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- Stock the pantry with holiday baking ingredients
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SAVE



### Stock the pantry with **holiday** baking ingredients

any holiday traditions begin with family and friends gathered in the kitchen or around the dinner table. Food is an integral part of celebrating Thanksgiving, Christmas and Chanukah, and key components of each holiday are tied exclusively to food. Come the holiday season, many people gather to make delicious desserts for holiday dinners or even as gifts. The right ingredients are necessary to produce a bounty of baked goods. It's also essential to ensure those ingredients are fresh, as age can compromise the taste of some spices, and leavening ingredients like yeast, baking soda and baking powder may lose efficacy over time.

Flours: All-purpose flour is versatile and useful in many recipes. In addition, bread flour, cake flour and pastry flour have attributes that make them better suited for their respective jobs than all-purpose flour. Individuals who follow certain diets, including gluten-free diets, can find alternative flours that can be substituted in many different recipes.

Baking soda: This leavening agent is activated when it is combined with acid and heat. That is why it is often paired with citrus juice, buttermilk and sour cream.

Baking powder: This leavening agent is baking soda mixed with a powdered acid and cornstarch. If baking soda is the only leavening agent, it will not require the addition of another acidic ingredient. "Double-acting" means carbon dioxide bubbles will form during mixing and again during heating.

Yeast: Yeast takes more time to metabolize and cause doughs to rise than other leavening agents.

Sugar: Granulated sugar is the most common sugar found in recipes. Confectioner's sugar (powdered sugar) is used in frosting and icings. Brown sugar is refined sugar with molasses added, and is used in certain recipes, like gingerbread.

Salt: Granulated table salt is used in everyday

baking.

Unsalted butter: Unsalted butter will be the default for baked goods unless the recipe specifically mentions salted butter.

**Eggs:** Eggs help to bind ingredients together. Large eggs are most often cited in many baking recipes.

Milk: Dairy adds moisture and texture to batters. Alternative milks, such as soy or almond milk, can sometimes be substituted, but the resulting texture may

Vegetable oil: Many recipes call for vegetable oil, which has a neutral flavor.

Shortening: Shortening is a solid vegetable fat used to make tender baked goods. Shortening also has a higher melting point, which helps cookies and other items retain their shape while cookina.

Flavorings: It is helpful to have various spices and extracts on hand. Cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, and allspice are some common baking spices. Almond and vanilla extracts are quite versatile and add extra punch to recipes.

Additions: Mix-ins, such as chocolate chips, cocoa powder, oats, nuts, and dried fruits, often turn up in holiday recipes.

Certain ingredients are essential for baking and holiday cooks can take steps to ensure their



### HOME ≈ Holidays

### Home holiday ? decorating ideas



he holidays often involve purchasing gifts for close friends and loved ones as well as making a delicious meal the entire family will love. But nothing sets the holiday scene and overall mood more so than beautiful decorations and other seasonal accoutrements. Many people leave no room untouched for the holidays, meaning color schemes or trinkets may carry through from top to bottom. Decking the halls this season can be made even easier with some of these handy ideas.

### Holiday timeline

If you keep holiday photo cards each year, put them in chronological order and hang them from a piece of garland from the mantel or drape on a staircase banister. This can be a fun way to see how your own children or other members of the family have grown.

### Make mini evergreen displays

Clip your favorite pieces of evergreen and push the stems into floral foam. Display in small vases or other containers and place in groupings to emulate an evergreen forest.

### Plan the outside

Exterior illumination and other exterior decorations share the holiday spirit with others. It can be overwhelming trying to visualize it all without a plan in place. Take a photo of the house and map out where you want lights and decorations to go. Then with your "map" in hand, you can more

readily purchase supplies and start decorating.

### Go for a specific natural color scheme

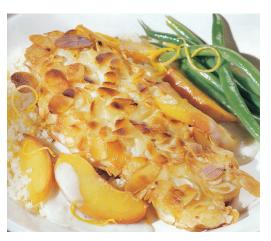
If you desire an overall holiday feel but aren't interested in Santa figurines or kitschy elements, decorating with color in mind can be key. It's easy to tie things together with some natural elements in your desired palette. For example, white, gold and green may look beautiful. Put boxwood clippings and white amaryllis flowers together. Pine cones, twigs and holly pieces also can add touches to mantels, doorways and table centerpieces.

