

Festive Foods Salute Fall

Fall is favored not only for its brilliant colors, comfortable days and crisp moonlit nights, but also for its bountiful harvest. Since ancient times, people have celebrated the autumn harvest with festivals featuring the fabulous foods of the season. In this country, the tradition has become known as Porkfest—a table tribute to the land that teams pork with other favorite American foods.

Today's on-the-go family will especially appreciate slowing the pace to enjoy the time-honored Porkfest custom with a hearty and wholesome home-style dinner. Deserving the center spotlight at any fall feast are Pecan-Stuffed Pork Chops. Thick, succulent pork rib chops are filled with a unique stuffing that's deliciously flavored with graham cracker crumbs, allspice and chopped pecans which add not only crunchy texture but also rich taste.

While the plump, golden stuffed chops are impressive in flavor and appearance, they are relatively easy to prepare. One of the secrets to success is to cut the pocket in each chop from the rib or bone side. This simple technique seals in the stuffing during cooking and eliminates the need to close the pocket by skewering or sewing.

To make the chops even more attractive, bake them in versatile Fireside tinted glass ovenware that doubles as serving ware when placed in attractive decorated brass carriers. Besides adding style to the setting and the chop, the carrier holds the warm glass ovenware safely above the serving table so it won't scorch it. Pass the pecan gravy in a simple yet elegant rimmed bowl.

It's appropriate that pork and pecans are paired for a salute to American foods since both have prominent places in this country's culinary history. Pork has been popular here since pre-Colonial times and pecans, the only nut native to America, are believed to have grown wild here for thousands of years. They also contribute valuable nutrition as well as fine flavor to the American table. Pork is an outstanding source of complete protein, the B-vitamins thiamin, niacin, riboflavin, B-6 and B-12 and the minerals iron and zinc. Pecans are also nutritious, for they add protein, B-vitamins, iron, calcium, potassium, phosphorus and fiber to the diet.

For another delightful sampling of the pork and pecan partnership, try Sausage and Pecan Corn Bread Pie. Perfect for a fall supper, lunch or brunch, this quick and easy main dish pie features fresh pork sausage and chopped pecans baked in corn meal batter. Wedges of the nutritious, delicious pie are especially tasty served with maple syrup.



Pecan Stuffed Pork Chops

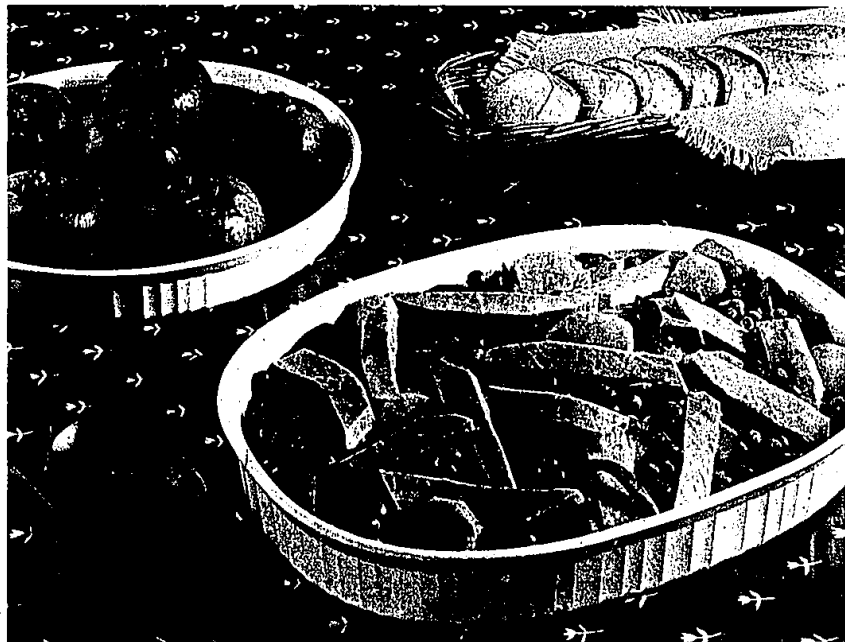
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| 6 pork loin rib chops, cut 1-1/4 inches thick | 1/2 cup dry bread cubes |
| 3/4 cup finely chopped celery | 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice |
| 2 tablespoons butter or margarine | 1/8 teaspoon salt |
| 1/4 cup water | 2 tablespoons cooking fat |
| 1 cup crushed graham cracker crumbs | Salt and pepper |
| 1 cup coarsely chopped pecans | 2 tablespoons flour |
| | 1/2 cup water |

Make a pocket in each chop by cutting into the chop with a small, sharp knife on rib side parallel to the surface of the chop. Be careful not to cut through the opposite side. Cook celery in butter or margarine in frying-pan 3 minutes. Stir in water. Combine graham cracker crumbs, 3/4 cup pecans, bread cubes, allspice and salt; stir into celery. Fill pocket in each chop with an equal amount of stuffing. Lightly brown chops in cooking fat in frying-pan. Season chops on both sides with salt and pepper. Place in 11-3/4 x 7-1/2 x 1-3/4-inch glass baking dish; cover tightly with foil. Bake in moderate oven (350°F.) 45 minutes. Remove foil and continue baking 15 minutes or until done. To prepare gravy, combine flour with 1/2 cup water, stir into cooking liquid in small saucepan and cook until thickened, stirring constantly. Add reserved 1/4 cup pecans and continue cooking 3 minutes. Serve gravy with stuffed pork chops. 6 servings.

