

Come for Coffee!

BY KARLA JONES SEIDITA, HOME ECONOMIST

How about some easy entertaining to kick off the holiday season? Simple, no stress entertaining that doesn't break the bank, with make ahead party fare that jump starts your Christmas baking. Sound good? Great! Invite your peeps for coffee and let's get into the kitchen!

First the Coffee

Get fancy and serve a signature coffee. It's a fun change from everyone's day to day cup. Plus, there's sooooo much you can do with coffee! Flavored creamers, caramel sauce, chocolate syrup, spices, spirits. If you crave it, you can make it. Here's some ideas...

Start off by brewing your favorite coffee. Perc-ed. Dripped or however you like it. Regular and (purists will cringe) decaf. Serve in big mugs or tall, heat safe glass cups. Get creative with your choice of add ins to taste. No exact recipe needed. Let your guests stir in the optionals as desired.

Café Cinnamon - Black coffee with a cinnamon stick. Cream and sugar optional.

Peppermint Stick - Black coffee and a peppermint stick or candy cane. Sugar optional.

Honey Bee - Black coffee, honey and a sliver of orange peel. Milk or cream optional.

Pumpkin Spice - Black coffee, pumpkin pie spice. Milk and sugar optional.

Maple - Black coffee and maple syrup. Cream optional.

Café Mocha - Equal parts black coffee and hot $\frac{1}{2}$ & $\frac{1}{2}$, two or three Tablespoons of chocolate syrup. Sugar optional.

Café Caramel - Equal parts black coffee and hot $\frac{1}{2}$ & $\frac{1}{2}$, a Tablespoon or two of caramel

ice cream topping. Sugar and whipped cream on top optional.

Spiked

Spirited Coffee - Black coffee, a jigger of spirits - Cointreau, Southern Comfort, Irish Whiskey. Sugar and whipped cream on top optional.

Café Brandy Alexander - Black coffee, brandy, a slash of heavy cream, sugar.

Hot Buttered Rum Café - Black coffee, rum, a little sugar

and a pat of butter.

Café Italiano - Black coffee and anisette. Sugar optional.

Toasted Almond Café - Equal parts black coffee and hot $\frac{1}{2}$ & $\frac{1}{2}$, Amaretto.

Bee Sting - Black coffee, honey and Southern Comfort or bourbon. Cream optional.

Santa's Candy Cane Coffee - Black coffee, peppermint schnapps, whipped cream on top and a candy cane.

Now the Food

Inviting guests for coffee is easy because you only need a few simple sweets for nibbling. Compare that to inviting guests for tea with it's made-at-the-last minute array of sandwiches, scones, and tarts.

These three cookies are make-ahead magic. Why not get a head start on your holiday baking by making an extra batch or two? They freeze great!



No Bake Honey Rum Balls

Make things super simple with these spirited, no bake treats. Sinfully delicious. The longer they age, the better they taste. They're naughty but oh so nice.

MAKES 2 DOZEN (1 INCH) BALLS
REFRIGERATE 1 WEEK
BEFORE SERVING

INGREDIENTS

½ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
2 Tablespoons honey or corn syrup
1 1/3 cups graham cracker crumbs
¼ cup powdered sugar (sifted)
1/2 cup walnuts (chopped) or raisins
1/4 cup dark rum
For rolling – extra sifted powdered sugar (about ½ cup)

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, microwave chocolate and honey (or corn syrup) together till almost melted – about 40 seconds. Stir to finish melting. Stir in remaining ingredients.
2. Form into 24 (1 inch) balls. Roll in powdered sugar to coat. Refrigerate (covered) 1 week to mellow before serving.

BAKER'S TIP

If the mixture seems dry, mash it together before adding more rum. It may surprise you. If it's still too dry to hold together, add more rum. If too moist, add more crumbs.



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Almond and Orange Biscotti

Impress your guests with these coffee shop favorites. Easier to make than they look.

MAKES 20 TO 24
(4 INCHES WIDE X 1 INCH TALL X ½ INCH THICK) BISCOTTI
USES 1 COOKIE SHEET AND
BAKING PARCHMENT

INGREDIENTS

¾ cup sugar
1/3 cup light olive oil
2 eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla
2 Tablespoons orange zest (about 2 thick skinned oranges)
1 cup sliced almonds (blanched or not)
1 teaspoon baking powder
2 cups all purpose flour

DIRECTIONS

1. Position oven rack so biscotti will bake in center. Preheat to 350 degrees. Line cookie sheet with baking parchment. Set aside.
2. Mix sugar, oil, eggs, vanilla, zest and almonds. Stir in baking powder and flour. Dough will be heavy and slightly sticky.
3. Put dough onto prepared cookie sheet. Dampen hands with water and form dough into a loaf measuring 3 inches wide X 12 inches long X 3/4 inch high. Bake till light brown on top – 35 to 40 minutes. Remove from oven. Immediately cover loaf completely (still on the cookie sheet) with foil. Let rest 10 minutes.
4. After 10 minutes, remove foil and put loaf on a cutting surface. Using a serrated knife, cut loaf into ½ inch thick slices. Put slices, cut side down, back onto cookie sheet. Return to oven for 10 minutes to dry a bit. Remove from oven and cool on rack.

CUTTING TIP

To prevent crumbling edges when slicing, put the knife across the top of the loaf and, using a sawing motion, cut straight down. **1**

Oatmeal Lace Cookies

Crackly shards of toffee tasting sweetness. The kind of cookie that comes from an expensive bakery.

MAKES 3 DOZEN (2 ½ INCH) COOKIES
USES COOKIE SHEETS AND BAKING PARCHMENT

INGREDIENTS

1 stick butter (melted)
1 ½ cups old fashioned oatmeal (uncooked)
¾ cups sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon all purpose flour (Yes - only 1 teaspoon!)
½ teaspoon salt
1 egg
1 ½ teaspoons vanilla

DIRECTIONS

1. Position oven rack so cookies will bake in center. Preheat to 325 degrees. Cover cookie sheets with baking parchment. Set aside.
2. Mix all the ingredients. Use 2 teaspoons of dough for each cookie, drop onto lined cookie sheets - 6 cookies per sheet leaving space between. They spread a lot.
3. Bake till golden on edges – about 10 minutes. Cool on pan 5 minutes. Slide baking parchment (with the cookies) onto a rack to finish cooling and crisp.

BAKER'S TIP

Only a small amount of dough is used for each cookie. Use a measuring spoon or a 2 teaspoon size scoop to portion.