### **Ornaments elsewhere**

Who says ornaments only have to go on a tree? Display antique or favorite ornaments by hanging them from beautiful ribbons throughout the home.

### Scent the scene

Hang something aromatic on the tree to mingle with the pine. Fresh cinnamon sticks tied with twine or ribbon can be nestled among the boughs. Another scented idea is to make pine cone candles and use pine or cinnamon scents to make them smell just like the season.\Holiday decorating gets a hand from some creative ideas. Always follow safety precautions, especially when using candles, hanging lights and plugging in multiple items to electric sockets. With ingenuity and safety in mind, holiday decorations can be extra special.



### A skillet supper makes for easy entertaining

oasts and hams certainly may get a lot of fanfare for holiday dining, but chicken is a versatile food that is mild enough to be molded into whatever I flavor profile cooks desire. Chicken also can be dressed up so it easily competes with other protein sources for top billing on holiday tables. Easily cooked on the stovetop in a flash, this recipe for "Almond Chicken With Peaches and Roquefort" from "125 Best Chicken Recipes" (Robert Rose) by Rose Murray can be customized and multiplied depending on the size of the crowd. While peaches may not be in season where you live during the holidays, simply substitute two small pears, which work well for fall and winter meals. Serve with crisp green beans and lemon couscous, which is easily made by adding ½ teaspoon grated lemon zest and 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice to warm couscous.

### "Almond Chicken With Peaches and Roquefort"

Serves 2

- 2 skinless, boneless chicken breasts
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour Salt and pepper
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 3/4 cup sliced almonds
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 unpeeled peaches, sliced; or 2 small pears, cored and sliced
- 1/4 cup dry white wine or chicken stock
- 1/4 cup whipping cream
- 2 tablespoons Roquefort or Gorgonzola cheese

- 1. Place chicken breasts between two pieces of plastic wrap and pound to an even thickness of about 1/4 inch. Dredge in flour mixed with 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Dip each breast in egg and coat with almonds.
- 2. In a large skillet, heat half the oil over medium heat. Add chicken and cook about 5 minutes per side, turning once, until golden and no longer pink inside. Remove to a warm platter and keep warm.
- 3. Add remaining oil to pan and heat over medium heat. Add peaches (or pears) and cook 1 minute. Stir in wine and bring to a boil; cook 3 minutes to reduce. Stir in cream, cheese and salt and pepper to taste. Cook stirring, until thickened. Spoon sauce around the chicken and serve.

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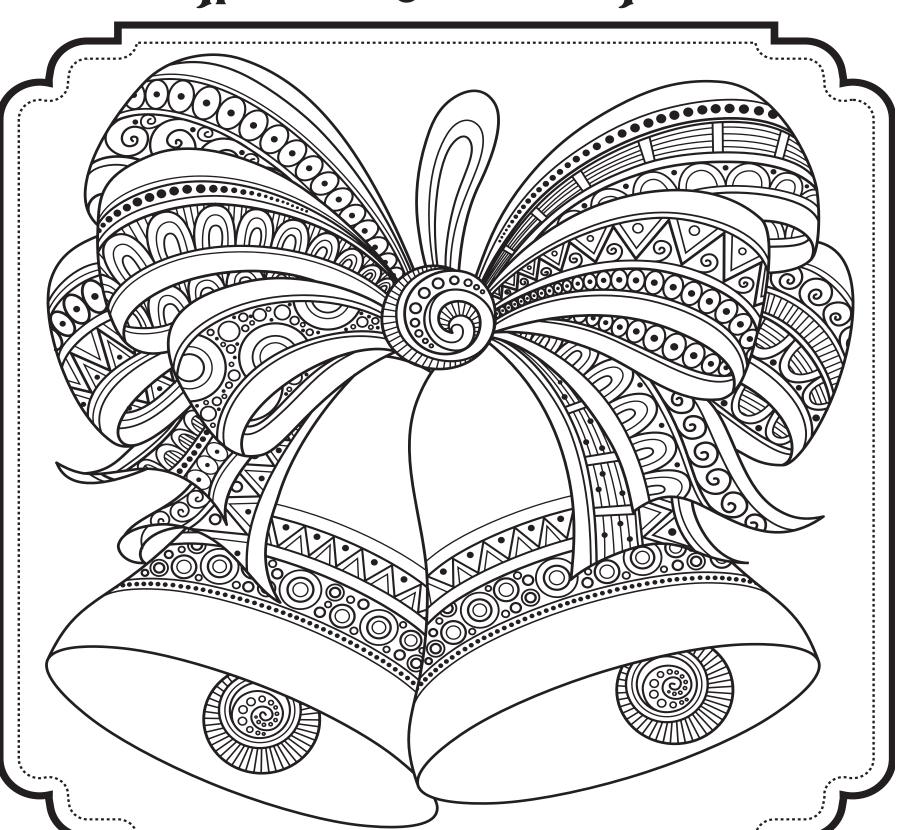
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### HOME Holidays

