. To make gravy, place 4 cups of stock in a saucepan.
12. Add salt, pepper and kitchen bouquet if desired.
13. Before stock comes to a simmer, but while it is warm and continuing to heat, stream in Wondra flour and whisk in briskly. Continue to whisk until the mixture thickens over the heat.
14. When gravy reaches desired thickness, turn off heat and taste for seasoning. Add salt and pepper to taste. Check for thickness. If you find your gravy is a bit thin, whisk in a bit more Wondra.
15. ***NOTE*** Gravy will thicken even further as it cools down. You may wish to wait a few minutes before testing for desired thickness.
16. Now you are ready to serve your gravy.
17. Enjoy!

HINTI know this looks like a lot of steps to achieve your end result, but it is worth it and really doesn't take any additional time if you do things while you are roasting the turkey. If you would like to skip the step of making the stock altogether, than use some purchased chicken stock or even use some bullion dissolved in the desired amount of water. You will not have the same rich flavor you get from making your own stock, but you will still have delicious gravy to serve with your turkey.

Candied Sweet Potatoes

Thanksgiving, as well as, other holiday meals usually have the distinction of having something sweet served as a side dish. Everyone has their favorites, this one is certainly sure to make an appearance on many a holiday table. Sticky and sweet and delicious this is the perfect accompaniment to the salted gravy, meat and vegetable dishes that will most likely be served. These are made easy by using sweet potatoes or yams from a can. It will take a lot of time off of the preparation of this recipe. If you want to use fresh, go right ahead. I promise you won't know the difference.

Ingredients

Serves 8

2 large cans yams drained

1 cup brown sugar

1 cup light corn syrup or lyle's golden syrup

1 stick butter, melted

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground allspice

½ teaspoon ground cloves

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Place drained yams in a baking dish.
3. In a small saucepan melt butter.
4. Add brown sugar, corn syrup, cinnamon, allspice, cloves and nutmeg and bring to a simmer.
5. Pour over yams. Make sure all pieces of the potato are coated.
6. Place in oven, uncovered.
7. Check at 15 minute intervals and spoon the syrup over the potatoes until it is thick and sticky.
8. Remove from oven and transfer to a serving dish. Potatoes should be caramelized and gooey.
9. Enjoy!

Broccoli Souffle Casserole

My mom has been making this recipe for as long as I can remember. It was frequently on our dinner table when she was a stay at home Mom, because it was simple to make and required ingredients that were usually in the house. It's a wonderful side dish to any type of meat and can stand on it's own when served with a nice green salad and some French bread. I recently hosted Easter dinner for Rick's and my family. Mom and I talked about what we would serve on our buffet and this dish was at the top of my list. Mainly because it hadn't made an appearance for some time and it was something that's easily served. Everyone loved it and there was not a speck left. I love it when that happens.

Ingredients

Serves 8

1 bag 12 to 16 oz frozen broccoli florets (thawed)

1 cup small curd cottage cheese

3 large eggs beaten

1 cup shredded cheddar or jack cheese

1/4 cup flour

1/4 cup chopped green onion

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1/8 teaspoon grated or ground nutmeg

Dash of hot sauce

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, beat eggs until frothy.
3. Add cottage cheese and shredded cheese and blend well.
4. Whisk in flour until well blended.
5. Add green onion, salt, pepper, nutmeg and hot sauce and stir to combine.
6. Place thawed broccoli in a 3 quart casserole or baking dish coated with Cooking spray.
7. Pour egg mixture over broccoli, stirring gently to combine.
8. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes to 1 hour.
9. Souffle' is done when the center is firm and does not jiggle.

Green Beans and Almonds

This dish is a fancy, throw back to the 70's. A happy childhood memory, this dish was reserved for holidays and dinner parties. They are a lovely side dish to accompany just about any main dish. Maybe you remember them. If you've never had them, give them a try. You will find yourself reaching for the recipe time and time again.

Ingredients

Serves 6 to 8

2 lbs fresh green beans washed, strings removed.

4 tablespoons butter

1 shallot finely minced

½ cup slivered almonds

¼ teaspoon almond extract or
1 ounce of amaretto liquor

Directions

1. Fill a large bowl with ice water. Set aside.
2. Wash and remove strings from green beans.
3. Place green beans in a sauce pan and cover with cool water, add a teaspoon of salt.
4. Bring beans to a boil then reduce heat to a simmer. Allow to simmer for 5 minutes. Until beans are a vibrant green.
5. While the beans are simmering. Place butter and minced shallot in a heated skillet.
6. Sautee shallots until tender.
7. Add slivered almonds and allow to, toast in the butter.
8. Drain beans in a colander and plunge into ice water. This will help to set the bright color.
9. Immediately place beans in skillet with butter, shallots and almonds.
10. Sautee beans in skillet until they become tender crisp.
11. Add almond extract and toss to coat.
12. Transfer to a serving plate, serve and enjoy!

Buttery Corn

This is not so much of a recipe as a technique. You can apply this technique to just about any vegetable that you like, but I find corn to taste just like fresh corn on the cob when prepared this way. We all need to be a little nicer to ourselves during the holidays, especially those of us who are tasked with preparing the meals. Frozen vegetables are my first choice, then home canned and grocery store canned. If you take some high quality frozen vegetables or even vegetables that you have grown and frozen yourself and prepare them like this, no one will be the wiser, and it all won't matter, because they'll be too busy eating and enjoying their meal to worry about how you made it.

Ingredients

Serves 4

1 pound frozen shoe peg or white corn

3 tablespoons butter

1 teaspoon black pepper

1 teaspoon salt

Directions

1. Place frozen corn in microwave safe bowl.
2. Cut butter into cubes and place on top of corn.
3. Add salt and pepper to bowl.
4. Cover with plastic wrap or a plate and microwave on high for 4 to 5 minutes.
5. Remove from microwave and stir well, making sure that the corn is completely cooked and there are no cold spots. If there are, return to the oven for another minute.
6. Serve.

****You can also make this in a foil pan in the oven with all your other sides. Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes and you'll have no extra work. Your vegetables will be ready when the rest of your meal is done.****

Cranberry Relish

You will never buy a can of cranberry relish again after you try this recipe. A wonderful combination that is really is more like sweet chutney. If you are a cranberry lover, you are sure to love this version. It is a favorite of my family and I hope it becomes a favorite of yours.

Ingredients

Serves 6 to 8

1 bag (1 pound) fresh cranberries

½ cup dried cranberries

½ cup golden raisins

½ cup dried apples, diced

1 cup apple cider

Zest and juice of 1 navel orange

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

¼ teaspoon ground mace

Directions

1. In a medium saucepan combine, fresh cranberries, apple cider and orange juice.
2. Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer.
3. Allow to simmer until most of the cranberries have popped, or are soft when pressed with a spoon against the side of the saucepan.
4. Add in dried cranberries, golden raisins and dried apples. Stir to combine and allow to, simmer for 5 minutes.
5. Add in orange zest, cinnamon, nutmeg and mace. Allow to simmer for 5 minutes.
6. Turn off heat and place a lid on the saucepan. Set aside.
7. Allow to cool completely.
8. The mixture will get very thick when it is cool.
9. Serve along side any meat or poultry. Enjoy!

NOTE Make this recipe the day before you are going to serve it. Once it cools, place it in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Take out, about an hour before serving so the flavors will be bright.

Buttermilk Biscuits

In the South, biscuits are as personal as your religion. You may ask for a recipe, but chances are you won't get the whole thing. A woman in the South prides herself on her lofty and light biscuits. You choose the size and whether to bake them close together or far apart. Close together and the sides will be soft. Far apart and the biscuit will have a nice crunchy crust all around. Whichever you choose, these will be a welcomed addition to your holiday table.

Ingredients

Serves 8

4 cups all purpose flour

2 tablespoons baking powder

2 teaspoons salt

12 tablespoons cold butter

2 cups buttermilk

4 tablespoons butter, melted

Directions

Makes At Least 2 Dozen Biscuits

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large bowl whisk together, flour, baking powder and salt.
3. Cut butter into small cubes and toss with flour.
4. Using a pastry blender, cut butter into flour until the mixture resembles a course corn meal.
5. Slowly add buttermilk and gently mix just until the dough begins to form.
6. Turn out onto a well floured board.
7. Gently press dough together and fold over 3 or 4 times until it holds together.
8. Pat into a disk that is approximately 1/2 inch thick.
9. With a well floured biscuit cutter, cut biscuits close together so that you don't waste your dough. ****Do not twist the cutter or your biscuits will not rise fully****
10. Place on baking sheet either close together or spaced apart, your choice.
11. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until tops are golden brown.
12. Remove from oven and brush with melted butter. Serve.

Pumpkin Pie

What are the holidays without pumpkin pie? I have pictures of my oldest daughter and my dad sitting on the kitchen floor eating a pumpkin pie right out of the pan with one spoon. She was around 2 or 3 and of course it was a special moment. This traditional pie is a staple at many holiday dinners. Pumpkin can be out of a can or home grown and roasted in the oven. Don't have access to pumpkin? Use some roasted butternut squash and you will have a similar result. Anyway to make it, this pie is great!

Ingredients

Serves 6 to 8

2 cups pumpkin (1 small can)

1 12 ounce can evaporated milk

3 eggs

1 cup granulated sugar

1 teaspoon good quality vanilla extract

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground ginger

1 teaspoon ground cloves

1 teaspoon ground allspice

1 un-baked 9 inch deep dish pie shell

Directions

1. Preheat Oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large bowl combine pumpkin, evaporated milk, eggs, granulated sugar and vanilla. Whisk well to combine to a smooth consistency.
3. Add spices and blend well to incorporate.
4. Place pie shell on a lined baking sheet.
5. Pour pumpkin mixture into pie shell allowing the mixture to fill the shell to within ¼ inch of the top of the pie crust. You may have additional filling left over but not that much.
6. Bake for 1 hour and check for doneness. Pie is done when a knife inserted in the center comes out clean and free of any liquid. If pie is not done, return to oven for an additional 15 minutes.
7. If pie crust begins to turn brown, place a pie shield on the crust or make one from aluminum foil. This will prevent the crust from getting too browned.
8. Allow pie to cool for at least 2 hours.
9. Serve with Whipped cream and enjoy!

Classic Pecan Pie

Southern food never tasted so good! This pie will satisfy any sweet tooth. The pecans taste even nuttier when cooked in this simple custard. There is no substitute for pecan pie on Thanksgiving, Christmas or any holiday table for that matter. Down south this pie is sold everywhere, year round. It is very simple to make with ingredients that you may already have on hand.

Ingredients

Serves 8

1 cup dark corn syrup

3 eggs lightly beaten

1 cup granulated sugar

4 tablespoons butter melted

1 tablespoon cornstarch

2 teaspoons good quality vanilla extract

2 cups pecan halves

1 unbaked 9 inch deep dish pie shell

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, combine corn syrup, eggs, granulated sugar, melted butter, cornstarch and vanilla. Whisk until blended.
3. Place pecans in the bottom of the unbaked pie shell.
4. Pour liquid mixture over pecans into pie shell.
5. Place pie on a lined baking sheet to catch any spills while baking.
6. Bake for 45 minutes and check for doneness. Pie is done when center springs back after being touched.
7. If crust edges begin to brown, cover with a pie shield or some aluminum foil bent around the crust only.
8. When pie is done, remove from oven and place on a cooling rack, allow it to cool for at least 2 hours before wrapping or covering. Store at room temperature.
9. This pie is best when made one day prior to serving. The sugar custard is best when it has had time to set completely.

