



A "just desserts" party can shed new light on holiday entertaining. It's a festive solution to the weary cocktail party and elaborate dinner routine.

Holiday sweets for favorite elves

AS YEAR-END celebrating begins, it ushers in a busy schedule of social events. Many occasions center around too many cocktails or heavy multi-course meals.

But a "just desserts" party — offering guests a smorgasbord of desserts, fruits, and libations — can shed new light on holiday entertaining.

For a pre-holiday event, you can inspire visions of sugarplums with a plum preserve pastry. To please both adult and child tastes, try a basket of thumbprint cookies with bright fruit preserve centers. For a touch of sophistication, serve individual cups of a festive mousse that will add color and variety to your dessert selection.

A New Year's Eve party also can be built around a dessert theme to put less emphasis on cocktails.

NO MATTER when the dessert party takes place, it wouldn't be complete without fine chocolate. Scatter small plates of chocolates everywhere.

To go with the treats, offer guests freshly brewed coffee with a side tray of cordials. For those who want something free of calories and caffeine, serve chilled sparkling mineral water with a twist of lemon, orange or lime.

PLUM DELICIOUS PASTRY

¼ cup flour
¼ cup sugar
¼ tsp. baking powder
pinch of salt
¼ cup butter or margarine
1 egg, beaten
2 tbsps. milk
¼ tsp. vanilla
½ (13 oz.) jar plum preserves

Sift together dry ingredients. Using two knives or pastry cutter, cut in butter until pieces are size of

cornmeal. Mix together milk and egg, add vanilla. Add milk mixture to flour mixture and stir. Press dough into well-buttered springform pan. Spread plum preserves over it. Bake at 375 degrees F for 20 to 25 minutes.

THUMBPRINT COOKIES

¾ lb. butter or margarine
1 cup sugar
3 cups flour
3 egg yolks
1 ½ tbsps. vanilla
ground walnuts or almonds
fruit preserves

Cream together butter and sugar, add flour. Add egg yolks and vanilla, mix well. Refrigerate one hour. Scoop out heaping teaspoons of dough and roll into small balls. Roll into ground nuts. Make thumbprint in each ball. Fill with preserves. Bake at 325 degrees F for 20 to 30 minutes on ungreased cookie sheet. Cool.

Makes three dozen.

MOUSSE GRAND MARNIER

1 cup sugar
2 cups water
1 tbsps. grated orange rind
6 egg yolks
½ cup Grand Marnier
2 ½ cups heavy cream, whipped
cocoa

Combine sugar, water and orange rind and boil 3 to 4 minutes. Add egg yolks. Beat mixture 10 to 12 minutes at high speed until very thick and pale yellow. Add Grand Marnier and beat 3 minutes. Fold in whipped cream. Fill soufflé dish to which you have added paper collar. Freeze until firm, 1 to 2 hours. Just before serving, sprinkle with cocoa.

Makes six to eight individual servings.

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