

Wonderful Ways to Wrap Up the Season

Make your gift-giving special this year with homemade creations from the kitchen. Delicious baked goods can be just right for anyone on your Christmas list, young or old, and especially those "hard-to-buy-for" folks. You'll have fun creating your gifts; they'll enjoy sampling the fruits of your efforts.

Package your tasty gifts with complementary containers—delicious cookies in a decorative box or small cakes on a ceramic tray. That way, when the goodies are gone, these wonderful gift containers remain to use again and again.

Eggnog Bundt cakes are light, little pound cakes that blend this traditional holiday flavor with a hint of brandy or orange juice. For a unique gift or serving idea, bake the cakes in various sized vegetable and coffee cans. Drizzle with a shimmering glaze, and arrange on a decorative tray or cutting board. Or, if you like, bake in a more traditional bundt-type pan and give with a handsome serving tray.

Giant Gingerbread People are perfect for the younger set to give and receive. Plan a day in the kitchen with the children, letting them shape, bake and decorate these jolly treats. The youngsters will love adding their own creative touch using "M&M's" Chocolate Candies and tinted icing.

For a mouthwatering gift that's sure to please the whole family, what's better than a jazzy box filled with an assortment of holiday cookies. The trio pictured here includes delicious Chocolate Cream Bars, a moist, chewy brownie that gets a double chocolate flavor, vibrant color and delectable crunch from the chocolate candies. They're simple to make, and cut easily into bars. Merry Cherry Cookies are delightful jewels with toasted coconut for a wonderful taste and a festive mix of green chocolate candies and red candied cherries. Crisp and buttery Petite Pecan Wreaths round out your gift box. Decorated with an assortment of trimmings, these pecan shortbreads look like miniature wreaths.

Another gift idea is an elegant porcelain basket filled with delectable moist Chinese Cheews. These tasty treats combine dates, nuts and ginger and are topped with a dusting of confectioners sugar. Arranged beautifully in the basket, they're the perfect take-along for holiday parties.

Plan to make extra of these baked goods for last-minute giving and family gatherings. Bake ahead and freeze until you're ready to serve, making sure to keep them securely wrapped until completely thawed. Spread your love to all this holiday season with homemade gifts that come from the kitchen and from the heart.



GIANT GINGERBREAD PEOPLE

- COOKIES:**
- 1 cup butter or margarine
 - 1 cup granulated sugar
 - 1/2 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
 - 1/2 cup molasses
 - 2 eggs
 - 6 cups flour
 - 2 teaspoons baking powder
 - 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 - 2 teaspoons ginger
 - 1-1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda**
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves**
- DECORATION:**
- 2 egg whites
 - 4-1/2 cups sifted confectioners sugar
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla
 - 6 to 7 teaspoons hot water
 - Food coloring
 - "M&M's" Plain or Peanut Chocolate Candies

For cookies, beat together butter and sugars until light and fluffy; blend in molasses and eggs. Gradually add combined flour, baking powder, cinnamon, sugar, salt, soda and cloves; mix at lowest speed on electric mixer until well blended. Divide dough into 3 equal portions. Wrap each securely; chill 1 hour. On 17 x 14-inch cookie sheet, roll out portion of dough to 1/8-inch thickness. Using patterns below, cut out 2 large gingerbread people from one portion. Remove excess dough; reserve for additional gingerbread people. Repeat with remaining two portions and reserved dough. Bake at 350°F. for 15 to 18 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Immediately remove to wire rack; cool thoroughly.

For decoration, beat egg whites until foamy, gradually adding confectioners sugar. Add vanilla and 1 teaspoon water at a time, beating until glaze is thick and of spreading consistency. Tint glaze with food coloring, as desired. If glaze thickens, add a few drops of water. Decorate with glaze and candies, as desired. Makes nine 10 x 6-inch gingerbread cookies.

*NOTE: To make boy pattern, trace outline from brown silhouette onto wax paper. Using tracing, cut out figure from cardboard. For girl pattern, repeat process including green outline for skirt and hair. To make cookies, place pattern on dough and cut around with sharp knife.

CHOCOLATE CREAM BARS

- 1 cup sugar
- 2-1/4 cups flour
- 1/3 cup cocoa powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup chopped nuts
- 1 cup butter or margarine, melted
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 can (14 oz.) sweetened condensed milk
- 1/2 cup "M&M's" Plain Chocolate Candies

Combine sugar, flour, cocoa, soda, salt and nuts; mix well. Add butter, egg and vanilla; mix until dry ingredients are thoroughly moistened and mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Reserve 1-1/2 cups crumb mixture; press remaining crumb mixture evenly onto bottom of greased 15-1/2 x 10-1/2-inch jelly roll pan. Bake at 375°F. for 10 minutes. Spread condensed milk over partially baked crust to within 1/2 inch of edge. Sprinkle reserved crumb mixture and candies evenly over condensed milk, pressing in lightly. Continue baking 18 to 20 minutes or until set. Cool thoroughly; cut into bars. Store in tightly covered container. Makes one 15-1/2 x 10-1/2-inch pan.