HINT If using a frozen pie shell, preheat the baking sheet before placing the pie in the oven. That way, your bottom crust will be crisp.

Holiday Ham Dinner

Menu

Baked Brown Sugar Ham
Carmelized Pineapple
Augratin Potatoes
Pineapple Bake
Roasted Asparagus
Garlic Aioli
Brown Butter Cauliflower
Fresh Carrot Raisin Salad
Northern Style Corn Bread

Dessert

Pineapple Upside Down Cake
Chocolate Cream Pie
Lemon Meringue Pie

Baked Brown Sugar Ham

Ham is a tradition for many families at the holidays. Whether it's Easter, Christmas or even Thanksgiving, a ham can be a sacred and special thing. People await it's arrival at the holiday table sometimes as much as they await Santa himself! This ham is covered in a brown sugar glaze, pineapples and Maraschino cherries. This recipe is a real throwback to my youth. To me, if it's not prepared like this, it's not ham. This is simple and delicious and quick to put together. You can serve this ham with any number of accompaniments. Everyone will love this sweet and savory selection.

Ingredients

Allow for 1/4 pound per person when selecting a ham and add 2 pounds for bone.
A shank end bone in ham is a better value.
I prefer a ham that is NOT spiral sliced.

1 shank end ham

1 or 2 cans pineapple rings (reserve juice)

1 jar maraschino cherries without stems

2 cups brown sugar (more if your ham is larger)

Whole cloves

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees.
2. A foil pan is recommended for easy clean up.
3. Remove ham from wrapper and rinse with cool water. Removing any plastic netting or protective material.
4. Place ham flat side down into baking pan.
5. Score ham 1/8 inch deep in a criss cross pattern with a sharp knife.
6. Rub Ham with brown sugar, packing it on to the meat all around.
7. Arrange pineapple slices on ham using toothpicks to secure. These will be removed before serving.
8. Place a cherry in the center of each pineapple ring, securing with a toothpick.
9. Stud the ham all around with cloves at each cross section of the scoring lines that you previously made.
10. Cover ham with aluminum foil and bake for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Removing foil for the last 30 minutes of cooking.
11. Remove from oven and allow to rest covered with foil for 30 minutes.
12. Slice, serve and enjoy.

Caramelized Pineapple Rings

This is such a versatile dish. We often serve this along side slice ham but you could serve this over waffles or pancakes or as my good friend Sue suggested; add some Maraschino cherries, toasted coconut and serve over vanilla ice cream and you have a dessert fit for a king. No matter what you choose this will surely become a family favorite at your house.

Ingredients

Serves 4

1 Can Sliced Pineapple (20 Ounces)

4 Tablespoons Butter

1/2 Cup Brown Sugar

Directions

1. Melt butter in a skillet and allow to brown slightly.
2. Add brown sugar and stir until it becomes thick and syrup like.
3. Add pineapple slices and cook until they become browned and caramelized. About 3 minutes per side.
4. You may have to do the pineapple rings in batches depending on the size of your skillet.
5. Set pineapple slices aside in a shallow bowl and reduce the caramel sauce for by a third. This should take about 5 minutes.
6. Pour syrup over pineapple slices and serve.

Augratin Potatoes

Who doesn't love a bubbling casserole full of cheesy delicious potatoes? This is the perfect side dish for your holiday ham or anytime you want a cheesy side dish. Warm and comforting, cheesy and smooth. Your family will love you for making this. Plan ahead of time, bake this next to your ham and everything will be ready to come out of the oven at the same time. Making your holiday low stress and easy!

Ingredients

Serves 6 to 8

4 large russet potatoes
4 tablespoons butter
4 tablespoons flour
2 cups milk
3 cups shredded cheddar cheese
1/2 cup grated parmesan
1 teaspoon black pepper
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

Directions

1. Wash and peel potatoes and slice into 1/4 inch slices. Place in a microwave safe bowl and microwave on full power for 5 minutes. Remove and set aside.
2. Melt butter in a heavy bottomed, medium sized saucepan.
3. Add flour and whisk until well incorporated.
4. Allow flour and butter to cook for about two minutes.
5. Add in Milk and continue to whisk until the sauce thickens.
6. Add shredded cheddar and whisk until the sauce becomes smooth.
7. Add in Parmesan cheese and stir well.
8. Add in Pepper, nutmeg, onion powder, garlic powder and Worcestershire Sauce. Stir to combine and allow to simmer for 2 to 3 minutes longer.
9. In a 9 x 13 casserole dish place a ladle full of sauce in bottom of dish and spread out.
10. Layer half of the potatoes on top of sauce.
11. Ladle half the remaining sauce over the first layer of potatoes.
12. Layer remaining potatoes on top and pour remaining sauce over the casserole.
13. Cover with foil and bake in a 350 degree oven for 1 hour.
14. Remove foil and continue to bake for 20 minutes until lightly browned and bubbly.
15. Allow to cool for 10 minutes before serving, in order to allow the starches to thicken the sauce.
16. Serve and Enjoy!

Mom's Pineapple Bake

This is a family favorite from my childhood. Originally printed in an old church cookbook, mom put her own spin on things. Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter would not be the same without this casserole on the table. Make this one your own. Add some coconut and Maraschino cherries to the mix and you can have a pina colada bake! This is also great by itself for dessert, brunch or breakfast.

Ingredients

Makes a 9x13 casserole (Approximately 18 Servings)

8 cups cubed bread

2 sticks butter, melted

8 eggs

1 cup granulated sugar

2 20 ounce cans crushed pineapple, drained

4 cups mini marshmallows, divided

Directions

1. Preheat Oven to 350 degrees.
2. Fill an oven proof pan with water and place on a lower rack in the oven while preheating.
3. Prepare a 9 x 13 baking dish with cooking spray.
4. In a large bowl, combine melted butter and pineapple and blend thoroughly.
5. Add in Eggs and beat until well combined.
6. Add sugar to egg mixture and blend completely.
7. Mix bread cubes into egg mixture, blending until the bread as absorbed the liquid.
8. Stir in 2 cups of mini marshmallows.
9. Pour mixture into prepared pan.
10. Bake on rack above pan of water for approximately 45 minutes. Check for doneness. Pineapple bake is done when a knife inserted in the center comes out clean.
11. Remove from oven and top with remaining 2 cups of mini marshmallows.
12. Return to oven for 5 minutes or until marshmallows have browned slightly.
13. Allow to cool for 15 minutes before serving.
14. Enjoy!

Roasted Asparagus

Asparagus is one of those love it or hate it vegetables. My husband was never really a big fan. But when I roasted them like this and served them with a simple garlic aioli, he was won over by these beautiful stalks. I find that this is really the best way to enjoy asparagus. It is almost decadent to eat with your fingers, and by all etiquette standards it is even allowed! These will pair well with anything, poultry, beef, ham, even fish. I promise this is worth a try. It is also one of the best ways to get all the nutrients out of the vegetable since you are briefly roasting them instead of boiling them.

Ingredients

Serves 4 to 6

2 Pounds Fresh Asparagus

2 to 3 Tablespoons Olive Oil

Kosher Salt

Cracked Black Pepper

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Wash and dry asparagus.
3. Place on a lined baking sheet
4. Drizzle olive oil over asparagus.
5. Sprinkle salt and pepper over and mix up with your hands so the asparagus becomes coated with the oil, salt and pepper.
6. Arrange in a single layer on baking sheet
7. Place in oven for approximately 10 minutes. Watch carefully so you don't burn them.
8. Remove to a platter along side some garlic aioli and serve.
9. Enjoy!

Quick Garlic Aioli

Aioli used to be scary to me. I would watch all of the famous chefs prepare this sauce and never consider making it for myself. When I learned that it is nothing more than flavored mayonnaise, I felt silly. Anyone can make this

Ingredients

Serves 4 to 6

1 Cup good quality mayonnaise

1 Tablespoon dijon mustard

Juice from ½ of a fresh lemon

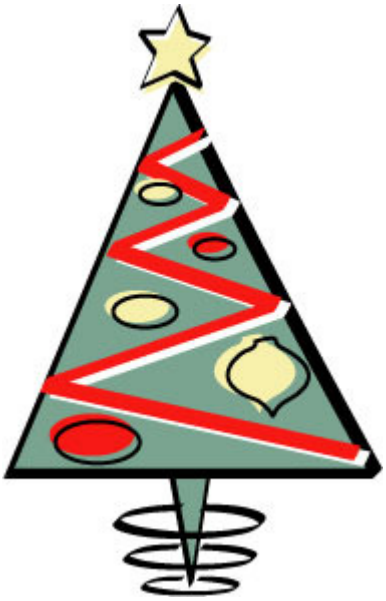
1 to 2 Cloves garlic, minced

2 Teaspoons fresh tarragon, minced

Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and stir well.
2. Serve along side roasted vegetables, meats or as a gourmet spread on that post holiday turkey sandwich.
3. Enjoy!



Brown Buttered Cauliflower

Here is a really quick and really simple side that makes it look like you slaved over it! You won't believe how simple this one is. I learned how to make this from my Nanny, my Mom's mom. She was German through and through, having immigrated here at the age of 19 and I have many wonderful memories of her -- mostly the food that she shared with our family. To say that she was typical German would be an understatement, she was staunch, opinionated and very stubborn. She never let anyone stop her from doing exactly what she wanted to do. She often made this vegetable side dish with fried pork chops or chicken. No matter what you choose to pair this dish with, you'll certainly love it. The bread crumbs add a nutty flavor to the mild cauliflower, and it is addictive. I have to double the recipe when I cook this dish because everyone in my family loves it.

Ingredients

Serves 8

1 large head fresh cauliflower or
1 pound bag of frozen cauliflower

1/4 cup water

1 cup dried bread crumbs

4 tablespoon butter

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1/8 teaspoon freshly grated or ground nutmeg

Directions

Serves 6

1. If using fresh Cauliflower: prepare by washing and drying and cutting the head in half and then in quarters and remove the core. Break into florets.
2. Place fresh Cauliflower in microwave safe bowl along with the water. Cover with plastic wrap or a lid/plate and microwave on high for 5 minutes to steam the vegetable.
3. ***If using frozen Cauliflower, place in microwave safe bowl along with water and microwave covered for 3 to 4 minutes until heated through and proceed.
4. Drain Cauliflower, return to bowl and set aside.
5. In a frying pan, melt butter over low heat and allow it to brown slightly.
6. Add bread crumbs and continue to stir constantly over low heat until the bread crumbs become browned and start to smell roasted and nutty.
7. Pour hot bread crumbs over cauliflower and gently stir to coat the florets. Serve.

