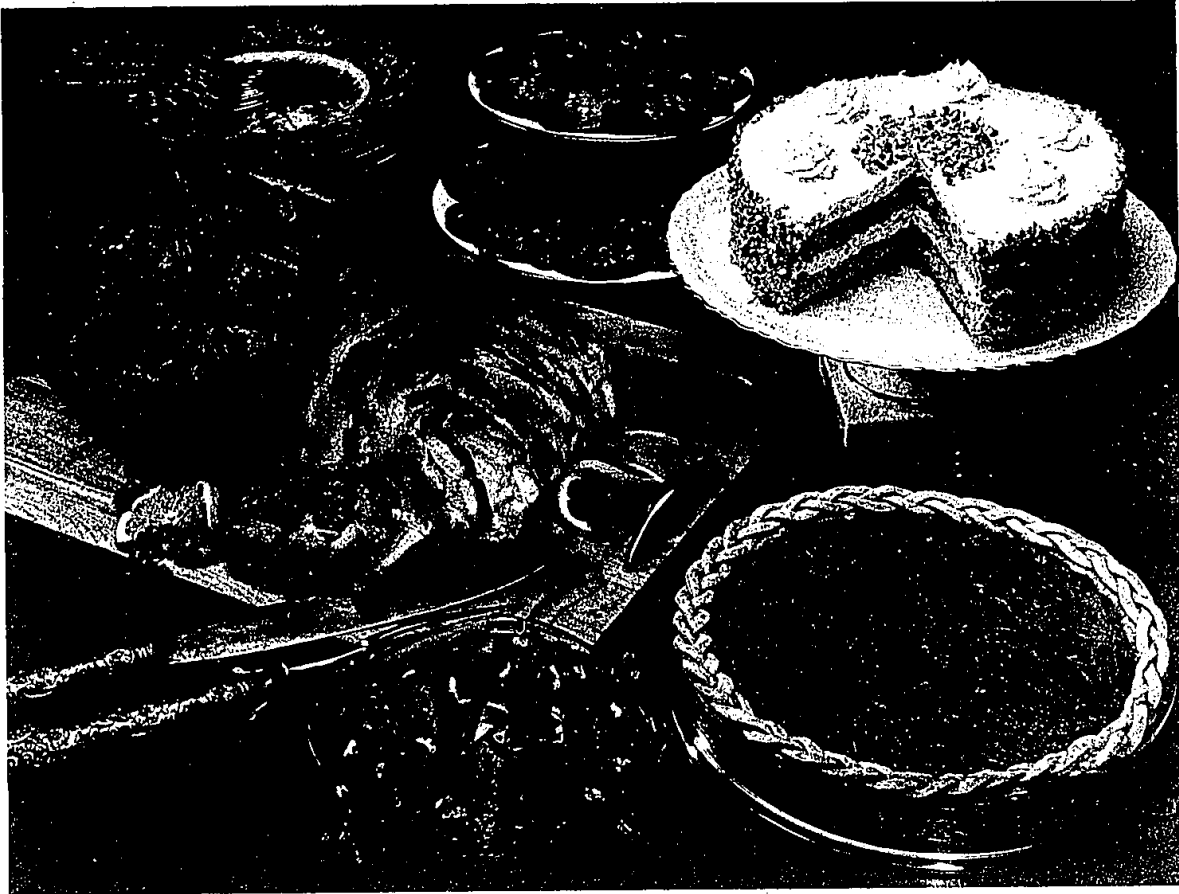


American Cuisine: Entertain With Style



The time-honored melting pot of the U.S. is spilling forth a cuisine that chefs around the world are acknowledging as "American." Comprising adaptations from practically every country, as well as dishes unique to regions of the U.S., clever American hosts are entertaining in American style. Take the pride of the southland, for instance—the pecan pie. It could crown any party meal in triumph. And it combines two of America's famous originals—pecans and corn syrup.

As nearly everyone knows, corn was an important staple to Indians across this land. They shared it with the new settlers from Europe, and taught them how to dry it, grind it, press it and love it. Pecans, also an Indian favorite, were

called variously "pakans," "pagans," and "peccans" by the local Indian tribes. The Indians roasted pecans, and they also ground them, mixed them with vegetables and extracted their oil.

Pecan trees, given to George Washington by Thomas Jefferson and planted just weeks before the Revolution, can still be seen at Mt. Vernon. Even then pecans were prestige nuts and a worthy gift. Today, their flavor and delightful crunchiness add goodness to a variety of foods—desserts, of course, but also main dishes, meats and relishes. Pecans are also nutritionally wholesome. They add fiber to the diet and contain iron, calcium, the B vitamins, potassium and phosphorus.

Although the ingenuity of the Indians was great and their use of corn creative, it wasn't until this century that corn syrup was developed. It was named Karo, perhaps for romantic reasons, by its inventor. Corn syrup quickly became a standard product in the American kitchen. Cooks like its subtle sweetness and the consistency, body and gloss it lends to sauces and glazes. Many of the fine corn syrup recipes developed by its early fans remain classics of good eating today—whether they be special desserts, meats, fruit; or vegetable dishes, sauces, condiments or candies.

Call it patriotic, chauvenistic, or just plain fun, but embracing American cookery is a festive way to entertain.

Citrus Glazed Ham with Pecans

- 1 (12 to 15 lb) fully cooked ham, with bone in
- 1 cup dark corn syrup
- 1 tablespoon shredded orange or lemon rind
- 2 tablespoons orange or lemon juice
- Toasted pecan halves
- Whole cloves
- Very thin slices orange peel

Place ham fat side up on rack in large roasting pan. Bake in 325°F oven about 1 hour and 45 minutes. In small bowl stir together corn syrup, orange rind and juice. Remove ham from oven; with sharp knife, score fat 1/8-inch deep in diamond pattern. Brush ham with some of the syrup mixture. Continue basting about 45 minutes, basting frequently, until ham is well glazed and heated through. Remove from oven. Place 1 pecan half in center of half of the square marked on ham. Put whole clove through center of orange peel and insert 1 in center of each of the remaining squares. Baste ham once more. Return to oven 10 minutes.