EGGNOG BUNDT

- CAKE:**
- 1/4 cup finely chopped nuts
 - 1-1/4 cups butter or margarine
 - 4 eggs
 - 1-1/2 cups granulated sugar
 - 3 cups flour
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg**
- 3/4 cup eggnog**
- 1/4 cup brandy**
- GLAZE:**
- 1 cup sifted confectioners sugar
 - 4 teaspoons water
 - 2 teaspoons brandy

For cake, generously grease 10-inch bundt-type pan* with vegetable shortening; coat bottom with nuts. Beat together butter and granulated sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Add combined flour, salt, soda and nutmeg, alternately with combined eggnog and brandy, mixing well after each addition. Spoon batter into prepared pan. Bake at 325°F. for 1 hour or until wooden pick inserted in center of cake comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes in pan; invert onto wire rack to remove from pan. Cool thoroughly on wire rack. For glaze, combine confectioners sugar, water and brandy; mix until smooth. Drizzle over cake; garnish top as desired. Makes one 10-inch cake.

VARIATION: For cake, substitute 1/4 cup orange juice for brandy. For glaze, substitute 2 tablespoons orange juice for water and brandy. Proceed as recipe directs.

*NOTES: • Substitute two 1-lb. coffee cans for bundt-type pan. Generously grease bottom and sides; coat each with 1 tablespoon finely chopped nuts. Spoon about 3 cups batter into each can. Bake at 325°F. for 1 hour, or until wooden pick inserted in center of cake comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes in can; remove from can. Cool thoroughly on wire rack. Glaze as directed above.

• Substitute five 16-oz. vegetable cans for bundt-type pan. Generously grease bottom and sides; coat each with 1 tablespoon finely chopped nuts. Spoon about 1-1/3 cups batter into each can. Bake at 350°F. for 40 to 45 minutes, or until wooden pick inserted in center of cake comes out clean. Cool and glaze as directed above.

PETITE PECAN WREATHS

- COOKIES:**
- 1 cup butter or margarine
 - 1-1/3 cups sugar
 - 1 egg
 - 1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla
 - 3 cups flour
 - 1 teaspoon salt
- 1-1/3 cups finely chopped pecans**
- 1 egg white, slightly beaten**
- DECORATIONS:**
- Green tube decorating frosting
 - Red or green candied cherries
 - Pecan halves, if desired

For cookies, beat together butter and 1 cup sugar until light and fluffy; blend in egg and vanilla. Gradually add combined flour and salt, mixing until well blended. Stir in 1 cup chopped pecans; chill dough 1 hour. Combine remaining 1/3 cup sugar and 1/3 cup chopped pecans; reserve. Shape dough to form 1-inch balls; roll out balls into 4-1/2-inch long ropes. Shape to form wreath, pinching the ends together. Brush top surface of cookies with egg white; sprinkle with reserved sugar-nut mixture. Place out side up on ungreased cookie sheet about 2-inches apart. Bake at 350°F. for 12 to 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove to wire rack; cool thoroughly.

For decoration, garnish with green frosting and pieces of red or green candied cherries or nuts, as desired. Makes about 5-1/2 dozen 2-inch cookies.

MERRY CHERRY COOKIES

- 1-1/2 cups butter or margarine
- 1-1/2 cups sugar
- 1 egg
- 1/4 teaspoon almond extract
- 2-2/3 cups flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped green "M&M's" Plain Chocolate Candies
- 1/4 cup chopped red candied cherries
- 1 cup coconut, toasted

Beat together butter and sugar until light and fluffy; blend in egg and almond extract. Add combined flour and salt; mix well. Stir in candied cherries. Shape to form 1-inch balls; roll in coconut. Place on greased cookie sheet about 3 inches apart; decorate with additional candies and cherries, pressing in lightly. Bake at 375°F. for 12 to 14 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Cool on cookie sheet about 3 minutes; remove to wire rack to cool thoroughly. Store in tightly covered container. Makes about 4 dozen 2-1/2-inch cookies.

CHINESE CHEWS

- 1-1/2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup flour
- 1-1/4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ginger
- 1-1/2 cups firmly packed chopped dates
- 1-1/2 cups chopped pecans or walnuts
- 3 eggs, separated
- Confectioners sugar

Combine granulated sugar, flour, baking powder, salt and ginger. Add dates and nuts; mix well. Beat egg whites until stiff; reserve. Beat egg yolks until thick and creamy; stir into flour mixture, mixing until well blended. Fold in egg whites. Spread mixture evenly into greased 13 x 9-inch baking pan. Bake at 325°F. for 25 to 30 minutes, or until lightly browned. Cool about 25 minutes on wire rack. While warm, cut into 1-inch squares; roll squares to form balls. Sprinkle with confectioners sugar. Store in tightly covered container. Makes about 6 dozen 1-inch cookies.