Carrot Raisin Salad

Ingredients

Serves 8

1 pound carrots

2 stalks celery chopped

1/2 cup dried cranberries

1/2 cup golden raisins

1/2 cup pecans, chopped

1 cup mayonnaise

1/2 cup orange juice

1 tablespoon orange zest

1 teaspoon celery seed

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Directions

Serves 8

1. Wash and grate carrots making sure to cut off both ends and remove any bad spots.

2. In a large bowl blend together Mayonnaise, Orange Juice, Orange Zest, Celery Seed and Cinnamon. Whisk well to combine.
3. Add Carrots, Celery, Dried Cranberries, Golden Raisins and Chopped Pecans to the dressing in the bowl. Blend well making sure to coat all the vegetables with dressing.
4. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.
5. Stir well before serving.
6. Enjoy!

Northern Style Cornbread

Cornbread is a breakfast favorite in our house on cold and frosty mornings. Although not reserved strictly for breakfast, we also enjoy this recipe made into muffins and served along side my husband's chili or placed next to a steaming bowl of hot beans and rice. I didn't grow up eating cornbread. My mother was just not partial to it. Since moving to the south, I have developed a love for this dense delicious quick bread. I have honed my recipe into this very simple and satisfying side dish. I have titled this Northern Cornbread because not all Cornbread is created equal. Northerner's prefer a sweeter, moist and cake like cornbread, while Southerner's prefer a denser, less sweet version which is bold with corn flavor. Truth be told, I am a Yankee, being born and somewhat raised in New Jersey. Hopefully all my Southern friends will not hold that against me. Whatever way you prefer, I hope you will give this a try. It will fill you up in the morning or be a nice companion to your soup at dinner.

Ingredients

Makes a 9 x 13 pan of Cornbread (18 servings) or 24 corn muffins or 48 mini muffins

2 Sticks Butter, Melted

1 1/3 Cups Granulated Sugar

4 Eggs, Lightly Beaten

2 Cups Buttermilk *

1 Teaspoon Baking Soda

2 Cups Cornmeal

2 Cups All Purpose Flour

1 Teaspoon Salt

Directions

1. Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees
2. In a large bowl, combine melted butter with sugar and stir well to combine.
3. Quickly whisk in the beaten eggs until well blended.
4. Add the baking soda to the buttermilk in a measuring cup and stir well.
5. Add buttermilk mixture to butter, sugar and egg mixture and whisk to blend.
6. Stir in cornmeal, flour and salt and stir until well combined. A few lumps may still remain.
7. Pour into a 9 x 13 pan that has been sprayed with cooking oil spray or 24 standard muffin cups or 48 mini muffin cups that have been lined with paper liners.
8. Bake 30 to 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
9. Slather with some butter and honey and enjoy!

***NOTE:** *If you do not have buttermilk, make some! Measure 2 cups of milk and add ¼ cup of white vinegar or bottled lemon juice, stir well and allow it to sit for 10 minutes. This will simulate the properties of buttermilk in the recipe.*

Pineapple Upside Down Cake

Here is a recipe that we have had in our family for years. This cake is an often requested favorite of family and friends. I have, on more than one occasion been paid to bake this for people, so they could take it to special events. It's that good! It's also super easy, you can use easily accessible ingredients and put this cake together for your holiday table. Your family is going to go bananas, or should we say pineapples, over this one!

Ingredients

Serves 12

1 pineapple cake mix

1 box (4 serving size) instant vanilla pudding

1 cup pineapple juice (reserved from cans)

½ cup vegetable oil

4 eggs

2 – 20 ounce cans pineapple rings

1 cup brown sugar

1 stick butter

12 maraschino cherries stems removed

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Open canned pineapple and drain juice into a measuring cup. Set pineapple and juice aside for later.
3. Place butter in a metal 9 x 13 baking pan and place on stove burner over medium heat. Allow butter to melt completely.
4. Stir brown sugar into butter and allow it to melt, until it is somewhat bubbly. Remove from burner.
5. Make sure the sugar, butter mixture is evenly spread in the bottom of the pan and top it with 12 pineapple rings. For this size pan, you will have 3 x 4.
6. Place a cherry inside each of each of the pineapple rings. Set pan aside and make batter.
7. In large mixer bowl combine cake mix, instant pudding, pineapple juice, vegetable oil and eggs. Blend on medium speed until batter is light yellow and all the ingredients have incorporated thoroughly.
8. Carefully pour batter over the pineapple and sugar mixture in the pan. Gently spreading the batter to the edges of the pan.
9. Bake on the middle rack of the oven for 35 to 40 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean.
10. Immediately turn cake out onto a lined baking sheet.
11. Allow to cool completely before serving and enjoy!

Easy Chocolate Cream Pie

Chocolate cream pie is a frequent visitor at our holiday table. We almost always have this selection for Thanksgiving and my daughter Micah always requests this as one of the desserts for her birthday dinner.

This recipe is quick and easy. Please don't balk at my use of instant pudding mix. As I said in another recipe, I am trying to help you get through the holidays unscathed. It is how you use the mix that makes the difference! You will think you are indulging in a classic treat that evokes thoughts of fancy restaurants or hours toiling in a hot kitchen. This recipe will change your mind and make chocolate cream pie more accessible for you and your family.

Ingredients

Serves 8

2 Boxes (4 serving size) Chocolate fudge instant pudding mix

3 Cups cold half and half

1 Teaspoon good quality vanilla extract

1 Teaspoon orange extract or Grand Marnier

1 Baked 9 inch pie shell cooled

1 Pint whipping cream

1 Teaspoon good quality vanilla

Chocolate shavings

Directions

1. In mixer bowl, combine pudding mix, half and half and extract(s)
2. Blend with whisk attachment until slightly thickened.
3. Cover with plastic wrap and place in refrigerator for 30 minutes.
4. Remove from refrigerator and stir well.
5. Pour filling into baked pie shell and smooth. You may have more filling than will fit in the pie shell. Cooks Treat!
6. Place covered pie in refrigerator while you prepare the topping.
7. Whip cream by placing in mixer bowl and whipping until soft peaks form.
8. Add vanilla and continue beating until firm. Don't over beat or you will have butter.
9. Top pie with whipped cream either by spooning and smoothing or by placing the cream in a pastry bag or a zip top bag with a corner snipped off and piping in a decorative manner.
10. Sprinkle with chocolate shavings. You can do this by running your vegetable peeler down the side of a dark chocolate bar.
11. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours before slicing.

Lemon Meringue Pie

This is my all time favorite pie and the first pie I ever learned to make. Using the pudding mix makes this easy. Remember to save the egg whites in the refrigerator for when you are ready to make the meringue. I always add a couple extra egg whites because I like a lofty meringue. Bake this the day before you would like to serve it so that the filling has time to set. Also remember to spread your meringue all the way to the edges of the pie, sealing the filling into the crust so you won't have shrinkage on your topping.

Ingredients

Serves 8

Lemon filling

1 box (4 serving size) cooked lemon pudding mix
2/3 cup sugar
2 1/4 cups water
3 egg yolks
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons lemon juice

Meringue

Reserved egg whites plus 2 additional 5 total make sure they are room temperature
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 baked 9 inch deep dish pie shell

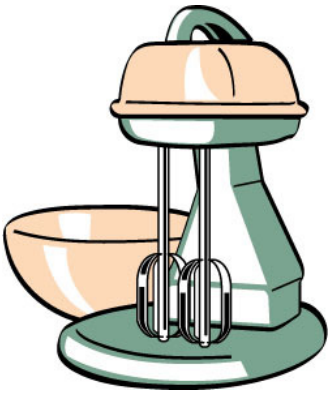
Directions

Lemon Filling

1. In a medium saucepan mix pudding mix and sugar and 1/4 cup water with whisk.
2. Add egg yolks and remaining water and blend well.
3. Cook over medium heat stirring constantly so it won't burn. Don't be tempted to turn the heat up. Once this begins to cook, it will burn very easily.
4. Stir, stir, stir. It may take 15 to 20 minutes for this to thicken.
5. Once mixture comes to a full rolling boil, remove from heat.
6. Stir in butter and lemon juice.
7. Allow to cool in saucepan for about 30 minutes.
8. Pour filling into a cooled baked 9 inch pie shell
9. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until completely cooled

Meringue

10. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
11. Fit your mixer with the whip attachment or beaters.
12. Use a glass or metal bowl that has been cleaned and dried very well. If there is any trace of grease on your bowl or beaters or whip, the egg whites will not whip properly.
13. Place egg whites in bowl and begin to beat on low speed. Continue to beat until frothy.
14. Add in sugar and turn the mixer to high. Beat until soft peaks form.
15. Add in Cream of Tartar and continue to beat until you achieve stiff peaks.
16. Be careful not to over whip or your meringue will break.
17. Drop meringue on top of pie in spoonfuls and smooth down to seal into the crust or you may pipe the meringue through a pastry bag fitted with a large star tip. This will make for a lovely design on the finished pie.
18. Place pie on a baking sheet for stability.
19. Bake pie for 10 to 15 minutes, watching carefully that the meringue does not burn.
20. When meringue is browned on top, remove from oven and allow it to cool on a rack for 15 minutes.
21. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.



Crusted Roast Beef Dinner

Menu

Crusted Roast of Beef
Au Jus
Horseradish Sauce
Garlic Mashed Potatoes
Creamed Spinach
Old Fashioned Yeast Rolls

Dessert

Chocolate Toffee Trifle
Quick and Easy Banana Pudding
5 Flavor Pound Cake

Crusted Roast Beef

When ever I hear the words "Roast Beef", I always think of the Dr. Seuss book, How the Grinch Stole Christmas. Because of how he even took the roast beast! I remember being appalled at the thought of it, even as a child. The bum took everything, even their dinner!? WOW! I always think of Christmas dinner as a meal of roast beef and all the trimmings. I don't really know why because growing up, we only had this meal for Christmas one time. I suppose it is more of a romantic association than anything. No matter how you slice it, this roast beef is the best. My grandmother made it this way, my mother made it this way, I make it this way and now you can make it this way.

Ingredients

When purchasing meat allow for ½ pound per person. The size of the roast depends of the number of people to be fed.

4 to 5 lb rump or bottom round roast

2 tablespoons Jane's Krazy Mixed up Salt
or sea salt or course kosher salt

1 tablespoon cracked black pepper

1 tablespoon granulated garlic

1 tablespoon granulated onion

1 tablespoon dried thyme

1 tablespoon dried marjoram

1 tablespoon Mrs. Dash or any salt free blend

Directions

1. Preheat Oven to 450 degrees.
2. Wash roast under cool water and dry with paper towel.
3. Combine salt, pepper, granulated garlic, granulated onion, dried thyme, dried marjoram and salt free blend in a bowl.
4. On a few layers of paper towel. Spread out spice blend.
5. Roll roast in spices to cover the entire outer surface completely.
6. Place roast in a pan and add ½ cup of water to bottom.
7. Place roast on middle rack of preheated oven and cook at 450 degrees for 20 minutes.
8. After 20 minutes reduce heat to 350 degrees and continue to cook roast for 15 minutes per pound (for a 5 pound roast that would be an additional 1 hour and 15 minutes past the initial 20 minute roasting time at the higher temperature.)
9. When the roast has cooked for 15 minutes per pound, turn the oven off and leave the roast in the oven undisturbed for an additional 20 minutes.
10. Remove roast from oven and allow it to sit at room temperature for and additional 10 minutes before slicing. This will allow the juices in the meat to redistribute.
11. Slice, serve and enjoy!

