

For your heart of hearts, a tart

Valentine's Day is one of those whimsical holidays that allows you to "wear your heart on your sleeve." This sentimental day is also the occasion for sharing heart-filled gifts of chocolate — hand-dipped candies, chocolate truffles and luscious chocolate desserts.

Americans' unyielding passion for chocolate seems to peak on Valentine's Day. But, instead of the typical store-bought chocolates, dazzle your special valentine with an elegant chocolate pie or tart, just like the ones showcased on restaurant pastry carts.

French Silk Tart and Choco-Cherry Baked Alaska Pie are two impressive-looking desserts featuring chocolate in the filling. Although these lovely valentine pies appear complicated, they are easy to make since they begin with convenient refrigerated pie crusts.

French Silk Tart is a stylish translation of the ever-popular French Silk Pie, with the rich, velvety chocolate filling highlighted in a tart shell. The pretty scalloped edges of this European-style tart are achieved by pressing the pre-rolled pie crust in the bottom and up the sides of a fluted tart pan. The smooth-as-silk chocolate filling, which gives the dessert its name, is then topped with a decorative crisscross piping of whipped cream and colorful raspberries.

This luscious French Silk Tart also works beautifully in a regular pie pan, if a tart pan is not available. Choco-Cherry Baked Alaska Pie is a simplified version of the showy dessert Baked Alaska, featuring layers of both chocolate and cherry ice cream separated by a layer of chocolate fudge topping. While the meringue is browning, the ice cream layers are insulated by the bottom pie shell, instead of the usual cake layer.

An advantage to this version is that the entire dessert, including the meringue, can be made hours or even days in advance. This eliminates the fear usually associated with the last-minute preparation of traditional Baked Alaska.

FRENCH SILK TART

15-oz. pkg. all ready pie crusts

1 tart. flour

Filling:

3-oz. (3 squares) unsweetened chocolate

1 1/2 cups sugar

1/4 cup butter, softened

4 eggs

1/4 tsp. almond extract

Whipped cream, whipped, if desired

Frozen raspberries, thawed and drained, if desired

Prepare pie crust according to package directions for unfilled 1-crust pie. Heat oven to 450 degrees. (Refrigerate for later use.) Cool completely.

Spread chocolate ice cream in bottom of baked crust. Spoon fudge topping over ice cream; spread cherry ice cream over topping. Freeze until firm. In medium bowl, beat egg whites and salt until soft peaks form. Gradually add marshmallow creme, beating until stiff peaks form. Spread meringue evenly over ice cream, completely covering ice cream and sealing to the crust. Bake at 450 degrees on lowest rack for 3 to 5 minutes or until delicately browned. Freeze several hours or overnight. Before serving, sprinkle with cashews. Let stand 3 to 5 minutes before cutting. 8 servings.

Prepare pie crust according to package directions for unfilled 1-crust pie. Heat oven to 450 degrees. (Refrigerate for later use.) Cool completely.

Prepare pie crust according to package directions for unfilled 1-crust pie using ungreased 8-inch tart pan with removable bottom. Heat oven to 450 degrees. (Refrigerate remaining crust for later use.) Place prepared crust in pan; press in bottom and up sides of pan. Trim edges. Generously prick crust with fork. Bake at 450 degrees for 9 to 11 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool completely.

In small saucepan, melt chocolate; cool. In medium bowl, cream sugar and butter until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, beating at medium speed 2 minutes after each addition. Blend in chocolate and almond extract; mix well. Pour into crust. Refrigerate at least 2 hours before serving. Remove sides from pan. Garnish with whipped cream and raspberries, if desired. Store in refrigerator. 12 servings.

Tip: "Crust may be prepared in 9-inch pie pan.