# HOLIDAY COLORING FUN



# Eggnog is a classic for holiday celebrations —



o beverage is more associated with holiday cocktail parties than eggnog, which is a beloved beverage come the holiday season. While it's perfectly acceptable to purchase store-bought eggnog in the dairy case and dress it up with a favorite spirit, most eggnog recipes only feature a handful of ingredients and are quite easy to make at home. Rum, whiskey and brandy are customary liquors to use in eggnog recipes. However, The Spruce: Eats has taste-tested them all and believes brandy tops the others for the perfect finished product. Enjoy their version of "Quick Brandy Eggnog" below.

### **Quick Brandy Eggnog** 1 cocktail

- 1 ounce brandy 11/4 ounces milk
- ½ ounce simple syrup
- 1 egg yolk Grated nutmeg or cinnamon for garnish

In a cocktail shaker, combine the brandy, milk, simple syrup, and egg yolk. Dry shake without ice. Fill shaker with ice, then shake

vigorously for about 30 seconds to ensure the egg is well mixed. Strain into an old-fashioned or cocktail glass. Add a dash of grated nutmeg or cinnamon as a garnish. Note: Only use a fresh egg. Test the egg's freshness by placing it in a glass of water. If the egg floats, discard it, as this indicates the egg is too old. Only use eggs that rest on the bottom of the glass. This will ensure the most flavorful drink and helps to reduce the risk of salmonella.



### Warm up with a ~ rich chocolate beverage

othing beats sipping a hot, soothing beverage after a day of choosing the perfect Christmas tree or lobbing snowballs in the backyard. Teas, hot toddies, coffees, and mulled ciders certainly can fit the bill, but a mug

of rich hot chocolate is a holiday season staple. Hot chocolate can be whipped up quickly from premade packets, but many such packets are loaded with sugar. Chocolate lovers should have a reliable hot chocolate recipe to lean on when the moment is right. This recipe for "Real Hot Chocolate" from "Chocolate" (Parragon) by the editors of Love Food is sure to please.

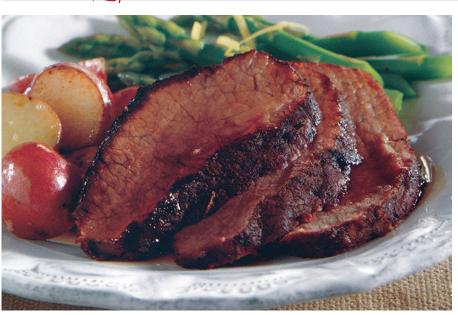
### **Real Hot Chocolate**

Serves 1 to 2

1½ ounces semisweet chocolate, broken into pieces 11/4 cups milk Chocolate curls to decorate

Place the chocolate in a large, heatproof pitcher. Place the milk in a heavy-bottom saucepan and bring to a boil. Pour about one-quarter of the milk onto the chocolate and leave until the chocolate has softened. Whisk the milk and chocolate mixture until smooth. Return the remaining milk to the heat and return to a boil, then pour onto the chocolate, whisking constantly.

Pour into warmed mugs or cups and top with the chocolate curls. Serve immediately.



### Slow cooker meal makes holiday ~ entertaining a breeze

he holidays wouldn't be complete without a delicious meal to share with family and friends. A holiday roast is often the centerpiece of festive occasions. Having a go-to recipe for this classic main course makes holiday preparations that much easier.

Utilizing a slow cooker to make a beef roast reduces time spent in the kitchen, affording hosts more opportunities to mingle with their quests. That's just the idea behind this recipe for "Beef Roast With Dark Rum Sauce" from "Crock. Pot. 356 Year-Round Recipes" (Publications International, Ltd) by Crock

Pot Kitchens.