Au Jus

This, light, flavorful broth is the perfect accompaniment to roast beef. Make enough to have French dip sandwiches with some of the leftovers!

Ingredients

Pan drippings from beef roast
3 cups beef stock -- canned or boxed
1 teaspoon kitchen bouquet
1 teaspoon cracked black pepper
1/2 teaspoon salt

Directions

1. Once you have removed the roast from the pan, skim the fat from the pan drippings
2. Place the pan on a stove burner and turn the heat to medium.
3. Using a flat bottomed spoon, gently scrape the fond or brown bits from the bottom of the roasting pan. When everything begins to bubble and the bits are loosened, add the stock to the pan along with the kitchen bouquet and the salt and pepper.
4. Stir constantly until the au jus begins to simmer. Simmer for 5 minutes over medium heat. Stirring often to avoid burning.
5. Turn off heat and strain the au jus through a mesh sieve into a serving bowl.
6. Serve along with the roast beef or as a dipping sauce for French dip sandwiches.

Horseradish Sauce

This creamy and spicy sauce is the perfect accompaniment for a nice slice of roast beef, just like you get at your favorite steak house. This sauce will impress everyone at your next family gathering. You probably already have these ingredients in your fridge. Let this chill for at least an hour to allow the flavors to meld and come together.

Ingredients

1 cup sour cream

2 tablespoons prepared horseradish (not creamed horseradish)

2 tablespoons chopped chive or green onion

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 teaspoon cracked black pepper

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and stir well.
2. Cover and refrigerate for at least one hour before serving.
3. Serve next to a nice slice of roast beef or prime rib or slather on a sandwich for a spicy treat!
4. Enjoy!

Garlic Mashed Potatoes

Mashed potatoes are the ultimate in comfort food. Add some garlic and you really steal the show. Pair these with any roasted or grilled meats, poultry or fish and you have a side that can go a long way to making your crew happy. These are just as easy as traditional mashed potatoes, but the flavor is explosive. Top them with the gravy of your choice or some shredded cheese and you have something special to serve friends and family for the holidays and beyond.

Ingredients

Serves 6 to 8

3 lbs Yukon gold potatoes, washed

6 cloves of garlic, peeled and smashed

1 stick butter

1 cup sour cream

½ cup milk or half and half

1 teaspoon sea salt

1 teaspoon cracked black pepper

¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg

Directions

1. Wash and cut potatoes into uniform pieces. Do not peel.
2. Peel garlic cloves and smash with the flat side of your knife.
3. Place potatoes and garlic in a large stock pot and fill the pot with cold water to cover the potatoes by at least one inch.
4. Place on medium heat and bring to a boil. Allow to simmer until the potatoes are fork tender. About 20 minutes.
5. Drain potatoes into a colander
6. Return stock pot to burner. Add butter to the pot and allow it melt.
7. Return the potatoes to the pot and mash slightly.
8. Add sour cream, salt, pepper and nutmeg.
9. At this point you can use your electric hand mixer to whip the potatoes or you can continue to mash by hand.
10. Check for consistency. If you think the potatoes are a bit thick, add the milk or a portion of it until it is to your liking.
11. Taste for salt and pepper.
12. Serve and enjoy!

Creamed Spinach

Creamed spinach was always reserved for special occasions when I was growing up. You either got it when it was someone's birthday or a major holiday like Thanksgiving or Christmas. Sometimes, my mom would make this on the sly for a weeknight treat. As I got older it was reserved as a steakhouse side dish. When I learned that this dish was so simple to make, I realized that it was good for any time of the year. Spinach is a favorite in my house so creamed spinach is always a popular go along, with roast beef, grilled meats or even by itself. Frozen spinach is used here, but if you prefer, use fresh and steam it up yourself but make sure you use organic. Spinach is one of the most highly sprayed vegetables in the store today. Whichever you choose it is going to be delicious!

Ingredients

Serves 8 to 10

2 Bags organic frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed dry

4 Tablespoons butter(half a stick)

½ Cup onion, minced

2 Clove of garlic, minced

½ Teaspoon salt

½ Teaspoon cracked black pepper

¼ Teaspoon grated nutmeg

1 Brick (8 oz) cream cheese cut into cubes

1 ½ Cups half and half

Directions

1. Thaw spinach and drain. Squeeze dry in a clean towel. You want this as dry as possible. Set aside.
2. In a large saucepan, melt butter over medium heat.
3. Add onion and sautee until you can smell it.
4. Add garlic and sautee vegetables until they are soft and onions are translucent.
5. Add in 1 cup half and half and stir to combine.
6. Gradually add in cream cheese a little at a time and whisk into cream and vegetables.
7. Add in salt, pepper and nutmeg stir to combine.
8. Add in the spinach and combine with the cream mixture until it is well combined.
9. At this point you will decide whether or not the mixture needs the additional ½ cup of half and half. If it seems a bit thick, add it in and stir well.
10. Serve this next to any grilled or roasted meat and you will feel like you're dining at a steakhouse.
11. Enjoy!

Old Fashioned Yeast Dinner Rolls

The classic dinner roll that we all remember is easier to make than you think. Give these a try!

Ingredients

Makes 16 rolls

3 ½ Cups bread flour

2 Teaspoons instant yeast

¼ Cup instant potato flakes

3 Tablespoons nonfat dry milk

2 Tablespoons sugar

1 ½ teaspoons salt

4 Tablespoons butter softened

2/3 Cup hot tap water

½ Cup cold milk

2 Tablespoons melted butter for topping

Directions

1. In the bowl of your stand mixer combine milk, hot tap water, yeast, sugar, salt and butter. Whisk lightly.
2. Add in flour, potato flakes and dry milk.
3. Place on mixer with dough hook attached.
4. Mix until dough pulls away from sides of bowl and then continue to knead for 7 minutes. The inside of the bowl should be fairly clean and the dough should not be sticky.
5. Remove dough from bowl and gather into a ball. Coat inside of bowl with a bit of oil and place the dough back in the bowl to rise.
6. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and a clean dish towel and set in a warm area of your kitchen and allow dough to rise until doubled in size. About 1 hour.
7. Remove dough from bowl and press air out. Don't punch your dough it didn't do anything to you!
8. Divide dough into 16 equal pieces. Round and smooth the dough pieces into rolls.
9. Place rolls into 2 buttered 9 inch round baking pans. 8 rolls per pan.
10. Cover and allow to rise until doubled in size. About 45 minutes to an hour.
11. While dough is rising, preheat oven to 350 degrees.
12. When rolls are puffy and fill the pan uncover and place on center rack in oven.
13. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes Until golden brown. Remove from oven allow rolls to cool on rack. Brush tops with melted butter.
14. Enjoy!

Chocolate Toffee Trifle

When you mix chocolate, chocolate, chocolate and toffee, how can you go wrong? This is sure to please even the most far gone chocoholic in your family.

Ingredients

Serves 8 to 10

1 recipe of your favorite brownies prepared
(9 x 13 pan)

2 boxes instant chocolate fudge pudding

3 cups half and half

1 cup mini chocolate chips

1 cup of toffee bits

1 large tub frozen whipped topping, thawed

Chocolate curls (optional)

Directions

1. Prepare your favorite brownie recipe that makes a 9 x 13 pan of brownies. Allow to cool and cut into 1 “cubes.
2. Prepare pudding using two boxes of instant pudding and 3 cups half and half. Blend well and place in the refrigerator and allow to set for 20 minutes.

ASSEMBLY

1. In a trifle bowl or large glass serving bowl place one third of the brownie cubes in the bottom.
2. Top with 1/3 of the chocolate pudding mixture, spreading evenly to the edges.
3. Top with 1 ½ cups whipped topping.
4. Sprinkle with 1/3 cup mini chocolate chips and 1/3 cup of toffee bits.
5. Continue to layer remaining ingredients. Ending with whipped topping.
6. Sprinkle top with some additional mini chocolate chips and toffee bits and some chocolate curls (optional)
7. Place trifle in the refrigerator and allow to chill at least 2 hours.
8. When serving, use a long handled serving spoon and scoop deep into the dish so everyone gets a bit of all the delicious layers.
9. Enjoy

Quick and Easy Banana Pudding

I have met few people, who didn't love classic southern banana pudding. This dish is usually made from scratch, with custard and a meringue on top that is then baked until browned. This version eliminates all of the work and gives you all of the flavor and satisfaction. Only you will know that this isn't made from scratch unless you want to share the recipe. Once you try this, you will want to make it again and again for family gatherings, church suppers and parties.

Ingredients

Serves 12

For pudding

2 boxes (4 serving size) vanilla instant pudding

3 ½ cups half and half

1 teaspoon good quality vanilla extract

1 teaspoon banana liquor or extract (optional)

4 bananas sliced

1 box vanilla wafers (you may not need it all)

For topping

1 pint heavy whipping cream

¼ cup powdered sugar

1 teaspoon good quality vanilla extract

1 teaspoon banana liquor or extract (optional)

Directions

Pudding

1. Place instant pudding powder in mixing bowl. Add half and half mix with an electric mixer on low speed until well combined. Add vanilla and banana flavorings mix well.

2. Cover pudding and place in refrigerator for 30 minutes until set.

3. In a 9 x 13 casserole dish place a layer of vanilla wafers along the bottom.

4. Add a layer of sliced bananas.

5. Cover with half of pudding mixture.

6. Add another layer of cookies. You may line the sides of the dish with cookies if desired.

7. Add more bananas and top with remainder of pudding.

8. Cover with plastic wrap and place in refrigerator while you make the topping.

Topping

1. Add cold whipping cream to mixer bowl and beat on medium to low speed until soft peaks begin to form.

2. Add sugar along with vanilla and banana flavorings and continue to beat until firm peaks form when lifted with the beaters.

3. Spoon or pipe through a pastry bag the whipped cream on to the top of the banana pudding. Decorate with more vanilla wafers.

4. Place in refrigerator for at least 4 hours or overnight so the wafers become soft and cake like before serving.

5. Enjoy!

Tips and Tricks

1. This recipe uses instant pudding. Should you choose to make your own vanilla custard/pudding from scratch, by all means do it! I'm trying to help your holidays be less hectic and sometimes a mix is just the ticket!

2. Using half and half in the instant pudding instead of plain milk gives you, richer, creamier custard much like you would have if you had made it from scratch. My mom has been using this trick for years to fill her cream puffs.

3. When you begin the recipe place the mixing bowl you will use for the whipped cream along with the beaters in the freezer. Starting with cold tools always gives you the best end result when whipping cream.

4. When you slice your bananas place them in a bowl with about a tablespoon of lemon juice so that you can avoid having them oxidize or get brown and unappealing.