Cranberry-Orange Relish

- 2 cups fresh or frozen cranberries
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 1/4 cup orange juice or orange-flavored liqueur
- 1 cup orange sections
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped toasted pecans

In 2-quart saucepan stir together cranberries, sugar, corn syrup and orange juice. Stirring occasionally, bring to boil over medium heat. Reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes or until cranberry skins pop. Remove from heat. Stir in orange sections. Cover; refrigerate several hours. Just before serving, stir in pecans. Makes about 2 1/2 cups.

Deluxe Pecan Pie

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup light or dark corn syrup
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons corn oil
- margarine, melted
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups pecans
- 1 unbaked (9-inch) pastry shell

In large bowl with mixer at medium speed beat eggs slightly. Beat in corn syrup, sugar, margarine, vanilla and salt until well blended. Stir in pecans. Pour filling into pastry shell. Bake in 350°F oven 55 to 65 minutes or until knife inserted halfway between center and edge comes out clean. Cool. If desired, serve with whipped cream. Makes 1 (9-inch) pie.

Praline Gateau

- 1 1/3 cups unsifted flour
- 1/2 cup ground toasted pecans
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 4 eggs, at room temperature
- Dash salt
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup light corn syrup
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
- 2 cups heavy cream, whipped
- 1 cup finely chopped toasted pecans

Grease and flour 2 (9 x 1 1/2-inch) round layer pans. In small bowl stir together flour, ground pecans and baking powder. In large bowl with mixer at high speed beat eggs and salt until foamy, about 1 minute. Gradually beat in sugar, then corn syrup until mixture is thick and pale yellow, about 3 to 4 minutes. Beat in vanilla. Reduce speed to low; add flour mixture, 1/4 at a time, beating until well blended after each addition. Pour into prepared pans. Bake in 350°F oven 30 to 35 minutes or until cake springs plently on wire rack. Place one layer on serving plate. Spread with about 1 cup of the whipped cream. Top with remaining cake layer. Frost top and sides of cake with remaining whipped cream. Sprinkle sides of cake with finely chopped pecans. Garnish with additional whipped cream and chopped pecans. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Makes 10 to 12 servings.

Candied Pecans

- 3 cups pecan halves
- 2 tablespoons corn oil
- margarine
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 cup sugar, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla

Place pecans in 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking pan. Heat in 250°F oven 5 minutes. In 2-quart saucepan melt margarine over medium heat. Stir in corn syrup and 1/4 cup of the sugar. Stirring constantly, bring to boil over medium heat. Boil without stirring 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in vanilla. Pour syrup over pecans, stirring constantly to coat evenly. Bake in 250°F oven 1 hour, stirring several times. Sprinkle with remaining 1/4 cup sugar; toss to coat evenly. Immediately spread out on greased cookie sheets to cool. Separate into individual pecan halves. Cool. Store in tightly covered container. Makes 3 cups.

To toast pecans: Place pecans on cookie sheet. Bake in 400°F oven 5 minutes or until lightly toasted.

Wafer Crisps

- 2/3 cup unsifted flour
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup dark corn syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup chopped pecans

Line cookie sheets with foil. In small bowl stir together flour and salt. In large bowl with mixer at high speed beat eggs until foamy. Gradually beat in sugar until thick, about 2 minutes. Beat in corn syrup and vanilla. With mixer at low speed, gradually stir in flour mixture until well blended. Fold in pecans, drop by teaspoonful, 3 inches apart, onto prepared cookie sheets. Bake in 375°F oven 9 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool 5 to 7 minutes on foil on wire rack. Remove cookies from foil. Cool completely on wire rack. Store in tightly covered container. Makes about 6 dozen.

Crunchy Chicken with Peach Sauce

(Not Illustrated)

- 1/3 cup dark corn syrup
- 1/4 cup spicy brown mustard
- 2 whole chicken breasts, skinned, boned, cut in 1-inch cubes, 1/4-inch thick
- 2 egg whites
- 4 tablespoons corn starch
- 2 tablespoons water
- 3 cups finely chopped pecans
- 1 quart (about) corn oil
- Peach Sauce

In small bowl stir together corn syrup and mustard. Add chicken; toss to coat well. Cover; refrigerate several hours or overnight. In small bowl beat egg whites lightly but not until frothy. Gradually stir in corn starch and water until smooth. Dip chicken pieces, a few at a time, into corn starch mixture; then coat with pecans. Dry on waxed paper-lined trays while coating remainder. Pour corn oil into heavy 3-quart saucepan. Heat over medium heat to 350°F. Add chicken pieces, a few at a time, fry about 1 minute or until golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Serve with Peach Sauce. Makes 8 servings as an hors d'oeuvre.

Peach Sauce

- 2 cups fresh or frozen peach slices, thawed
- 3/4 cup dark corn syrup
- 1/4 cup cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg

In 2-quart saucepan stir together peaches, corn syrup, vinegar, onion, cinnamon and nutmeg. Stirring occasionally, bring to boil over medium heat and boil gently 15 minutes. Place fruit mixture, about 1/2 at a time, in blender container; cover. Blend on medium speed 5 to 10 seconds or just until coarsely chopped. Store in tightly covered container in refrigerator. Serve with Pecan-Crusted Chicken. Makes about 3 cups.