### **Beef Roast With Dark Rum Sauce** Makes 6 servings

- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 beef rump roast (about 3 pounds)
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup dark rum, divided
- 1/2 cup beef broth
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 whole bay leaves, broken in half
- ½ cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1/4 cup lime juice

- 1. In a small bowl, combine allspice, salt, pepper, and cloves. Rub spices onto all sides of roast.
- 2. Heat oil in skillet over medium heat until hot. Sear beef on all sides, turning as it browns. Transfer to a slow cooker. Add ½ cup rum, broth, garlic, and bay leaves. Cover; cook on low 1 hour.
- 3. In a small bowl, combine remaining ½ cup rum, brown sugar and lime juice, stirring well. Pour over roast. Continue cooking on low 4 to 6 hours, or until beef is fork-tender. Baste beef occasionally with
- 4. Remove and slice roast. Spoon sauce over beef to serve.

### Holiday baking pointers

he holiday season is steeped in tradition. Baking is one tradition that comes with the holiday territory.

Many people may only bake in November and December, so it's understandable if they're a little rusty come the holiday season. These baking tips can lead to successful yields of cookies, cakes and other holiday treats.

### Follow the recipe carefully

When cooking, it is easy to add an extra dash of this or a pinch of that. But baking is a science and the ingredients are used in a ratio to produce a desired chemical reaction while cooking. To ensure success, do not substitute ingredients unless the recipe tells you how to do so, and measure each addition carefully.

#### Spoon out your measurements

It can be tempting to dig a measuring cup right into a bag of flour, but scooping packs the ingredients down potentially causing you to use more than the recipe calls for. Instead, spoon the flour into your measuring cup gently and use a straight edge to level it out. Even better, use a scale and metric measurements to ensure exact amounts of wet and dry ingredients.

### Read up on temperature

Certain ingredients, like butter and eggs, are temperature-dependent. Cold butter in biscuits helps them to rise up flaky and delicious. Eggs brought to room temperature enable the emulsification process to work more readily. The difference in temperature can mean a completely different chemical reaction, so follow the recipe accordingly.

### Calibrate the oven

Purchase an oven thermometer, set your oven to 350 F, the standard baking temperature, and see what the thermometer reads. If it is different, adjust cooking times accordingly or have the oven repaired. Cooking at the wrong temperature might mean the recipe doesn't turn out right.

#### Use unsalted butter

Most recipes will call for unsalted butter so you aren't adding unwanted sodium to the recipe, affecting dough consistency and flavor.

### Position pans centrally

Pans should be on the center rack of the oven. If the oven isn't wide enough to put multiple pans side by side, place them on different racks and slightly offset them to enable air circulation.

### Use parchment paper

This unsung hero of baking can keep cookies from spreading out on baking sheets, prevent cakes from sticking to pans and may even help batter and dough bake evenly.

#### Flip cakes

Cool cakes upside down on a cooling rack. This will help flatten out the tops, which makes it easier to stack and level cakes for layered cakes. A few tips can go a long way to helping holiday baking go more smoothly.







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# Delight holiday diners with savory fish stew



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Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to trimming the tree. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 11 = S)

23 A.

Clue: Strips of foil

**15 26** 

Clue: Strands of bulbs

Clue: Items that serve as ornaments

D.

Clue: Leaves or flowers hung as decoration

any families gather around the dinner table and enjoy seafood on Christmas Eve. Called the Feast of the Seven Fishes, this tradition traces its origins to Italy and was brought over to North America by Italian

For many Christians, Christmas Eve is a vigil or fasting day, and the inclusion of seafood reflects the Roman Catholic custom of abstinence from eating meat and dairy products on the eve of certain holidays, such as Christmas. The number seven is traced to ancient times and it can be connected to multiple Catholic symbols and biblical references.

While people can enjoy seven entirely different seafood options, it also is customary to serve one or two types of fish seven different ways. This recipe for "Cioppino" from "Soup's On" (Chronicle Books) by Leslie Jonath and Frankie Frankeny manages to include seven different types of seafood, and it can be modified according to your preferences.

### Cioppino

Serves 4

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 1 white onion, chopped
- ½ cup thinly sliced leeks, white part only
- garlic cloves
- anchovy fillets or 2 tablespoons anchovy paste
- 1/3 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
- sprigs fresh marjoram
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- live Dungeness crab (2 to 21/2 pounds), cleaned and sectioned, crab fat reserved
- 8 ounces lingcod or other white fish
- 1 cup dry white wine

Answers: A. tinsel

B.