5. Using the vanilla extract and the banana liquor gives a nice added flavor boost. You can leave any of them out, but give them a try and see what you think.

6. When topping the pudding, place the whipped cream in a disposable pastry bag or a 1 gallon zip top bag with a corner snipped off, you can place a star tip in the bag and pipe the cream on top just like a fancy restaurant. Simple, pretty and delicious!

Five Flavor, Cream Cheese

Pound Cake

Ingredients

Serves 12

Cake

1 1/2 cup butter (3 sticks) at room temperature
3 cups white sugar
5 eggs, beaten
3 cups cake flour
1-8oz brick cream cheese at room temperature
1 teaspoon coconut extract
1 teaspoon lemon extract
1 teaspoon rum flavored extract
1 teaspoon butter flavored extract
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Glaze

1 cup granulated
1/4 cup water
1/2 teaspoon coconut extract
1/2 teaspoon rum flavored extract
1/2 teaspoon butter flavored extract
1/2 teaspoon lemon extract
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C). Grease a 10 inch tube pan. In a small bowl, combine flour and baking powder. Set aside. In a measuring cup, combine the milk and 1 teaspoon each coconut, lemon, rum, butter and vanilla extracts; set aside.
2. In a large mixing bowl, cream butter, shortening and 3 cups sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, and beat until smooth. Beat in flour mixture alternately with milk mixture, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Spoon mixture into prepared pan.
3. Bake for 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 hours, or until cake tests done. Cool in pan on wire rack for 10 minutes.
4. **To make the Five Flavor Glaze**: In a saucepan, combine 1/2 cup sugar, water and 1/2 teaspoon each coconut, lemon, rum, butter and vanilla extracts. Bring to a boil, stirring until sugar is dissolved.
5. Turn cake out of pan onto wire rack.
6. Place waxed paper under rack to catch glaze drippings. Slowly spoon Five Flavor Glaze onto top of hot cake. Cool completely, remove wax paper and discard.
7. Serve and enjoy!

My Christmas Eve Dinner

Menu

Antipasto Platter
Cheese Board
Easy Italian Style Meatballs
Baked Italian Sausage in Sauce
Baked Pork Tenderloin in Sauce
Italian Bread*
Assorted Rolls*
Fresh Mixed Green Salad*
Assorted Dressings*

Dessert

Cannoli Cake
Incredible Cheesecake Pie

*Indicates you should choose your favorite.

Antipasto Platter

The secret to a good Antipasto Platter is simply balance. Not too much and not too little, this is just the beginning of the meal, Antipasto literally means "Before the Pasta" or before the main meal - a way to take the edge off of your hunger and a way to welcome your guests. In many cases, my family has said that this platter paired with a nice cheese board is all they really need to have a satisfying meal. We always save this special treat for Christmas Eve. It's our tradition. You can make this your own by adding your own ingredients or removing some that I've listed. You can add some other cheeses, but I always have a cheese board so I save the tiny mozzarella balls for this platter, mixing them with grape tomatoes and dressing them with a simple balsamic vinaigrette. Whatever you choose you are going to love it and your guests will be impressed. The best part of this platter, you don't really cook anything! You just put it all together, break a loaf of crusty bread and dig in! Mangia!

Ingredients

Serves 12

1/2 pound Capicola, thinly sliced
1/2 pound Pepperoni cut in chunks
1/2 pound Prosciutto, thinly sliced
1/2 pound Soprasetta cut in chunks
1/2 pound Mortadella thinly sliced
1 cup of marinated mushrooms, drained
1 small tub/jar Peppadew peppers, drained
1 cup of marinated artichoke hearts, drained
1 cup of jar roasted red peppers, drained
1 cup of Calamatta olives, drained
3/4 cup sliced Pepperoncini peppers, drained
1 Cup Pimento-stuffed Manzanilla green olives

1 Tub Bocconcini Mozzarella in water
1 Box grape tomatoes
1 Small jar or 1 cup of Giardinera
1 Head of butter lettuce
1 Head of Arugula
2 tablespoons Olive oil
1 tablespoon Balsamic Vinegar
1 clove fresh garlic minced
1 teaspoon basil leaves, shredded
1 teaspoon dried Oregano

Directions

1. Separate the lettuce and Arugula and wash the leaves. Line a large platter with the butter lettuce. Place the Arugula, which will act as cups for the vegetables around the outside of the platter.
2. Arrange meats in the center of platter. Rolling some into cigar shapes and rolling the salami into fan shapes. Pile the Prosciutto and Capicola into mounds.
3. Drain the Bocconcini and place in a bowl with grape tomatoes add olive oil and balsamic vinegar, garlic, basil and oregano and toss together. Set aside for a few minutes to allow flavors to mingle.
4. Slice roasted red peppers.
5. Fill arugla cups with Bocconcini & tomatoes, Peppadew peppers, marinated mushrooms, marinated artichoke hearts, calamata olives, manzanilla olives, and roasted red peppers and Giardinera.
6. Assemble Antipasto platter about an hour before your guests arrive. Cover with plastic wrap and keep refrigerated until time to serve. Any leftovers can be placed in airtight containers and refrigerated for up to 1 week.
7. Serve with crusty Italian Bread and enjoy!

Building A Classic Cheese Board

The Rule of 3

A cheese board is always a part of our family celebrations, whether it's Christmas, Easter or just a summer barbecue. The problem with a cheese board is that it can be daunting for some people. The thought of having to choose cheeses can be scary if you are unfamiliar with the vast differences that cheese can present. A trip to the gourmet cheese counter of a good grocer can make your head spin. Hard Cheese, English Cheddar, Parmesan, Aged cheese, ripened cheese, soft, semi soft, cow's milk, goat's milk, sheep's milk, you can see, the choices can be confusing if you don't know where to start.

This is not really a recipe, so much as a guideline. A good cheese board can be narrowed down to what I like to call my "Rule of 3". Three types of cheese, three types of bread or cracker and three types of fruit. You start with this and you build from there. The possibilities are endless. The only other rule you need to follow is for the amounts. A cheese board should have enough cheese, in total weight so that each guest will be able to have approximately 4 ounces of cheese or ¼ pound. First I will explain my "Rule of 3" and then I will give you an ingredient listing of what I would choose to put out on my cheese board.

The "Rule of 3" is simple, three types of cheese, one hard, one soft and one ripened. For example I like to put an aged English cheddar, a wedge of brie and a wedge of Amish Blue cheese. Sometimes I also add in a wheel of Goulda for my daughter (her favorite) I also include a tub of Boursin with garlic and herbs. Let's face it, sometimes restricting yourself to 3 can be hard, especially, when you like cheese. Like I said, start with 3 and build from there. Heck, you could do the whole kitchen table if you wanted to!

Next, in the "Rule of 3", crackers and/or bread. Choose three. I like to use a butter cracker, a whole or cracked wheat cracker and a water cracker. I also like to slice a baguette and serve it alongside with some imported butter, either, Irish, French or Dutch and some course ground black pepper and French gray sea salt, also called Sel Gris.

Finally, we arrive at the fruit. Fruit is a classic addition to a cheese board as it offsets the saltiness and pungency of the cheese. It adds texture and a different mouth feel to the experience. I believe that fruit and cheese should always be served together. They are natural culinary partners. I recommend you have a fresh fruit, a dried fruit and a cooked fruit. Fresh Fruits such as grapes, sliced apples and sliced Anjou pears are wonderful with soft and semi soft cheeses such as brie and Chevre and even sharp Cheddar. Dried fruits like figs, cranberries, currants and both golden and dark raisins are a nice palette cleanser and help to

buffer some of the sharper cheese selections. Thirdly, a cooked fruit would be something like a jam or chutney. Fig jam is always a good choice as is apricot or you could choose a classic chutney which has the sweet and savory aspects of both a jam and a relish. Choose a few or choose them all, you decide. There is really only one rule to follow and that is the "Rule of 3". When you follow that rule, you will have a lovely cheeseboard and a lovely addition to your gathering.

Next I am going to share with you what I like to put on my cheese board. Use this as a jumping off point if you have never done this before. I encourage you to go to your cheese purveyor and ask to sample the cheeses and ask them also to suggest and help educate you on what they have to offer. They are the experts and they are more than happy to help you

Noreen's Favorite Cheeseboard

Ingredients

Cheeses	Crackers & Bread
1 Wedge of sharp aged Cheddar 1 Wedge of Brie (at room temperature) 1 Wedge of Amish or Danish blue cheese 1 Wheel Goulda (not smoked) 1 Small wedge of Glouschester cheese (my fave)* 1 Tub garlic & herb Boursin	Butter crackers Whole wheat crackers Water crackers 1 French baguette sliced
Fruits	**Extras**
1 Honeycrisp apple, slice 1 Anjou pear, sliced 1 Small bunch of green grapes Dried figs Dried cranberries Fig or apricot jam Major Grey's Chutney	European butter Either French, Irish or Dutch 1 small dish of cracked black pepper 1 small dish of French gray salt Also called Sel Gris

Equipment

1 Large wooden cutting board or clean piece of plywood or large platter
Squares of parchment to lay cheeses on
Small bowls
Cheese knives or just some forks to break the cheese apart
Small spoons for jam and chutney

Directions

1. Make sure the board you choose is clean and large enough for the selections you have made.
2. Wash and slice apples and pears. Toss them with a tablespoon of lemon juice to keep them from turning brown.
3. Place cheeses on board, putting a parchment square beneath each one and making sure to spread them out so they are not all bunched up in one spot.
4. Make sure to have a few slices of each cheese cut off of the wedge or brick. This invites your guests to help themselves.
5. Intersperse the apple slices, grapes and pear slices between the cheeses adding in the dried fruits such as figs and dried cranberries. If you have room on the board, include small bowls of the jam and chutney as well. If your board is small. Set it up on a larger table in the kitchen or a coffee table in the living room and have the other items spill out around the cheeseboard.
6. Arrange the crackers and a basket of baguette as well as a plate with the butter and small cellars of salt and pepper around the board.
7. Place some cheese knives alongside the cheese and some small spoons in the jam and chutney and you are done.

I know that this "recipe" is long but I wanted to take the time to fully explain how it should be done and give you some great suggestions. I have a passion for food but always thought the term "foodie" applied to people who were not like me. I don't fit that mold in my own mind.

Cheese and fruit and bread is simple peasant food. A farmer's lunch in the middle ages consisted of these things. Here we elevate it to gourmet status and make it a part of a special occasion. The reason for that, is because, what once was produced

entirely in the home, fresh baked bread, cheese from your own livestock's milk and fruit from your orchard is now considered "Gourmet" fare. Cheeses are expensive so we reserve them for the most special occasions. A cheeseboard may look complex and confusing but it is simple and basic and delicious. Enjoy!

