

IRRESISTIBLE SWEETS FOR A DESSERT TABLE

Although Americans are eating lighter main meals, dessert carts are featured in increasing numbers of fine restaurants. Sweet tables appear at large catered parties as well as small home wedding receptions. Maida Heatter, the cookbook author who has been called the high priestess of desserts says, "The whole country has gone crazy about sweets."

So it is no wonder that dessert parties are becoming a popular way to entertain at home. Some people invite their guests for dessert at 9 p.m. and suggest they eat lightly at dinner. Others find this an ideal way to end the evening after a concert or play.

Many desserts can be made ahead or take only a few minutes of last-minute preparation, so this is the kind of party you can enjoy with your guests, rather than being stuck in the kitchen.

You can combine homemade treats with food purchased ready-to-serve, like beautiful fresh fruit to arrange in a basket and the best quality ice cream, to serve with your own special topping. Cut down even more on cooking time with convenience foods that you turn into your own fabulous desserts.

The most impressive dessert table appeals to the eye as well as the taste buds. Since guests may want to sample all the choices, you will want to plan for variety in flavors and textures.

A homemade pie will impress more people than a tray of the fanciest French pastries. When guests compliment you on the flaky, tender crust, you don't need to reveal that you took advantage of the new pre-rolled, refrigerated pie crusts that are all ready to use and bake up just like the best homemade crust. One beauty of a two-crust pie for fall, Cranberry Apple Pie, features new crop apples and whole fresh cranberries. Another choice might be a classic one-crust Black Bottom Pie which combines a rich baked chocolate layer with a light rum custard layer.

A cake roll is another impressive dessert, and German Chocolate Cake Roll is surprisingly easy to make. The time-saving secret here is that recipe directions show how to turn a pudding-included German chocolate cake mix into a make-ahead cake roll, while the filling is a new ready-to-spread frosting which looks and tastes like the traditional homemade coconut pecan frosting. The German Chocolate Cake Roll is frosted with whipped cream before serving and garnished with mandarin orange pieces dipped in chocolate.

Another cake dessert which would be an attractive addition to your table is Rum Raisin Oatmeal Torte. Oats and brown sugar cake mix is the base, and coconut almond frosting combined with cream cheese, rum and raisins makes the rich filling.

When your guests try Praline Bananas Royale, they'll be reminded of New Orleans-style Bananas Foster. Form ice cream balls ahead of time and store them in your freezer in a pretty glass serving bowl covered with plastic wrap. The sauce takes just minutes to make by heating a can of coconut pecan or coconut almond frosting, which you spice with a little cinnamon. Add banana pieces to the hot sauce and keep warm in a chafing dish or some other heatproof serving dish. Just before serving, pour rum around the outer edge of the warm sauce, light it and spoon it flaming over ice cream.



A dessert table which has eye-appeal as well as taste-appeal includes Cranberry Apple Pie, an edible centerpiece of fresh fruit, Praline Bananas Foster to serve flaming over ice cream and German Chocolate Cake Roll.

CRANBERRY APPLE PIE

15-oz. pkg. All Ready Pie Crusts
1 teaspoon flour

FILLING
5 cups sliced apples
1 1/2 cups cranberries
1 1/4 cups sugar
3 tablespoons all purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt

Prepare pie crust according to package directions for a 2-crust pie. Heat oven to 400°F.

Combine apples, cranberries, sugar, flour, cinnamon and salt; toss lightly. Spoon mixture into pie crust-lined pan. Top with second crust. Slit crust in several places. Bake at 400°F. for 30 to 40 minutes or until apples are tender. Garnish with a sugar-coated cranberry and mint leaf if desired. 8 servings.

TIP: Cover edge of pie crust with strip of aluminum foil during last 15 minutes of baking to prevent excessive browning.

Bake on cookie sheet to prevent spillage.

BLACK BOTTOM PIE

(not illustrated)

15-oz. pkg. All Ready Pie Crusts
1 teaspoon flour

FILLING
1/4 cup margarine or butter
1/2 cup light corn syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla
3 eggs
1/2 cup sugar
1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa

CUSTARD
1/3 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 cups milk
4 eggs
2 teaspoons rum extract
Whipped cream, whipped
Chocolate curls

Prepare pie crust according to package directions for a filled 1-crust pie. (Refrigerate remaining crust for later use.) Heat oven to 350°F.