C

D. . garland

- 1½ cups tomato purée or peeled, fresh whole tomatoes
- ounces clams, well scrubbed
- ounces mussels, scrubbed and debearded
- ounces raw prawns or large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- ounces calamari Kosher or sea salt Freshly ground black pepper

Warm the oil in a heavy, nonreactive pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, leeks and garlic and sauté until the garlic is golden. Add the anchovies, parsley, marjoram, and pepper flakes and stir to mix. Add the crab and fish and cook until the fish begins to fall apart, 7 to 10 minutes. Add the wine and cook to reduce the liquid by one-third.

Mix together the reserved crab fat, 1 cup water and the tomato purée in a small bowl. Add to the pot, raise the heat to high, and bring to a boil. Add the clams, mussels, and prawns and cook until the clam and mussel shells begin to open and the prawns turn pink, approximately 3 minutes. Discard any clams or mussels that do not open. Add the calamari and cook until opaque, approximately 1 minute. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Ladle into soup bowls and drizzle with olive oil. Serve immediately with a green salad, crusty country bread and white wine.

### WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to the holidays.

### DWREPAP



paddpsm: Mrapped



phenomenon called "cabin fever" tends to set in around late autumn or in midwinter. Long hours of darkness coupled with cold, inclement weather often is a recipe for increased time spent indoors. For people who live alone, the effects of cabin fever might be more pronounced. In addition to seasonal cabin fever, this year another factor comes into play: social distancing and voluntary guarantine as a result of the novel

### Help isolated loved ones this holiday season

coronavirus COVID-19. Even those who may venture outside to socialize, particularly around the holiday season, may be hesitant or unable to do so to help prevent the spread of the virus. In these instances. friends and loved ones can mitigate feelings of isolation in various ways.

Schedule video chats. Video conferencing apps have become the communication vehicles of choice during the era of social distancing. Different applications and services continue to evolve and help people stay in touch. Plan regular chats, either once or twice per week with isolated or vulnerable people. Try to organize a large group chat on the holiday itself so no one has to spend Christmas or Chanukah alone.

**Drop off supplies.** Even though supermarket shop-from-home and other delivery services have normalized somewhat since the start of the pandemic, treat individuals who may be isolated to some personalized attention. Put together care packages of supplies or holiday treats and deliver them in person so you can see the smiles that result from being able to visit with someone familiar.

Send uplifting messages. Children or even adults can make personalized cards and mail them to loved ones at home or those who may be in long-term care facilities. Send new mailings every week or two so that residents always have something to look forward to in the mail.

Start a virtual club. A book club or another shared interest can be the catalyst for more frequent communication. A club puts everyone on the same page and enables them to come together, via phone or video chat, for a discussion.

Ask for help learning a new skill. Along the same vein as a virtual club, lessons on everything from woodworking to crochet to making favorite holiday recipes can be conducted online. Give an isolated individual daily purpose and distraction by engaging him or her with online lessons.

Isolation and feelings of loneliness can affect anyone who normally suffers from cabin fever. However, this year it may be more pronounced, as it could be coupled with social distancing precautions that have already been in effect for some time.





### HOME Holidays

# More Holiday Coloring Fun



### How to host virtual holiday celebrations

he 2020 holiday season figures to be vastly different than seasons past. The novel coronavirus COVID-19 has transformed daily life in many ways. The public has become accustomed to wearing masks while shopping, limiting the number of people in public venues and keeping their distance from friends and loved ones. Many events have been reimagined as virtual celebrations because of social distancing protocols. For those with large families or people with inherent risk factors that make them more susceptible to illness, sharing the holidays over video conferencing apps may be the safest way to go in 2020. The following tips can help holiday hosts make the most of a virtual holiday experience.

#### Pick a bright, festive spot

Set up your tablet, smartphone or computer in a bright area with a festive backdrop. You'll want others who join the virtual hangout to be able to see you clearly. A Christmas tree or a decorated fireplace in the background can set the scene.

### Choose the right conferencing app

Certain programs may work better than others depending on your needs. For example, if everyone has the same operating system platform (iOS or Android), you may be able to use an app inherent to that system, which won't require a separate download or login.

Apps also may be chosen depending on how many people can be invited in, as some set limits. Do your homework and conduct a test run prior to the holidays.