- *Glouschester cheese is a layered cheese with sharp English Cheddar on the top and bottom and a layer of Stilton in the middle. Not for the faint of heart!*

Easy Italian Style Meatballs

Meatballs have never been easier or more versatile. Make these meatballs and cook some in the crock pot with your favorite pasta sauce and freeze some for later. These meatballs are a great start for Swedish meatballs, meatball Stroganoff, Spaghetti and meatballs, etc. The possibilities are endless. Your imagination is your only limit. These are my famous Christmas Eve meatballs that I have been making for my family for more than 20 years. I hope that you will make this a part of your own family traditions.

Ingredients

Serves 10 to 12

1 to 1 ½ pounds lean ground beef

1 pound ground pork or bulk sweet sausage

1 cup fresh breadcrumb or
dry breadcrumb soaked in ½ cup milk

½ cup grated parmesan cheese

2 eggs, beaten

½ cup milk

½ teaspoon of nutmeg

1 teaspoon each of:
- salt
- pepper
- garlic powder
- onion powder
- oregano
- thyme
- italian seasoning

3 or 4 jars of preferred bottled spaghetti sauce

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Line a baking sheet with foil and parchment paper.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer combine beef, pork, bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese, eggs and milk along with all of the seasonings and spices.
4. Mix with paddle attachment until well blended. Try not to over mix or your meatballs will be tough.
5. Use a 2 ounce scoop to make meatballs and place them in rows on baking sheet.
6. Bake meatballs for approximately 20 minutes until browned.
7. Transfer meatballs to a heated crock pot.
8. Cover with your favorite spaghetti sauce and cook on love 4 to 6 hours.
9. Serve with rolls for meatball subs or next to pasta for a wonderful meal.
10. Enjoy!

Baked Italian Sausage in Sauce

This is one dishe that always makes an appearance, without fail, on my Christmas Eve table. Early on, before I was married, but after I was an adult, I was the one tasked with preparing and serving the Christmas Eve dinner for my family. It had to be easy but it also had to have substance. I remember thinking about what I should make, and this came to mind. Over time the menu has evolved, however, this dish along with meatballs and pork tenderloin prepared in a similar way are, the cornerstones for our holiday meal. One year Mom and I decided to try something different. Total fail! Never again! When it comes to holidays, stick with what you know and what you love. Your family will thank you.

Ingredients

Serves 6

12 Links (About 2.5 pounds) Italian Sausage

4 to 5 cups of your Favorite Tomato Sauce
I like Ragu, Classico or Barrilla 1 or 2 jars.

Italian Rolls

Mozzarella and Parmesan cheese

Deep Foil Pan (1/2 Steam Table Pan)

Parchment Paper

Aluminum Foil

Directions

9. Place sausages in bottom of foil pan.

10. Cover with tomato sauce making sure to move the sausages around to coat.

11. Place parchment paper on top of pan and then cover with aluminum foil.

12. Bake at 300 degrees for 2 to 3 hours until sausages are no longer pink inside and the juices run clear.

13. If desired, skim some of the fat off of the top before serving.

I know this may sound simple. But when dealing with a holiday, simple is better. Everyone loves these sausages, served in a warmed bun or just with a hunk of bread. Holidays should be spent making memories, not slaving over a hot stove. The only thing you'll have to show for it is a bunch of pictures that you aren't in because you were too busy in the kitchen. Enjoy!

Baked Pork Tenderloin in Sauce

This is another tried and true but super simple family favorite. Again, a dish that always appears on Christmas Eve and sometimes at other times throughout the year simply because it is so delicious. When the tenderloin is cooked in the sauce, slowly over a couple of hours it can be pulled apart and eaten in the sauce on sandwiches or just by itself. We love to make it like this and ladle it over some short cut pasta such as a Rigatoni or Rotini. It makes for a hearty and delicious meal that everyone loves. In a buffet, this dish stands out because it holds up so well. Your holiday table will never be the same!

Ingredients

Serves 12

2 packaged pork tenderloin (1.5 -2 lbs each)

4 to 5 cups of your favorite spaghetti sauce
I like Ragu, Classico or Barrilla 1 or 2 jars.

Italian rolls

Mozzarella and Parmesan cheese

Deep foil pan (1/2 steam table pan)

Parchment paper

Aluminum foil

Directions

14. Remove tenderloins from package. There are usually two to a package.
15. Rinse well and place in foil pan.
16. Cover with tomato sauce making sure to move the tenderloins around to coat.
17. Place parchment paper on top of pan and then cover with aluminum foil.
18. Bake at 300 degrees for 2 to 3 hours until tenderloins is fork tender and shreds easily.

Again a simple dish that has become a family favorite. Who says that delicious food has to take hours of planning and prep? This can be thrown in the oven next to your sausage and meatballs. They all cook at the same time and all you have to do is break out the rolls and put together an Antipasto platter and an Italian salad and your holiday dinner is ready to go! Enjoy!

Cannoli Cake

Christmas is big business in an Italian family. Now my family is a mish mash of so many Eastern European countries it's like a mini united nations. My maternal grandmother was pure German, her husband first generation American whose parents immigrated, from Sicily. My paternal grandparents were first generation American whose parents immigrated from Czechoslovakia and Hungary. I hold dear many of the cultural traditions from my family. Cannoli is one of those holiday traditions. Hand rolled, deep fried and filled with a wonderful creamy filling, traditional Cannoli pastries take a lot of time and patience, it's not for sissys! This recipe gives you the flavors of cannoli with the convenience of a layer cake. When you start with a mix and add some other easily attainable ingredients, you'll make a cake that would rival something from a real Italian bakery, right in your own kitchen. You'll be very proud to put this on your holiday table.

Now, I know this recipe looks freakishly long. Don't let it intimidate you. It really is very simple. It just has a lot of steps. Do them a little at a time over a couple of days. Make the cake and the filling one day. Make the simple syrup one evening before you go to bed and put a lid on the pan and let it cool while you sleep. Make the whipped cream the day you are going to assemble and you will have an amazing dessert to share with family and friends.

Ingredients

Serves 12

For Cake

1 plain white cake mix
1 box French vanilla instant pudding
4 eggs
½ cup oil
1 ¼ cup water
1 teaspoon almond extract
1 teaspoon rum extract

For Filling

2-8oz brick cream cheese
2 pounds Ricotta cheese
2 cups powdered sugar
1 cup mini chocolate chips
¼ cup chopped candied cherries
1 cup chopped pistachios
¼ cup candied peel chopped

For Topping/Frosting

1 pint whipping cream
½ cup powdered sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla

Simple Syrup

1 cup sugar
1 cup water
2 teaspoons orange extract

Directions

Cake

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Prepare two 9 inch layer cake pans with cooking spray.
3. In Mixer combine cake mix, pudding mix, eggs, oil, water and extracts and mix well. Making sure to stir down the sides to incorporate all of the dry ingredients.

4. Divide batter between the two cake pans evenly.
5. Bake for 25 to 35 minutes or until the top springs back when you touch it. Or when a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake come out clean with no visible signs of batter sticking to the toothpick.
6. Allow cakes to cool on a rack for 10 minutes then remove from pans and allow to cool completely.
7. Once cakes are cooled, slice each cake through the center so that you will have 4 layers in total after each layer is sliced in half.

Filling

1. While cake is in the oven, make the filling.
2. In a clean mixer bowl combine softened cream cheese, Ricotta cheese, powdered sugar and mix until combined.
3. Remove from mixer and stir in by hand the following: mini chocolate chips, chopped pistachios and candied peel and candied cherries.
4. Cover and allow to cool in refrigerator for at least 1 hour before assembling cake.

Simple Syrup

1. In a saucepan combine sugar and water.
2. Add in flavoring. In this case the orange extract
3. Stir well to dissolve the sugar.
4. Allow to come to a boil over medium heat.
5. Once mixture boils, turn off burner and remove from heat.
6. Allow to come to room temperature before assembling cake.

Topping

1. In mixer bowl whip cold cream until soft peaks form.
2. Add in powdered sugar and vanilla and continue whipping until peaks will stand on their own. Don't over whip or you will make butter.
3. Cover and keep in refrigerator until ready to assemble cake.

Assembly

1. Place cake on the dish you will be serving from.
2. Cut some strips of wax paper, parchment or foil and lay them just under the edge of the cake all around so that you can pull them out easily cleaning the platter when you are done assembling the cake. This makes for a nice presentation.
3. Place a dab of the filling in the center of the plate and then place one of the four cake layers on the plate.
4. Using a pastry brush, brush the cake with some of the simple syrup.
5. Place a third of the filling on top of the cake and spread almost to the edges.
6. Place another layer of cake on top of the filling and press gently, this will allow the filling to come to the edge.
7. Repeat the cake, syrup and filling twice more.
8. Top with remaining layer of cake, making sure that you have save a nice top piece of one of the layers for the top of the cake.
9. Brush the top of the cake with the syrup.
10. You have the choice of frosting the entire cake or just the top. I usually decorate the top and do a star border around the bottom of the cake. This allows the pretty layers to be seen. (See below)
11. Remove the wax paper, parchment or foil from the plate.
12. **To make a star border**: Place some of the whipped cream into a disposable pastry bag fitted with a large star tip. You can make a disposable pastry bag from a gallon sized zip top bag that you have snipped one corner from.

No Bake Cheesecake Pie

Here is a pie that you can throw together in no time! It really only takes a few ingredients that you can have ready in your pantry or fridge. If someone calls to say "we're coming", you can actually have this whipped up and in the fridge ready for your guests to enjoy. During the busy holiday season, remember to keep a few bricks of cream cheese and a few cans of sweetened condensed milk on hand You can do so many things with them your friends won't believe you didn't slave to make things special just for them.

Ingredients

Serves 6

1 8 ounce brick cream cheese, softened

1 14 ounce can sweetened condensed milk

1/4 cup lemon juice (bottled is fine)

1 graham cracker pie crust

1 cup sour cream

2 tablespoons sugar

1 cup preserves or pie filling

Whipped cream

Directions

1. Using your hand mixer blend the cream cheese until light and fluffy.
2. Add in the sweetened condensed milk and continue to beat until well combined.
3. Pour in the lemon juice and blend well. Mixture should be somewhat thick.
4. Pour cream cheese mixture into pie shell.
5. Lightly cover with plastic wrap and place in refrigerator for 1 hour.
6. Blend sour cream and sugar.
7. Spread sour cream mixture on top of pie, spreading it to the edges.
8. Return pie to refrigerator for another hour.
9. When ready to serve, slice pie and top with whipped cream or your favorite pie filling or preserves (I like pineapple).
10. Enjoy!

Christmas Morning Breakfast

Menu

Ham and Cheese Strata
or
Baked Oven Omelet

Christmas Coffee Cake

Christmas Coffee
Tea*
Hot Chocolate*

*Indicates you should choose your favorite.

Ham and Cheese Breakfast Strata

This egg casserole is easy to put together and the combinations are endless. When I came up with this recipe, it was inspired by the movie "The Family Stone". You'll have to watch the movie to see why it is significant but hopefully your strata will not befall the same fate as the main character of the film. Nothing more than a savory bread pudding filled with ham, cheese eggs and roasted red peppers. This is a festive dish for any holiday table. You can throw this together the night before you need it and then stow it in the fridge overnight. In the morning slide it into a hot oven and bake for about an hour. No fuss, no muss and no stress! Spend your holiday morning with your family and friends, not missing all the action slaving in the kitchen.

