

Making edible baskets

SMOKED SALMON CHEESECAKE

EASTER BASKET
 1 cup leeks, chopped
 8 tablespoons butter, divided
 1 1/4 pound cream cheese
 4 egg yolks
 1 tablespoon cornstarch
 1/2 cup heavy cream
 1/4 pound smoked salmon
 1/4 cup Swiss cheese, grated
 1/4 cup walnuts, toasted and chopped
 1/4 cup wheat crackers, crushed (such as Wheat Thins)
 1/4 cup Romano cheese, grated

In a saute pan, saute the leeks with 3 tablespoons butter until tender and transparent. Cool to room temperature. In a food processor, blend the cream cheese, egg yolks, cornstarch and cream until smooth. Cut the smoked salmon into julienne strips. Combine it with the grated Swiss and leeks. Stir into cream cheese mixture.

Melt remaining butter. In a bowl, combine nuts, cracker crumbs and Romano cheese. Add the melted butter and mix well. Press into the bottom of a springform pan. Carefully fill the pan with the filling. Place springform pan into a roasting pan and add warm water to reach halfway up the sides of the springform. Place in a 300 degree oven for 1 1/2 hours. Turn off the heat and allow to rest in the oven for an additional hour. Meanwhile, make the cheese eggs. Remove the springform pan from the roasting pan. Allow to come to room temperature. Wrap in plastic and, if time allows, chill overnight.

CHEESE EGGS

1 lemon (juiced, and zest saved)
 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
 1/4 cup blue cheese, crumbled
 1/4 cup cheddar, grated
 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

Combine lemon juice, 1 teaspoon lemon zest and remaining ingredients. Mix well. Line plastic Easter eggs with plastic wrap. Place mixture in egg, pressing firmly. Chill. When chilled, unmold and roll in paprika, parsley or nuts.

To assemble basket: Place molded eggs on top and fill in with sprouts. Using toothpicks, make a handle with steamed green beans, if desired.

CHOCOLATE EASTER BASKET

One 9-inch round cake, prepared and cooled
 2 pounds good-quality dipping chocolate or chocolate chips
 8 peppermint sticks or pretzels

Place the cake on a base or plate for maximum stability. Cover with 1/2 cup melted chocolate. Set aside. Dip peppermint sticks or pretzels in melted chocolate. Chill to set. Insert chocolate sticks around the perimeter of the cake, making support for woven chocolate strips. Cool completely.

Meanwhile, scour an aluminum cookie sheet with steel wool. Wash and set on bed of ice. Using a spatula, spread about 1/4 cup of melted chocolate on the sheet and spread to the thickness of a penny. Allow to set, about 1 minute. Using a sharp knife, cut into strips 1 inch wide and about 12 inches in length. Make at least 10 of these. Set strips on waxed paper. After strips are cut, weave the strips around the chocolate sticks in basket-weave fashion. Alternate starting points and weaving formations. When desired height is reached, chill the basket completely before filling with fruit or chocolate.

CARAMELIZED EDIBLE EASTER BASKET

2 cups sugar
 1/2 cup water
 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

In a heavy saucepan, combine all the ingredients and cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, to dissolve the sugar (about 10 minutes). Increase the heat and boil without stirring until a light pale amber (between 350-360 degrees on a candy thermometer or "hard ball" stage).

Remove the pan from heat and set the bottom of the pan in cold water to stop the cooking. Allow to cool for a few minutes or until 240 degrees is reached on the candy thermometer. The caramel will not fall thickly if warmer than 240 degrees.

Invert a bundt pan and cover it with parchment paper or foil. Spray completely with a release agent (such as Pam) and drizzle the hot caramel over the top, continuing to drizzle the caramel in circles to form a "bowl." Allow to set at room temperature for 1 hour or until completely cooled. Carefully remove from mold.

To clean caramel-encrusted pan: fill pan with water and bring to a boil over high heat. Caramelization will melt and pan can be wiped clean.

Idea taken from "The Cake Bible" by Rose Levy Beranbaum (Morrow and Co., 1988, \$25), page 313 recipe for "Caramel for a Cage and Gold Dust."

Desserts for Passover in the holiday spirit

CHOCOLATISSIMO

10 ounces semi-sweet chocolate
 1 teaspoon instant coffee, powder
 1 1/4 cup unsalted butter or margarine (room temperature)
 1 1/4 cup sugar
 10 eggs, separated
 1 ounce semi-sweet chocolate grated

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease bottom of 9-inch springform pan. Melt chocolate with coffee in top of double boiler over simmering water. Stir until smooth. Cool. Cream butter and sugar in large bowl. Add chocolate mixture and blend well. Add egg yolks, one at a time, and beat at low speed until smooth. Beat egg whites until stiff but not dry, and fold into batter.

Pour 3/4 of batter into springform pan and bake 50 minutes. Let cake

cool (cake will sink in the middle). Spread remaining uncooked batter in well that will form. Cover and chill overnight. Garnish with grated chocolate.

STRAWBERRY MOUSSE

4 cups strawberries
 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 1 1/4 cups sugar
 2 eggs whites

Beat mashed berries, sugar and lemon juice together. Freeze until almost frozen but not solid. Remove from freezer, beat again slightly and fold in stiffly beaten egg whites. Cover and freeze.

UPSIDE DOWN APPLE CAKE

Apples:

7 or 8 apples, peeled and cored
 1/4 cup margarine
 1/4 cup brown sugar
 1/4 cup white sugar
 Walnuts
 Raisins
 Juice of 1 lemon

Batter:
 5 eggs, separated
 5 tablespoons sugar
 1 teaspoon lemon juice
 4 tablespoons potato starch, sifted

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Melt margarine and sugars in deep pan. Arrange apples over sugar. Fill the openings with apples and raisins. Pour the lemon juice over and bake for 30 to 35 minutes until apples are tender.

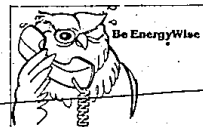
In large mixing bowl beat the egg yolks and sugar. Add lemon juice and sifted potato starch. In separate bowl beat egg whites until stiff, not dry and fold into egg yolk mixture. Pour the batter over apples and bake an additional 30 minutes. Let cake rest for 10 minutes before turning it upside down on a large cake plate.

COFFEE ICE CREAM

6 eggs separated

Scant 1/4 cup oil
 1/2 to 3/4 cup sugar
 2 teaspoons coffee

Whip egg whites until foamy. Slowly add sugar until you have a stiff meringue. In another bowl slowly add oil while whipping whites. Stir a dollop of the egg whites into the yolks then fold the yolks into the whites. Dissolve coffee in a few drops of hot water and fold into mixture. Freeze.



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