### Keep props nearby

If the goal is to open gifts virtually, be sure to have everyone gathered and gifts nearby so no one is scrambling in and out of view.

### Position the camera at eye level

Try to set up the camera so you're not looking up or down. Practice looking straight into the camera instead of at yourself in the minimized window or even others on the screen. This way you'll appear engaged.



### Use mute when not speaking

Muting yourself (and encouraging others to do the same) when you are not speaking will limit the amount of background noise. As the host, serve as the moderator and encourage everyone to speak one at a time. Choose a visual cue to signal when someone has the floor to speak, such as raising a hand or even showing a festive picture.

### Tune into virtual worship

While some places of worship have reopened to some capacity, others may still be offering hybrid services. If your place of worship offers services

via YouTube or another video platform, gather around and watch together and participate just as if you were there in person. Better yet, share the link with other family and friends so they can tune in as well.

### Share dinner 'together'

Set up your camera source so it captures the holiday table. All parties gathering virtually can then sit down to the holiday meal as one and enjoy one of the season's more endearing traditions.

Virtual celebrations may continue through the holiday season. Adapting with some video conferencing tips can ensure everyone enjoys the festivities.



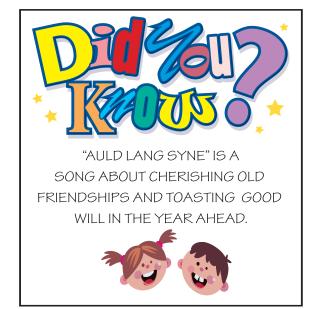
**ENGLISH:** Party

SPANISH: Fiesta

**ITALIAN:** Festa

FRENCH: Fête

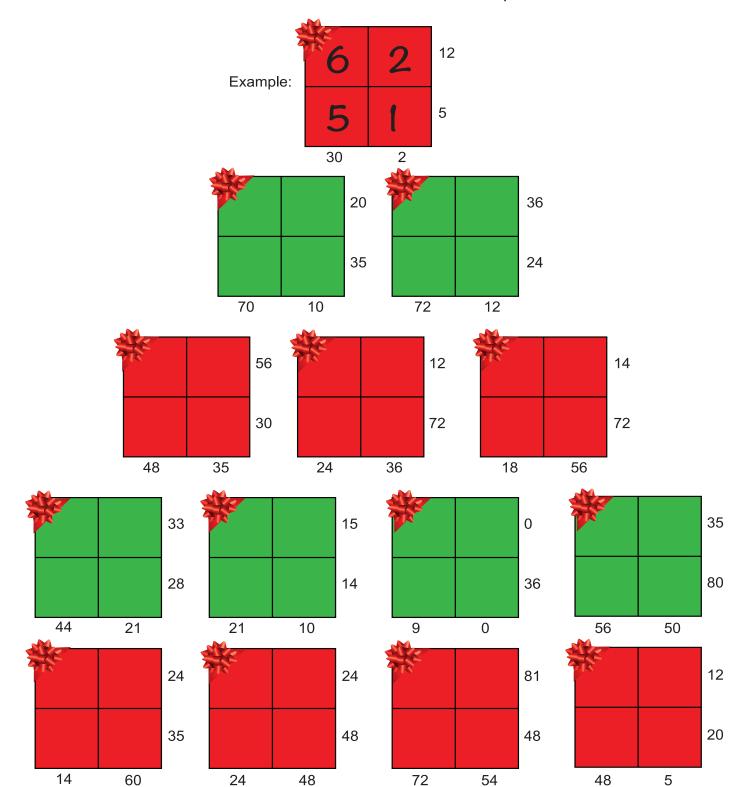
**GERMAN:** Party





ANSWER: PARTY NOISEMAKER

Fill in the factors in the boxes across and down so that the products will be correct.





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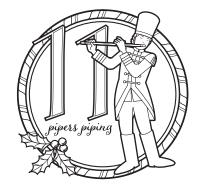
















# Delectable Desserts for Holiday Celebrations

FAMILY FEATURES

ith so many traditions and ways to celebrate the holiday season, the options are nearly endless for families looking to spend special moments together. One of the tastiest and most enjoyable activities you can engage in with family and friends is to team up and create sweet eats in the kitchen.