In medium saucepan, melt margarine; remove from heat and blend in syrup, vanilla and eggs thoroughly. In small bowl, stir together sugar and cocoa. Add to egg mixture; blend well. Quickly pour into pie crust-lined pan. Bake at 350°F. for 30 to 40 minutes or until center is set. Cool completely.

Meanwhile, in heavy weight saucepan, combine sugar with cornstarch. Add milk and eggs; mix until well blended. Cook over medium heat until mixture boils and thickens, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Stir in rum extract. Cover custard with plastic wrap; chill.

Spoon cooled custard over chocolate layer. Garnish with whipped cream and chocolate curls if desired. Chill several hours. Refrigerate leftovers. 8 to 10 servings.

GERMAN CHOCOLATE CAKE ROLL

CAKE
4 eggs
1/2 cup water
1 pkg. German Chocolate or Dark Chocolate Cake Mix
Powdered sugar

FILLING
1 can Ready To Spread Coconut Pecan or Coconut Almond Frosting Supreme

TOPPING
2 tablespoons powdered sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 1/2 cups whipping cream, whipped

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease 15x10-inch jelly roll pan; line with wax paper and grease again. Lightly sprinkle clean towel* with powdered sugar. In large bowl, beat eggs on highest speed until thick and lemon colored, about 5 minutes; stir in water. Gradually blend in cake mix at low speed until moistened; beat 2 minutes at highest speed. Pour batter into prepared pan.

Bake at 350°F. for 17 to 27 minutes or until cake springs back when touched lightly in center. DO NOT OVERBAKE. Remove cake from oven and immediately invert onto towel. Remove pan and paper. Drop filling by tablespoons over hot cake; spread evenly to within 1/2 inch of edges. Starting from shorter end, roll up hot cake. Cake may split on first roll; continue rolling. (See diagram below.) DO NOT ROLL TOWEL IN CAKE. Keep towel wrapped around cake until it is cool.

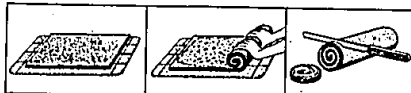
In small bowl, fold powdered sugar and vanilla into whipped cream. Spread about 2 1/2 cups over cooled cake. Pipe or dollop remaining whipped cream down center of cake. If desired, garnish with mandarin oranges.*** Store in refrigerator. 12 servings.

TIPS: *For best results, use terry cloth towel.

**Cooled cake may be stored frozen in foil up to 3 weeks. Let stand at room temperature for 2 to 3 hours to thaw. Frost as directed.

***Dip drained mandarin oranges in 1/2 square melted unsweetened chocolate. Place on cooling rack until chocolate is firm.

HIGH ALTITUDE — Above 3500 Feet: No change.



PRALINE BANANAS ROYALE

3 firm bananas, peeled
1 can Coconut Pecan or Coconut Almond Frosting Supreme
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
2 tablespoons rum
1 1/2 quarts (6 cups) vanilla ice cream

Slice bananas in half crosswise, then lengthwise. In large skillet, heat frosting and cinnamon over medium heat until frosting is melted. Add bananas; cook 3 minutes longer, stirring occasionally. Just before serving, pour rum around outer edge of mixture; ignite. Serve flaming over ice cream. 12 servings.

RUM RAISIN OATMEAL TORTE

(not illustrated)

CAKE
1 pkg. Oats 'n Brown Sugar Cake Mix
1 cup water
3-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
3 eggs

FILLING
3-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
1 can Coconut Pecan or Coconut Almond Frosting Supreme
1/2 cup raisins
1/4 cup rum
1 cup whipping cream, whipped

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease and flour 15x10-inch jelly roll pan.* In large bowl, combine cake mix, water, cream cheese and eggs. Beat at low speed until moistened; beat 2 minutes at highest speed. Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake at 350°F. for 25 to 35 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool completely. In small bowl, beat cream cheese until smooth. Stir in 1 cup frosting; add rum and raisins. Cut cake crosswise into thirds; spread 1/2 filling between each layer. Spread remaining 1/2 cup frosting on top. Frost sides of cake with whipped cream. Refrigerate at least 2 hours before serving. Store in refrigerator. 16 servings.

TIP: *Two 8 or 9-inch rounds can be used. Bake at 350°F. for 30 to 40 minutes. Cool layers on cooling rack 15 minutes; then remove. Cool completely. Slice cooled cake into 4 layers; gently spread filling between layers.

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