Sausage and Pecan Corn Bread Pie

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| 1 pound fresh pork sausage | 1 egg |
| 1 cup yellow cornmeal | 1 cup milk |
| 1 cup flour | 2 tablespoons oil |
| 1/4 cup sugar | 1/3 cup coarsely chopped pecans |
| 4 teaspoons baking powder | Maple table syrup, if desired |

Brown pork sausage, separating it into pieces. Pour off drippings. Sift together cornmeal, flour, sugar and baking powder. Add egg, milk and oil. Mix to combine thoroughly. Fold in sausage and pecans. Turn batter into a greased 9-inch glass pie plate. Bake in hot oven (400°F.) 30 minutes or until done. 6 servings.



More Fall Favorites

Fortunately for today's busy cooks, it's possible to create the old-fashioned goodness of a Porkfest meal with modern-day speed and convenience. Sure to please hearty cool-weather appetites is Fall Ham Medley. Strips of flavorful cooked ham, fresh sweet potatoes and peas are combined in a colorful entree that can be made conventionally or more quickly in the microwave oven. The ham and vegetable combo is deliciously glazed with an easy-to-make pineapple sauce that's laced with apricot brandy and, warmly spiced with nutmeg.

Put your microwave oven to use, too, to help you make a favorite fall dish—baked apples—in a matter of minutes. Crunchy Pecan Apples are especially tasty, for the cored apples are cooked with a sweet 'n' spicy pecan filling. Serve as a dessert or side dish at any meal.

You'll appreciate the ease with which these and other microwave dishes can be prepared and served in cookware designed to go from microwave or conventional oven to table. While the cookware is elegant enough for entertaining, it's practical enough to use every day.

Fall Ham Medley

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| 1 to 1-1/4 pounds cooked smoked ham, cut into 3 x 1/2 x 1/4-inch strips | 3 tablespoons butter or margarine |
| 2 small sweet potatoes | 3 tablespoons flour |
| 2 tablespoons water | 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg |
| 1 package (10 ounces) frozen peas, defrosted | 3/4 cup pineapple juice |
| | 3 tablespoons apricot brandy |
| | 3 tablespoons water |
| | 1 small red pepper, cut into strips |

Paré potatoes; cut crosswise into 1/4-inch slices. Place sweet potatoes and 2 tablespoons water in 2 or 2-1/2-quart glass-ceramic or glass baking dish. Cover with plastic wrap, venting one corner. Microwave at HIGH 5 minutes, stirring once. Add peas and continue cooking, covered, at HIGH 3 minutes, stirring once. Heat butter or margarine in 4-cup measure at HIGH 30 to 45 seconds. Stir in flour and nutmeg until smooth. Add pineapple juice, apricot brandy and 3 tablespoons water, stirring until combined. Microwave at HIGH 2-1/2 minutes, stirring after each minute. Add ham, pepper strips and sauce to baking dish, stirring gently to coat. Microwave, covered, at HIGH 5 to 7 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes before serving. 6 servings.

Directions for Conventional Preparation:

Cook sweet potato in 1/2 cup water in covered frying-pan 5 minutes. Add peas and cook 5 minutes longer. Meanwhile blend melted butter or margarine with flour and nutmeg. Gradually add pineapple juice, apricot brandy and 3 tablespoons water and cook slowly 5 minutes, stirring constantly; add to vegetables. Stir in ham and red pepper. Cook slowly, covered, 6 to 10 minutes or until heated through.

Crunchy Pecan Apples

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| 6 medium baking apples, cored | 1/3 cup toasted oat granola |
| 2 tablespoons butter or margarine | 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon |
| 1/2 cup chopped pecans | 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves |
| 1/3 cup packed brown sugar | |

Arrange apples in 10-inch glass-ceramic or glass pie plate or 2-quart glass-ceramic baking dish. Place an equal amount of butter or margarine in cavity of each apple. Cover with plastic wrap, venting one corner. Microwave at HIGH 4 minutes, rotating dish 1/4 turn every 2 minutes. Meanwhile combine pecans, brown sugar, granola, cinnamon and cloves. Spoon an equal amount of pecan mixture into cavity of each apple. Microwave at HIGH 2 minutes. 6 servings.

Directions for Conventional Preparation:

Follow microwave directions. Bake in a moderate oven (375°F.) 40 to 45 minutes. Spoon pecan mixture into cavity of apples and continue baking 5 to 10 minutes.