



OLD WORLD FAVORITES

FRESH AS SPRING

From ancient times to the present, in countries around the globe, people of varying faiths have celebrated numerous spring rites. Food often plays a prominent role in the festivities with eggs standing out above other foods and serving variously as a symbol of life, the renewal of life and the resurrection of Christ. In addition to their symbolic decorative use, these nutritious natural wonders have also shown their versatility in a host of dishes traditionally served for the occasions. The holiday treats below are merely a small sampling of classic ethnic recipes that have been adapted for modern cooks. One of them might be just the thing to add a fresh note to whatever you celebrate this spring!



PARED-DOWN PASKHA

about 2 cups

You might describe this Russian Easter cheese dessert as a spreadable cheese cake. Customarily made with bakers' farmer or pot cheese, and sometimes cream cheese and whipping cream besides, our uncooked version is still rich and creamy, but considerably lower in calories. After Easter, serve it with fruit, plain cookies or pound cake.

- 1 carton (12 oz.) dry cottage cheese
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup dairy sour cream
- 1/3 cup butter, softened
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
- 1 teaspoon grated orange peel
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Candied fruit pieces, optional

Press cottage cheese through sieve into small mixing bowl. Beat in remaining ingredients except nuts and fruit until thoroughly blended. Line a 2-1/4-cup (or larger) perforated container* with double layer of dampened cheesecloth. Spoon cheese mixture into cheesecloth. Fold over ends of cheesecloth and place a weight smaller than container on top. (About 1 lb. A full food can works well.) Set in shallow pan so liquid can drain. Refrigerate overnight.

To serve, remove weight and turn back cheesecloth. Unmold onto small serving plate. Garnish with fruit pieces, if desired. Refrigerate any leftovers.

*Sieve, colander, strainer, clean non-clay flowerpot, or empty cottage cheese can with a few holes punched in bottom.

NEW WORLD SIMNEL CAKE

12 servings

Legends about and recipes for this delicious fruitcake vary from county to county in England, but it is associated with the fourth Sunday in Lent, Mothering Sunday, when the British honor either the Mother Church, their own mothers, or both. This variation eliminates the tedious and toughening step of boiling before baking and is simply made with only one layer of almond paste.

- 1-3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup currants or seedless raisins
- 1/2 cup sliced candied mixed fruit
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 6 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 can (8 oz.) almond paste
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Place 9x3-inch springform pan on 12-inch length of waxed paper. Trace around pan. Lightly grease bottom and side of pan. Set pan and waxed paper aside.

In medium bowl, stir together flour, peel, baking powder and seasonings until thoroughly blended. Stir in fruits. Set aside. In large mixing bowl at medium speed, beat together butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Set aside 2 tablespoons of the beaten eggs. Add remaining beaten eggs to butter/sugar mixture. Beat at medium speed until thoroughly blended. Fold in reserved flour mixture. Pour into prepared pan. Bake in preheated 300°F oven 1 hour.

Meanwhile, cut scant 1/2-inch slice from almond paste. Cover and set aside. Place remaining paste in center of circle on reserved waxed paper. Top with another piece of waxed paper and roll paste to fit circle (trimming edges of paste, if necessary). Cover and set aside. Knead trimmings, if any, into reserved slice and form into 11 small balls. Cover and set aside.

Remove cake from oven. Increase oven temperature to 400°F. With a spatula, gently loosen cake from pan at side and remove pan side. Brush top of cake with some of the reserved beaten eggs. Carefully place rolled paste circle on top of cake. Brush paste circle with some of the remaining beaten eggs. Gently press balls onto top of paste. Brush balls with remaining beaten eggs. Bake until paste is lightly browned, 7 to 8 minutes. Cool on wire rack.

MODERN SPINACH MATZO KUGEL

4 to 6 servings

The 8-day home festival of Passover marks the Hebrew exodus from Egypt and the liberation of the Israelites from slavery. Joyously celebrated by Jews, the feast called Seder is notable for the lack of leavening foods, legumes and grains. The symbolic matzo crackers, eggs and vegetables are all combined in this kosher, quiche-like kugel.

- 3 matzo crackers
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms (about 8 oz.)
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 8 eggs
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 cup grated lemon peel
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 package (10 oz.) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
- 1 cup (8 oz.) low-fat cottage cheese
- 1 jar (2 oz.) chopped pimientos, drained

Soak crackers in enough warm water to cover just until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Press gently between paper towels and set aside.

In 10-inch omelet pan or skillet over medium heat, cook mushrooms and onion in butter until tender but not brown, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside. Set aside some attractive mushroom slices for garnish.

In large bowl, beat together eggs, lemon juice and peel and salt until thoroughly blended. Stir in reserved mushroom/onion mixture, spinach, cheese and pimientos. Place one of the reserved crackers on bottom of lightly greased 2-quart casserole or 8x8x2-inch baking dish. Cut another reserved cracker into four strips. Line sides of dish with cracker strips. Pour in about 2-1/2 cups of the vegetable mixture. Top with remaining cracker and remaining vegetable mixture. Bake in preheated 350°F oven 30 minutes. Arrange reserved mushroom slices on top. Continue baking until knife inserted near center comes out clean, 10 to 15 minutes.