Whether you're a chocolate lover or prefer traditional seasonal flavors like peppermint and gingerbread, these tasty, dairy-inspired treats from Milk Means More provide heartwarming ways to tingle your taste buds while bringing everyone together.

Cranberry Orange Bread Pudding provides a sweet, fruity, hearty dessert while Peppermint Cheesecake Brownies combine chocolatey goodness with creamy cheesecake and peppermint. Or, for a classic holiday combination, you can turn to Gingerbread Cupcakes with Whipped Vanilla Buttercream.

Find more ways to celebrate the season with sweet eats at milkmeansmore.org.

### **Peppermint Cheesecake Brownies**

Recipe courtesy of Sarah Bates of "The Chef Next Door"

on behalf of Milk Means More

Prep time: 10 minutes Cook time: 30 minutes

Servings: 16

Nonstick cooking spray

#### **Cheesecake Batter:**

- 8 ounces low-fat cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

#### **Brownie Batter:**

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup cocoa powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup milk
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

### **Topping:**

#### 1/2 cup peppermint baking pieces

Preheat oven to 350 F. Coat 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray; set aside.

To make cheesecake batter: Place cream cheese in bowl of stand mixer. Beat on medium speed until smooth and creamy. Add sugar and peppermint extract; beat well. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add flour and beat mixture until blended.

To make brownie batter: In medium bowl, whisk flour, cocoa powder and salt until combined. In separate bowl, whisk sugar, oil, milk, eggs and vanilla until well combined. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and mix until blended.

Pour brownie batter evenly into prepared pan. Carefully pour cheesecake batter over top, spreading evenly. Carefully swirl layers together using knife tip. Bake 20 minutes.

Sprinkle top of brownies with peppermint baking pieces and bake 10 minutes until brownies are set. Cool brownies completely in pan on wire rack before cutting into 16 squares.



Peppermint Cheesecake Brownies



To make pudding: Cut bread into bite-sized cubes. If

bread is soft and fresh, place

let stand at room temperature

cubes on half sheet pan and

Preheat oven to 375 F.

baking dish with softened butter. Place bread cubes in

cranberries over bread.

prepared baking pan. Scatter

Beat eggs with sugar, milk, orange zest, orange

juice, melted butter, vanilla and cinnamon until well

blended. Pour evenly over

coat. Sprinkle with coarse

custard is set and edges of

sauce: In small saucepan,

whisk egg volks with sugar

color, about 2 minutes. Stir

half-and-half into mixture

until combined. Cook over

low heat, stirring constantly,

spoon. Stir orange zest into

Serve bread pudding

with warm custard sauce

custard sauce.

over top.

15-20 minutes, or until sauce thickens enough to coat

until lightened to pale yellow

To make orange custard

bread and cranberries to

sugar, if desired. Bake

60-65 minutes, or until

bread are browned.

Grease 13-by-9-by-2-inch

overnight to dry out.

Gingerbread Cupcakes with Whipped Vanilla Buttercream

### Cranberry Orange **Bread Pudding**

Recipe courtesy of Kirsten Kubert of "Comfortably Domestic" on behalf of Milk Means More Prep time: 20 minutes Cook time: 65 minutes Servings: 12

### **Pudding:**

- 1 loaf Texas toast or day-old bread 1-2 tablespoons softened butter 1 1/2 cups fresh cranberries
- 6 eggs 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 3 1/2 cups 2% milk teaspoon freshly
  - grated orange zest 1/4 cup fresh orange juice
  - 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
  - 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 tablespoons coarse granulated sugar (optional)

### **Orange Custard Sauce:**

- 3 egg yolks
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- cup half-and-half 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated orange zest

### **Gingerbread Cupcakes** with Whipped Vanilla **Buttercream**

Recipe courtesy of Megan Gundy of "What Megan's Making" on behalf of Milk Means More

Prep time: 10 minutes Cook time: 25 minutes Servings: 20

### **Cupcakes:**

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tablespoons ground ginger
  - 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons molasses
  - 4 large eggs
  - 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

### Whipped Vanilla Buttercream:

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- cups powdered sugar
- tablespoons heavy whipping cream
  - pinch salt
  - cinnamon, for topping

Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and preheat oven to 350 F. Line muffin pan with cupcake liners. Set aside.

To make cupcakes: In medium bowl, whisk flour, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg and salt.

In large bowl of stand mixer, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add molasses and beat until incorporated. Beat in eggs, one at a time, then beat in vanilla. Add flour mixture and mix on low speed until just combined.

