



The Warming Oven by Emily Watson

Only 14 more days until Christmas. If you don't feel like battling the crowds in the shopping centers, you can find peace and quiet and some gifts in your own kitchen. Here are two of my favorite cookie recipes, especially made for Christmas.

FRUIT CAKE COOKIES

- 1 1/4 cups raisins
- 1/4 cup bourbon
- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp. ground cloves
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 lb. citron, diced
- 1/2 lb. whole candied cherries
- 1/2 lb. pecan halves

SPICE RUM BALLS

- 1/4 cup rum
- 1 cup seedless raisins
- 1 cup pitted dates
- 1 cup dried figs
- 1/2 cup walnuts
- 1/2 cup filberts
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. cardamom (optional)

Heat rum, but do not boil, over fruits in a bowl. Cover and let stand overnight. Put fruits and nuts through a food chopper, then knead until you have a compact dough. Combine sugar and spices on a flat plate. Form dough into small balls and roll in spiced sugar. Let stand on cake rack until dry. Yields about 35.

Put the raisins in a bowl. Add bourbon and mix well. Let stand one hour. Sift together next five ingredients, set aside. Cream butter, add sugar and eggs, and beat until light. Add the flour mixture and beat until smooth. Add raisins, citron, candied cherries and pecan halves. Mix well. Cover. Chill overnight. Shape into walnut-size balls. Bake 12 minutes on greased cookie sheets at 325 degrees.

GOLDEN CHEESE BITES

Let guests deep fry their own tidbits or serve them from a fabric-lined basket.

- 1 8-oz. pkg. natural brick, muenster, or monterey jack cheese
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 cup (2 oz.) grated parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup dry bread crumbs
- 1/2 teaspoon onion salt
- Oil

Cut brick cheese into 24 cubes. Dip in egg, coat with combined parmesan cheese, crumbs and onion salt. Repeat. Fry in deep oil, 375°, until lightly browned. 24 appetizers

To Make Ahead: Cover uncooked appetizers; refrigerate. When ready to serve, fry as directed.

DELECTABLE CHICKEN PUFFS

There's a cheezy surprise tucked inside this crowd-pleaser recipe.

- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup margarine
- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3 eggs
- 1/4 lb. process cheese spread, cut into small cubes
- 2 cups chopped cooked chicken
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 lb. process cheese spread, cut into small cubes
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Dash of pepper

Bring water and margarine to a boil. Add flour and salt; stir vigorously over low heat until mixture forms a ball. Remove from heat. Add eggs one at a time, beating until smooth after each addition. Stir in process cheese spread, mixing until melted. Drop level tablespoonfuls of dough onto greased cookie sheet. Bake at 400°, 25 minutes. Remove from cookie sheet immediately.

Combine chicken, celery, onion, process cheese spread and seasonings; mix lightly. Cut tops from cream puffs; fill with chicken mixture. Replace tops. Bake at 350°, 15 minutes.

Approximately 2-1/2 dozen

PARTY SANDWICH LOAVES

Festive and fast, these petite sandwich loaves begin with regular bread slices. Fix as many or as few as you need.

- 1-1/3 cups egg salad
- 1-1/3 cups ham salad
- 16 whole wheat bread slices, crusts removed
- 8 white bread slices, crusts removed
- Soft margarine
- 1 12-oz. pkg. American Singles process cheese food
- 1 5-oz. jar neufchatel cheese spread with olives and pimento

Spread both sides of white bread and one side of whole wheat bread with margarine. For each individual loaf, top whole wheat bread slice with process cheese food, two tablespoons egg salad, white bread, process cheese food, two tablespoons ham salad and whole wheat bread. Frost top with one tablespoon neufchatel cheese spread. Cover lightly. Refrigerate 1 hour. Cut vertically into four slices.

8 loaves
32 sandwiches