Ingredients

Serves 6 to 8
Makes one 9 x 13 Casserole

4 Eggs
2 Cups Milk
2 1/2 Cups Cheddar Cheese, Shredded
2 1/2 Cups Cubed Ham
12 Slices French Bread, Cubed
1 12 ounce Bag Broccoli Florets Thawed
1/2 Cup Parmesan Cheese
1 Tablespoons Chopped, Onion
3 Tablespoons Roasted Red Pepper
2 Tablespoons Dijon Mustard
1 Teaspoon Italian Seasoning
1 Teaspoon Cracked Black Pepper
1/4 Teaspoon Freshly Grated Nutmeg

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a Large Bowl: Mix together bread, ham, 1 1/2 cups of the cheese, and broccoli.
3. In another bowl beat eggs and add milk, onion, red pepper, Dijon mustard, Italian Seasoning, black pepper and nutmeg. Beat until fully combined.
4. Pour egg mixture over the bread mixture. Stir and make sure the bread is coated in the egg.
5. Coat a 9 x 13 casserole dish or foil pan with cooking spray.
6. Pour bread and egg mixture into pan. Distribute evenly.
7. Top with reserved cheddar cheese and Parmesan cheese.
8. Bake for 1 hour. Test for doneness. It is done when a knife inserted in the center comes out clean showing little remaining moisture. If the knife seems a bit moist, return casserole to oven for an additional 15 minutes.
9. When Casserole is done, remove from oven and allow it to rest for 15 to 20 minutes before serving. This will allow all of the heat to disperse and the casserole to settle.
10. Cut into squares and serve hot, warm or at room temperature.
11. Any leftovers will reheat well in the microwave on 50% power.

Baked Oven Omelet

Breakfast on a holiday such as Christmas or even Easter can pose a lot of obstacles. Mainly, because you don't want to be stuck in the kitchen while your family is opening presents or hunting for eggs. You should plan ahead and make this one of your offerings for the holiday brunch. Simple ingredients add up to a delicious and satisfying entrée. Serve this along with some croissants and a fruit platter or some yogurt parfaits and you have a holiday breakfast fit for royalty.

Ingredients

Serves 8

8 eggs

1 cup 4% cottage cheese

2 cups of either:
- diced ham
- crumbled cooked sausage
- crumbled cooked bacon

1 cup fresh sliced mushrooms or
1 small can of drained mushrooms

2 cups shredded Cheddar or Swiss cheese

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon cracked black pepper

Directions

1. Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9 X 13 glass baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In blender, mix eggs, cottage cheese, salt and pepper.
3. Place Ham, Sausage or Bacon in bottom of baking dish, top with all but ½ cup of shredded cheese.
4. Pour egg mixture over meat and cheese. Gently stir making sure that everything is covered with the egg mixture.
5. Place on a baking sheet for stability and place in oven for 30 minutes.
6. Turn off oven and remove omelet. Sprinkle remaining cheese over the top of the omelet.
7. Return to oven for 5 minutes.
8. Remove from Oven and allow it to rest for an additional 10 minutes to cool.
9. Cut into 8 pieces and serve.

Christmas Coffee Cake

Each and every Christmas morning, we have the same thing for breakfast, cinnamon rolls and orange blossom rolls. As a tradition we usually have the refrigerator type because that is what Rick grew up having each year. I try not to deviate from that tradition because it makes him happy. One year, I persuaded him to let me make a coffee cake and this is what I made. It is a better idea to make this the day before because coffee cake is always better after it has had a chance to cool and the flavors have a chance to develop. Either way, warm or cool, everyone is sure to love this.

Ingredients

Makes 1 9X13 cake

Cake

1 box plain yellow cake mix
1 box (4 serving) vanilla instant pudding
4 eggs
1 cup sour cream
½ cup vegetable oil
1 tablespoon grated orange zest
½ teaspoon ground cardamom

Cinnamon swirl

½ cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons flour
½ cup chopped pecans
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Prepare a 10 cup Bundt pan or tube pan with vegetable oil spray and flour.
3. In mixer bowl combine all ingredients for cake and blend until completely combined.
4. Mix together all the ingredients for the cinnamon swirl in a small bowl.
5. Pour half of the cake batter into a prepared pan.
6. Sprinkle all of the cinnamon filling mixture over the batter in the pan. Make sure that you don't sprinkle all the way to the edge of the pan. This will allow for the filling to remain in the middle of the cake.
7. Top with remaining batter and gently spread to the edges of the pan.
8. Place on middle rack in preheated oven and bake for 50 to 60 minutes checking at 45 minutes.
9. Cake is done when a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
10. Remove from oven, and allow to, cool on a rack for at least 20 minutes.
11. Turn cake out of pan onto wire rack and allow to, cool completely.
12. Place on serving platter and top with a simple icing glaze if desired.
13. Slice and enjoy!

Christmas Coffee

I am a coffee lover, so is my husband. We enjoy all types of coffee blends, but mostly prefer the more hearty and robust varieties. Jamaican Blue Mountain is among our favorites. When the holidays come around, we like to spice up our coffee and give it some flair. Adding your favorite baking spices into your coffee grounds, just prior to brewing will give you the flavor and aroma of the expensive coffee shops and you don't have to pay those expensive prices.

Ingredients

Recipe for a 12 cup pot in a standard drip coffee maker

12 cups cold water

4 coffee scoops heaping of ground coffee

(a standard coffee scoop is 2 tablespoons when leveled off)

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

¼ teaspoon ground allspice

¼ teaspoon ground cardamom

Directions

12. Pour cold water into your drip coffee maker
13. Place coffee into the filter liner.
14. Sprinkle spices on top of the ground coffee
15. Brew and enjoy.

This is really nice anytime. When the weather gets cool, I can drink coffee all day. I especially enjoy a cup after dinner.

Christmas Day Buffet

Menu

Fruited Chicken Salad
Sliced Deli Ham*
Sliced Deli Roast Beef*
Sliced Deli Roast Turkey*
Assorted Bread and Rolls*
Vegetable Platter*
Spinach Dip
Cold Shrimp Platter
Spicy Cocktail Sauce
Yummy Potato Bake

Dessert

Mom's Strawberry Sour Cream Mold
Assorted Christmas Treats**

*Indicates you should choose your favorite.

** Put out all of those fabulous treats you have made and received during this season.

Fruited Chicken Salad

Chicken salad is usually reserved for a cool summer meal, but this is just as welcomed on a festive holiday buffet or open house spread. Quick to make with accessible ingredients, this chicken salad is made special, with the addition of fruits and nuts. Sometimes dressing up the ordinary can be an unexpected surprise. Make this ahead of time so all you have to do is put it in a pretty bowl and let your guests serve themselves. Easy and delicious!

Ingredients

Serves 4 to 6

3 cups cooked chicken breast, cubed

1 cup celery, chopped

½ cup carrot, chopped

½ cup apple, chopped

½ cup water chestnuts, chopped

½ cup golden raisins

½ cup dried cranberries

½ cup chopped pecans, toasted

½ cup good quality mayonnaise

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

Directions

1. In a large bowl combine chicken, vegetables, raisins and cranberries, and toss well to combine.
2. Add in Mayonnaise and Mustard and blend until everything is well coated.
3. Add salt and pepper to taste.
4. Serve and enjoy!

Cold Spinach Dip

Here is an oldie but a goodie. Spinach dip served in a hollowed out bread bowl with crackers, and French bread. Some things never get old. If you haven't had this one in a while, try it again. This is satisfying addition to an appetizer spread or buffet. You may be surprised how many people love this dip.

Ingredients

1-10 ounce box frozen spinach, thawed & drained

1 8 ounce brick cream cheese, softened

1 cup sour cream

1 cup good quality mayonnaise

¼ cup roasted red pepper, chopped

1 can (4 ounces) water chestnuts, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

¼ cup onion, minced

3 green onions, chopped

1 envelope dry vegetable soup mix

Directions

1. Make sure spinach is thawed and all moisture is squeezed out. Set aside.
2. Combine cream cheese, sour cream and mayonnaise. Blend well.
3. Add roasted red pepper, water chestnuts, minced garlic and minced onion to cream cheese mixture and blend well.
4. Add spinach and soup mix to the mixture and combine completely.
5. Place in a bread bowl or a serving dish and top with chopped green onion.
6. Refrigerate for 1 hour before serving to allow flavors to mingle and get to know each other.
7. Serve with your favorite dippers and crackers along with some sliced French baguette.
8. Watch it disappear!

Cold Shrimp Platter

Ingredients

Serves 8 to 10

SHRIMP

2 Pounds Fresh 16-20 Peel on Shrimp
1 Lemon, Sliced
1 Tablespoon Old Bay Seasoning
Water

COCKTAIL SAUCE

1 Cup Ketchup
¼ Cup Lemon Juice
½ Cup Bottled Chili Sauce
2 Tablespoons Horseradish
1 Teaspoon Tabasco Sauce
Dash of Worcestershire Sauce

Directions

To Steam Shrimp

1. In a Steamer pot place water half way up, but not touching the steamer basket.
2. Add Old Bay seasoning and sliced lemon half the lemon slices to the water and bring to a mild simmer
3. Peel and de-vein shrimp under cold running water, leaving tails on.
4. Place shrimp and remaining lemon slices into the steamer basket and over the simmering water. Cover and allow to steam until they are pink and opaque. This should take around 5 to 7 minutes. Don't overcook your shrimp or they will be too tough.
5. Place some ice in a zip top bag and place the bag in a bowl.
6. Remove the shrimp from the steamer basket and place on top of the bag of ice. This will prevent your shrimp from becoming water logged and soggy. But it will help them to cool down and stay fresh.
7. Place bowl in refrigerator until fully chilled.

TO MAKE COCKTAIL SAUCE

1. Combine all ingredients together and blend well.
2. Allow to chill.
3. Serve in a small dish on a platter with the shrimp arranged around the sauce.\
4. Serve and enjoy

Yummy Potato Bake

Let's dive into my mom's recipe box, just one more time. This recipe came to our family when I was in junior high school. We hosted a student who was in Up With People, a popular singing group, comprised of international students who toured the country in the 70's and 80's. She stayed with us for about 6 weeks if I remember correctly. When she left, she gave us a cookbook that was a collection of all her family's favorite recipes. It had been compiled for her parents as an anniversary gift. This potato casserole is amazing. There is never a speck left when it is served, and we always have to double the recipe. When you make it you will understand why. It is aptly named Yummy Potato Bake!

Ingredients

Makes 1-9x13 casserole

1 Large bag frozen hash browns

½ Cup green onion, sliced

1 ½ Sticks butter, melted

1 Can cream of chicken soup

1 Small jar Cheese Whiz

1 16 ounce container sour cream

1 Cups crushed corn flakes

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Prepare a 9X13 pan with cooking spray.
3. Place frozen hash browns in pan and sprinkle with green onions, salt & pepper.
4. Pour half of the butter over potatoes.
5. In small sauce pan combine soup, sour cream & cheese whiz over medium heat until blended.
6. Pour cheese mixture over potatoes.
7. Mix corn flakes with remaining melted butter.
8. Sprinkle buttered corn flakes over potatoes.
9. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 45 minutes.
10. Remove foil and allow to bake uncovered for an additional 15 minutes.
11. Allow to cool slightly before serving.
12. Enjoy!

