

Easy cookie recipes prompt tradition

Holiday cookie baking is a tradition in many families, and the cookie tray has become an expected part of holiday gatherings.

When making cookies, choose a variety of recipes that family and friends will enjoy and that are easy to prepare. Arrange a cookie tray with old-fashioned favorites, like Holiday Thumbprints and Frosted Ginger People, along with some new holiday variations of another favorite, Marshmallow Treats. These are a hit with kids and adults and are so easy to make you may want to involve the younger members of your household in their preparation.

Warm mugs of hot chocolate or cider are a nice complement to these holiday recipes.

HOLIDAY THUMBPRINTS

1 cup margarine
1/4 cup sugar
1 tsp. almond extract
1/2 tsp. salt
2 cups flour
Strawberry or red raspberry preserves

Beat margarine and sugar until light and fluffy. Blend in extract and salt. Add flour, mix well. Shape level measuring tablespoons of dough into balls. Place on ungreased cookie sheet; flatten slightly. Indent centers, fill with preserves. Bake at 400° F. eight to 10 minutes or until lightly browned.

Makes about three dozen.

FROSTED GINGER PEOPLE

1 cup margarine
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup dark molasses
1 egg
2 1/2 cups flour
1 tsp. ground ginger
1/2 tsp. baking soda
Dash of salt

Frosting:
3 cups sifted powdered sugar
1/4 cup milk
1/2 tsp. vanilla
Dash of salt

Beat margarine and sugar until light and fluffy. Blend in molasses and egg. Add combined dry ingredients; mix well. Chill. On lightly floured surface, roll dough to 1/4-inch thickness; cut with gingerbread people cutters. Place on greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375° F. eight to 10 minutes or until edges are very lightly browned. Cool.

Combine sugar, milk, vanilla and salt; mix well. Add food coloring, if

desired. Frost cookies. Decorate as desired.

Makes about 3 1/2 dozen.

FRUIT AND NUT WREATH

Wreath:
1/4 cup margarine
4 cups miniature marshmallows
5 cups strawberry crisples cereal
1/2 cup chopped red candied cherries
1/2 cup chopped green candied cherries
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Frosting:
1 1/2 cups sifted powdered sugar
2 tsp. milk
1/4 tsp. vanilla

Melt margarine in large saucepan over low heat. Add marshmallows; stir until smooth. Remove from heat. Add cereal, candied cherries and walnuts; stir until well-coated. Place warm cereal mixture on greased wax paper. With greased hands, shape into wreath approximately eight inches in diameter. Cool. Combine remaining ingredients; mix well. Drizzle over wreath. Decorate with additional candied cherries. Cut into slices.

DATE PINWHEELS

1 (8 oz.) pkg. whole pitted dates
1/2 cup water
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1/4 cup margarine
40 marshmallows
5 cups crispy rice cereal

Combine dates, water, sugar and walnuts in saucepan. Cook, stirring occasionally over low heat until smooth and thickened. Cool. Melt

margarine in large saucepan over low heat. Add marshmallows; stir until smooth. Remove from heat. Add cereal; stir until well-coated. Press into greased 13x9x1-inch jelly roll pan. Spread with date mix. Cut in half crosswise. Roll up each half jelly roll fashion, starting with cut edge. Wrap tightly in wax paper, seal in ends. Chill one to two hours or until firm. Cut into 1/2-inch slices.

Makes about three dozen slices.

CRISP CANDY CANES

1/4 cup margarine
40 marshmallows
5 cups crispy rice cereal
1/4 cup crushed peppermint candy

Melt margarine in large saucepan over low heat. Add marshmallows; stir until smooth. Remove from heat. Add cereal and candy; stir until well-coated. With greased hands, shape into candy canes, approximately 1/4

cup mixture each. Place on greased wax paper; cool. Decorate with ribbon.

Makes about one dozen.

CHOCOLATE MARSHMALLOW SANDWICHES

1/4 cup margarine
4 cups miniature marshmallows
5 cups marshmallow crisples cereal
1 cup milk chocolate pieces, melted

Melt margarine in large saucepan over low heat. Add marshmallows; stir until smooth. Remove from heat. Add cereal; stir until well-coated. Place warm cereal mixture on wax paper. With greased hands, shape into log 15 inches long and 2 1/2 inches wide. Wrap tightly in wax paper, sealing ends. Chill one hour or until firm. Cut into 1/4-inch slices. Spread

chocolate on half the slices; top with remaining slices.

Makes about two dozen sandwiches.

PEANUT BUTTER LOGS

1 cup peanut butter
1/4 cup margarine, softened
1 1/2 cups unsifted powdered sugar
3 cups chocolate crisples cereal
1 cup chopped peanuts
1 (6 oz.) pkg. semi-sweet

chocolate pieces
2 tsp. shortening

Combine peanut butter and margarine. Stir in sugar. Add cereal; mix well. Shape level tablespoons of mixture into logs; roll in peanuts. Place on wax paper-lined cookie sheet. Melt chocolate with shortening over low heat, stirring until smooth. Drizzle chocolate mixture over logs; chill.

Makes about 40 logs.

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Helpful hints to save time

Want to save time, money and energy on holiday cooking and baking? Here are some helpful hints which can help cut corners and expenses this season.

1. Buy candles ahead of time on sale. Freeze them — they keep their shape, burn with a bright flame and they are not as likely to drip.
2. Need extra ice cubes for the holidays, use muffin tins.
3. When a recipe calls for softened butter, but you forgot to take it out of the refrigerator, measure the correct amount and shred like a carrot.
4. Utilize your freezer. Freeze cooked squash in a casserole. Make cranberry relish, pie and pie crust ahead of the holidays and freeze.
5. To get Brazil nuts out of the shell unbroken, freeze them until the shells crack.
6. Cranberries grind very neatly when frozen.
7. For a quick salad, freeze an unopened can of fruit cocktail. Open both ends, push out the frozen fruit and slice.
8. Buy bananas when they are cheap. You can mash and freeze the over-ripe ones in portions for banana bread, cookies or cakes.
9. Perk up soggy lettuce by adding lemon juice to a bowl of cold water and soak for one hour in refrigerator.
10. Shelling walnuts: soak overnight in salt water before cracking gently to get the walnut meats out whole.

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