EASY ITALIAN EASTER PIE

6 to 8 servings

Sometimes made in as many as thirty-three layers (representing the years of Christ's life), this savory main dish is delicious hot or cold. Despite the lack of all those layers, this modernized recipe is still lovely to look at when sliced.

- 4 ounces link mild Italian sausage
- 2 tablespoons water
- 4 eggs
- 1 carton (15 oz.) low-fat or part-skim ricotta cheese
- 4 ounces prosciutto or cooked ham, chopped
- 2 ounces Genoa salami, chopped
- 1/2 cup (2 oz.) shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed
- 4 hard-cooked eggs*, sliced
- 4 thin slices Genoa salami, optional
- Parsley sprigs, optional

In small skillet over medium heat, cook sausage with water, covered, 5 to 6 minutes. Uncover and continue cooking, turning occasionally, until lightly browned, about 2 minutes more. Set aside.

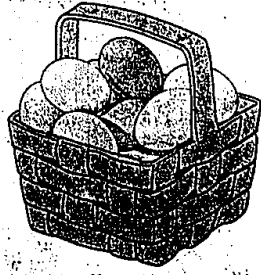
In large bowl, beat 4 eggs well. Set aside 2 tablespoons. Thoroughly blend ricotta into remaining beaten eggs. Slice cooked reserved sausage. Stir sausage and remaining ingredients except puff pastry and sliced eggs into ricotta mixture until well combined. Set aside.

On lightly floured surface, roll puff pastry into 14-inch square. Cut 12-inch circle from the square. Line 9-inch pie plate with rolled pastry. Press trimmings together and roll into 10-inch circle and set aside.

Pour 1-1/2 cups of the reserved ricotta mixture into pastry-lined plate. Reserving 1 center egg slice for garnish, arrange sliced eggs over ricotta mixture. Pour in remaining reserved ricotta mixture. Brush edge of bottom pastry with some of the reserved beaten egg. Place slit circle on top of ricotta mixture. Pinch edges of pastries together to seal. Trim edge even with rim of plate. Flute edge of crust and brush top and edge with remaining reserved beaten eggs.

Bake in preheated 350°F oven until lightly browned and knife inserted near center comes out clean, about 40 to 45 minutes. Garnish with reserved egg slice and salami and parsley, if desired. To serve, cut into wedges.

*To hard cook, put eggs in single layer in saucepan. Add enough tap water to come at least 1 inch above eggs. Cover and quickly bring just to boiling. Turn off heat. If necessary, remove pan from burner to prevent further boiling. Let eggs stand, covered, in the hot water 15 to 17 minutes for large eggs. (Adjust time up or down by about 3 minutes for each size larger or smaller.) Immediately run cold water over eggs or put them in ice water until completely cooled. To remove shell, crackle it by tapping gently all over. Roll egg between hands to loosen shell, then peel, starting at large end. Hold egg under running cold water or dip in bowl of water to help ease off shell.



QUICK KULICH

1 large or 2 small loaves

Though it's less time consuming to make this Russian Easter Bread with today's fast-rising yeast, its classic cylindrical shape is preserved by baking the rich yeast dough in empty food cans. Traditionally, the bread is sliced into rounds (with the top slice served to the guest of honor or senior member of the family) and spread with Paskha.

- 4-1/2 cups all-purpose flour, divided
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 packages fast-rising active dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup butter
- 4 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/2 cup chopped nuts
- 1/2 cup golden seedless raisins
- 1/2 cup chopped dried or candied mixed fruit
- 1/3 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1-1/2 to 2 teaspoons milk
- Nut halves, optional
- Fruit pieces, optional

Set aside 1 cup of the flour. In large mixing bowl, stir together remaining flour with 1/4 cup sugar, yeast, salt and nutmeg until thoroughly blended. In small saucepan over medium heat, heat 1/2 cup milk, water and butter until very warm, 120° to 130°F. (Butter need not melt completely.) Add to dry mixture along with eggs and vanilla. Stir until blended. Stir in enough of the remaining 1 cup flour to make a soft dough. Stir in chopped nuts, raisins and chopped fruit. Knead on lightly floured board 4 minutes.

Place dough in well-greased 2-pound coffee can OR 2 (1-lb. each) coffee cans OR 2 (46-oz. each) juice cans. Cover cans with plastic wrap and cloth or paper towels. Let rise in warm place until doubled (finger pushed into dough will leave an imprint), 30 to 35 minutes for large can or 15 to 20 minutes for small cans.

Bake in preheated 350°F oven until lightly browned and bread sounds hollow when tapped with finger, 30 to 35 minutes for large can, about 25 minutes for small cans.

Tip can/s gently on side/s to loosen. Remove from can/s. Cool on wire rack.

Beat together confectioners' sugar and 1-1/2 to 2 teaspoons milk until smooth. Drizzle over bread/s. Garnish with nut halves or fruit pieces, if desired. To serve, slice horizontally into rounds.