Mom's Strawberry Sour Cream Gelatin

Alright, I know, gelatin! Don't wrinkle your nose at this one because it is a real treat. Cool and creamy and tangy and sweet. This is the perfect side dish to go along with so many things. This is also great for a potluck or church supper. This is something my mom used to make for Christmas and Easter when I was growing up. We don't know where the recipe came from and she had to dig into her recipe box to find it. Really worth the effort and just wait till you taste it!

Ingredients

Serves 10 to 12

1 Large Box Strawberry Gelatin

1 Cup Boiling Water

1 Large box Frozen Strawberries in syrup Thawed

1 20 ounce Can Crushed Pineapple w/juice

1 Cup Chopped Walnuts

1/2 Cup Celery sliced very thin (Optional)

1 Pint (2 Cups) Sour Cream

Directions

18. In a large bowl, mix boiling water into gelatin powder, stirring to dissolve.
19. Add thawed strawberries in syrup and crushed pineapple with its juice.
20. Add Walnuts and Celery if desired.
21. Pour half of the gelatin mixture into a 9x13 glass baking dish or casserole.
22. Refrigerate until set, about 1 hour.
23. Allow remaining gelatin mixture to sit at room temperature covered.
24. Spread sour cream over first layer of gelatin once it is set completely.
25. Pour remaining gelatin mixture over sour cream layer.
26. Return to refrigerator and allow to set completely.
27. Cut into squares and serve.
28. Enjoy!

New Year's Day Feast

Menu

Roasted Pork Loin
Garlic Mashed Potatoes**
Roasted Pork Loin Gravy
Warm Raisin Apple Sauce
Black Eyed Pea Salad
Mixed Green Salad*

Dessert

Lovely Lemon Trifle
Southern Chess Pie

*Indicates you should choose your favorite.
**Found in the "Crusted Roast Beef" menu section of this book.

Roasted Pork Loin

In our family, New Year's Day dinner is a very important prospect. The beginning of a new year has its traditions. Roasted pork loin is the one constant at this table. We always have this dish for New Year's dinner, no matter what, we may change up some of the other selections, but this one remains the same. Old European folklore dictates that you never eat poultry for the first day of the New Year. The reason, you ask? Because it scratches backwards, not good for moving forward. Eating pork is also a southern tradition. Pork is a symbol of wealth as are black eyed peas and greens such as collards and cabbage which represent money. I think we can use all the help we can get. Even if you are not a superstitious person, it is fun to follow traditions like this.

Ingredients

1 3 to 4 pound boneless pork loin roast
have your butcher tie it for you
10 to 12 garlic cloves, peeled
1 tablespoon poultry seasoning
1 tablespoon cracked black pepper
1 tablespoon sea salt or kosher salt

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Wash and dry roast.
3. With a paring knife, pierce the roast making slits that you will slide the garlic cloves into. Making sure that the garlic is deep enough into the roast that it does not peek out. Do this with all the garlic, spreading it out around the roast as evenly as possible.
4. Mix poultry seasoning, black pepper and kosher salt together well.
5. Spread the spice rub out on a paper towel and roll the roast to coat all around.
6. Place the roast in a pan with ½ cup of water.
7. Place on middle rack of preheated oven and allow it to roast for 20 minutes per pound or until the internal temperature taken with an instant read thermometer reaches 160 degrees.
8. Remove roast from oven and tent with aluminum foil.
9. Allow roast to rest for at least 30 minutes before slicing.
10. Slice loin and serve with pan gravy.
11. Enjoy!

Roasted Pork Loin Gravy

You can't have a wonderful pork roast without having some gravy made from the pan drippings. This recipe is simple and straight forward. Implementing basic cooking skills, you can adapt this technique for any type of roasted pan gravy you like. You can make this for turkey, beef or this pork loin in the same way.

Ingredients

Pan drippings, skimmed of most of the fat
2 Cups Chicken Stock
2 Cups Beef Stock
¼ to ½ cup Wondra Flour (I don't really measure)
1 Tablespoon Kitchen Bouquet (Optional)
Salt and Pepper to Taste

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Place roasting pan on stove burner over medium heat.
3. Pour chicken stock into pan and bring to a simmer. Stirring to remove the brown bits or "fond" from the bottom of the pan.
4. Turn heat to low and add in beef stock.
5. Stream in flour while continually whisking the gravy.
6. Add flour until it is to your desired thickness.
7. Add Kitchen Bouquet and continue to whisk.
8. Gravy should be smooth, thick and silky. If it is too loose, whisk in a bit more flour. If it is too thick, whisk in a bit more stock until the desired consistency is reached.
9. Taste for seasoning adding salt and pepper as necessary.
10. Serve with pork loin roast or reheat leftover sliced roast in gravy and serve as opened faced sandwiches.
11. Enjoy!

Warm Raisin Applesauce

Is there a better accompaniment to roast pork or pork chops than applesauce? I know exactly what you're thinking! Let's say it all together "Pork chops and Applesauce" the spirit of Peter Brady lives every time someone says that phrase! Aside from the pop culture, this pair is a match made in heaven. Applesauce is very simple to make and when it's made with cinnamon and plump raisins in it, you are in for a treat.

Ingredients

4 Tart apples, such as granny smith or Honeycrisp

½ Cup Dark Raisins

½ Cup Golden Raisins

¼ Cup lemon juice

2 Teaspoons ground cinnamon

½ Teaspoon ground allspice

¼ Teaspoon ground clove

½ Cup apple cider or water

Directions

1. Wash, peel, core and dice apples.
2. In a medium saucepan combine apples, lemon juice, cinnamon, allspice, cloves and water.
3. Cook over medium heat and allow to simmer until fruit becomes tender and can easily be broken with a spoon or fork.
4. Add raisins to apples and allow applesauce to simmer for another 5 minutes.
5. Remove from heat and allow applesauce to cool for approximately 30 minutes before serving.
6. Any leftovers can be stored in an airtight container, in the refrigerator, for up to 1 week.
7. Enjoy!

Black Eyed Pea Salad

Black eyed peas are traditionally served with the New Year's meal in the South. They are a symbol of wealth and good fortune. Adding this dish to your meal may not make your wallet bigger, but it will certainly make you happy. The delicious combination of the peas, and other chopped vegetables combined with the savory dressing is a refreshing alternative to a hot vegetable dish.

Ingredients

Serves 6 to 8

1 16 ounce bag frozen black eyed peas, thawed
1 Cup frozen corn, thawed
1 14 Ounce can petite diced tomatoes
1 Medium onion chopped
1 Cup red pepper, diced
1 Cup green pepper, diced
1 Cup celery, diced
1 Jalapeno pepper, minced
1 Clove garlic, minced
1 Teaspoon dried oregano
1 Teaspoon sea salt
1 Teaspoon cracked black pepper
1 Cup Bottled balsamic vinaigrette dressing

Directions

29. In a large bowl combine all ingredients and blend well.
30. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours so flavors can mingle.
31. Serve cold.
32. Enjoy!

Lovely Lemon Trifle

I have taken my mother's decadent lemon layer cake and made it into a trifle. The reason? Because a trifle is easier! Cut cake into cubes, layer with luscious filling and whipped cream, and you're good to go. No slicing layers, or stacking, just so. Bake, toss, layer, chill and serve. It is just as beautiful as a layered trifle as it is as a layered cake and a little less work. This is sure to please the lemon lovers in your family and will make a nice addition to your dessert selections for your holiday meal.

Ingredients

Serves 8 to 10

Lemon curd

1 box (4 serving size) cooked lemon pudding mix
2/3 cup sugar
2 1/4 cups water
3 egg yolks
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons lemon juice

Trifle

1 white cake mix prepared according to package
1 pint whipping cream whipped with 1/4 cup sugar
(you should have 4 cups of whipped cream)
1 teaspoon good vanilla extract
Chopped candied lemon peel (optional)
Crushed lemon drops (optional)

Directions

Lemon Curd

33. In a medium saucepan mix pudding mix and sugar, 1/4 cup water with whisk.
34. Add egg yolks and remaining water, blend well.
35. Cook over medium heat stirring constantly so it won't burn. Don't be tempted to turn the heat up. Once this gets going it will burn very easily. Medium heat is high enough.
36. Stir, stir, stir. It may take 15 to 20 minutes for this to thicken.
37. Once mixture comes to a full rolling boil, remove from heat.
38. Stir in butter and lemon juice.
39. Transfer to a bowl, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until cooled completely.
40. Remove from refrigerator and stir to loosen. Proceed to trifle assembly.

Trifle Assembly

41. Cut cake into 1 inch cubes.
42. In a trifle bowl or large serving bowl, place a third of the cake in the bottom.
43. Top with one third of the lemon curd and spread to sides.
44. Top lemon curd with one third of the whipped cream spreading to sides.
45. Repeat layers, ending with whipped cream at the top.
46. Top the trifle with candied lemon peel and/or crushed lemon drops.
47. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours to allow to set.
48. Serve in parfait cups and enjoy!

Southern Chess Pie

When I was 11 my family moved from central New Jersey to Tucson Arizona. Traveling by car with three kids, two parents and a dog in a crate, we made that week long drive from one end of the country, almost to the other. Along the way, I got to see things I never saw before, like mountains! A wonderful memory of this trip was the night we stayed in Tennessee. Eating at the hotel restaurant, which was all decked out like a traditional log cabin. We gorged ourselves on chicken fried steak and fried chicken dinners. When we came to the end of our meal the waitress asked us about dessert. One of the offerings was chess pie. "What is Chess pie?" mom asks and the waitress brought us a slice. The reason, is simply because you cannot describe chess pie. It is a pie all to itself. It is not custard, it is not cream, and it is not fruit, it is all southern and all delicious.

I like to call this a pie made from nothing. Chess pie is a throwback to the civil war when provisions were sparse, but appetites were big. Somewhere an inventive woman threw this concoction together and created heaven in a pie plate. I promise you will love it!

Ingredients

Serves 8

1 stick (1/2 cup) butter, melted

2 cups granulated sugar

4 eggs, slightly beaten

1 tablespoon cornmeal

1 teaspoon good vanilla extract

¼ cup buttermilk

1- 9" unbaked pie shell

Directions

16. Preheat oven to 425 degrees
17. In a large bowl combine melted butter and sugar and blend well with a spoon.
18. Add eggs to the mixture and combine.
19. Add buttermilk and cornmeal and stir well until smooth.
20. Pour into pie shell.
21. Bake at 425 for 10 minutes then reduce the heat to 300 and bake for an additional 40 minutes.
22. Remove from oven and place on a cooling rack until it has cooled completely.
23. Do not attempt to slice this until it is cooled.

****HINT**** Chess pie is best eaten the day after it has been made.

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Happy
Holidays!