Divide batter evenly among muffin cups, filling each about 3/4 full. Bake 30 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center cupcake comes out clean or with moist crumbs. Let cupcakes cool 10 minutes then transfer to wire rack to cool completely.

To make whipped vanilla buttercream: In large bowl of stand mixer, beat butter on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add vanilla and, with mixer on low, slowly add in powdered sugar, cream and salt, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Once incorporated, whip frosting at least 3 minutes on medium-high or high speed. If frosting is too thick, gradually beat in additional cream. Pipe on top of cooled cupcakes and sprinkle with cinnamon.



Cranberry Orange Bread Pudding

### An Easy Way to Make Your Holiday Healthier

FAMILY FEATURES

lanning your holiday menu? Dried cranberries are an ingredient found in many classic holiday recipes, but what you may not know is that they are packed with added sugars. Raisins, on the other hand, are naturally sweet with 0 grams of added sugars, making them a healthy alternative that can help enhance the flavor and nutrition of your favorite holiday recipes.

Raisins fit seamlessly into many family-friendly recipes, like traditional oatmeal cookies, stuffing and sweet breads. They also make for easy salad, oatmeal and yogurt toppers, provide a naturally sweet fruit option on charcuterie boards and are a great standalone holiday snack.

Why is this important? Many health-conscious consumers are interested in wholesome foods and products with less ingredients and natural sugars, like those that occur in fruits, vegetables, grains and dairy products. Added sugars, however, refer to any sugars or caloric sweeteners that are added to foods during processing or preparation. Consumption of excessive added sugars may be associated with health consequences, such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, insulin resistance, fatty liver, dental caries and more, according to research published by the National Library of Medicine.

"Consumers are becoming more health conscious and trying to include more nutrient-dense options with less ingredients," says Sarah Schlichter, a registered dietitian with a master's in public health. "Yet, consumers often don't recognize how added sugars throughout the day can quickly

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's 2020 Scientific Report, which sets the stage for the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, has proposed an overall reduction in added sugars, recommending that added sugars comprise no more than 6% of the overall diet for adults and children ages 2 and older. This is a reduction from the previous recommendation of less than 10% of the overall diet, bringing further attention to the serious health risks of excessive sugar intake.





Photos courtesy of Getty Images

### **Understanding Natural Sugars vs. Added Sugars**

Nutrition labels haven't always distinguished between natural and added sugars, Schlichter said, but instead lumped them together under "total sugars." However, the Food and Drug Administration's Nutrition Facts label, which is currently being transitioned to, makes this easily discernible by clearly outlining how much of the total sugar content comes from added sugars.

"One key difference between natural and added sugars is that natural sugars usually complement other nutrients naturally found in a food or fruit, such as fiber, potassium, vitamin C or antioxidants, all of which confer several health benefits," Schlichter said. "These complementary nutrients may also slow the rate of digestion, keeping blood sugar more stable. Conversely, added sugars are added in isolation and aren't adding any nutrients to the product."

To put this in perspective, 1/4 cup of dried sweetened cranberries contains 29 grams of sugar. Of those 29 grams of sugar, 27 grams are added sugars, meaning that most of the sugar is not found naturally in dried cranberries. While a 1/4-cup serving of raisins also contains 29 grams of sugar, the difference is that all 29 grams are naturally found in raisins and none are added. Raisins also naturally offer potassium, iron and fiber.

### Making the Case for Raisins

To reduce added and total sugars, many products have been formulated using artificial sweeteners, such as sucralose, aspartame or other no-calorie sweeteners. No-calorie sweeteners are not free from health risks, however, and have been linked to weight gain, obesity, changes to the microbiome, decreased satiety and altered blood sugar levels, according to research published by the National Library of Medicine.

Products sweetened with artificial sweeteners may also contain other unnecessary ingredients as well. For example, 50% less sugar dried cranberries also contain ingredients such as soluble corn fiber, table sugar, glycerin and sucralose.

These products are not really any healthier, Schlichter said, noting there is still much unknown about artificial sweeteners and how they impact hormones, satiety and gut health. Because raisins have no added sugars, no artificial flavors and no unnecessary ingredients, Schlichter recommends swapping them for dried cranberries this holiday season.

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# Merry Christmas and Warm Wishes for a wonderful Holiday Season and a very Happy New Year



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