CHOCO-CHERRY BAKED ALASKA PIE

15-oz. pkg. all ready pie crusts

1 tart. flour

Filling: 1 pint (2 cups) chocolate ice cream, softened

1 cup fudge ice cream topping

1 pint (2 cups) cherry ice cream, softened

Meringue:

3 egg whites

1/4 cup cashews or peanuts, if desired

1 cup marshmallow creme

1 cup cashews or peanuts, if desired

Prepare pie crust according to package directions for unfilled 1-crust pie. Heat oven to 450 degrees. (Refrigerate for later use.) Cool completely.

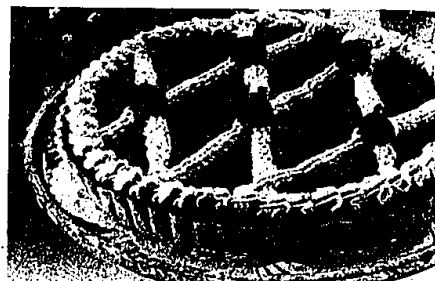
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This French silk tart is impressive looking but not that difficult to make using a refrigerated pie crust.

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Even leftover, chicken's fine

At one time the phrase "Chicken Every Sunday" meant that a family was thriving. The aroma of a slowly roasting bird filled the house on a long afternoon and promised good eating for all.

Today, chicken is the favorite everyday choice of all households from the smallest to the largest.

But roasting a whole chicken is still the ultimate method for enjoying the robust succulent goodness of this poultry. If there's too much for one meal in a two-person household, the extra meat on a 4-pound bird can be just as delicious the second time around.

Chicken's compatibility with a host of other flavors means it is possible to create a great dish with leftovers that will satisfy even a jaded appetite. For example, oranges give chicken a fresh, lively flavor without overpowering its natural taste.

Orange Glazed Chicken is stuffed with a mixture of rice, pecans and vegetables. Orange juice and rind add moisture and zip to the stuffing and to the apricot-orange glaze that coats the bird's crisp brown skin during the last minutes of roasting.

For a complete change of pace, leftover chicken meat stars in Hot Chicken Salad. The dish, which can be assembled beforehand and heated just before serving, combines cooked diced chicken, crisp celery, crunchy walnuts and fruity orange segments. Baked and served in individual ramekins, the dishes fit easily into a toaster oven, making this a delightful choice for the busy cook.

ROAST STUFFED CHICKEN

1 roast chicken, about 4 lbs.
Salt and pepper
1/2 cup (1/2 6-oz. pkg.) raw long grain and wild rice mix
1/2 cup orange juice
1/2 cup water
2 tbsp. butter or margarine
1/2 cup diced celery
2 tbsp. chopped scallion
1/2 cup chopped pecans
1 tsp. grated orange rind
Glaze:
1/2 cup apricot preserves
1/2 cup orange juice

Wash chicken thoroughly and pat dry. Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper inside and out. Prepare half of rice mixture, using orange juice and water for the cooking liquid; cook according to package directions. In small skillet, melt butter; saute celery and scallion until tender. In a small bowl combine cooked vegetables, pecans, orange rind, and prepared rice. Spoon rice mixture loosely into cavity of chicken; close cavity with skewers. Place in a shallow roasting pan, breast-side up. Roast in a 325 degree oven 2 1/2 to 3 hours or until done. Combine apricot preserves and 1/2 cup orange juice. Use to baste chicken during the last 30 minutes of roasting.

Yield: 4 servings.

HOT CHICKEN CITRUS SALAD

2 cups cooked, cubed chicken
1 cup diagonally sliced celery
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1 tsp. grated onion
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. dried leaf tarragon
1/2 cup orange juice
1/4 cup mayonnaise
2 oranges, peeled and sectioned
1/4 cup dry bread crumbs
1/4 cup grated Parmesan or Romano cheese

In a medium mixing bowl, combine chicken, celery, walnuts, onion, salt, tarragon, orange juice and mayonnaise; mix well. Cover. Refrigerate 1 hour. Stir in orange sections. Spoon mixture into 2 ramekins or individual casseroles. Sprinkle with bread crumbs and Parmesan cheese. Bake in a 350 degree oven 20 to 25 minutes or until mixture is heated through and cheese is lightly browned. Yield: 2 servings.

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