

# Treat someone on your list to homemade candy

See Larry Jones' column on Taste front.

## HOMEMADE BUTTER-BRICKLE

1 cup butter  
1 1/2 cups sugar  
3 teaspoons water  
12 oz. semi-sweet chocolate chips, melted  
1 cup nuts

Mix butter, sugar and water in a saucepan; cook until soft crack stage or 285 degrees. Pour into a

well greased pan. Spread with melted chocolate while still warm. Sprinkle with nuts. When cool, crack into pieces.

## CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES

2 tablespoons butter  
1 egg yolk  
1 cup powdered sugar  
8 oz. sweet cooking chocolate, grated

tablespoon rum (optional)

1 cup cocoa  
Cream butter until softened. Blend in egg yolk, then sugar. Add grated chocolate and rum. Mix well. Form into 1/2 inch balls. Roll in cocoa. Chill on waxed paper.

## OLD FASHIONED HARD CANDY

2 cups sugar  
1 cup water  
3/4 cup light corn syrup

food coloring, if desired  
1/2 teaspoon oil of cinnamon, wintergreen, peppermint, etc.  
powdered sugar

Mix together sugar, water and syrup; cook to 300 degrees on a candy thermometer. Remove from heat; add coloring and flavorings. Mix well. Pour into a well greased pan or marble slab. Cool candy until warm enough to touch. Cut into 1/4-inch strips and then into small chunks. Drop onto greased cookie sheet. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Makes 1 pound.

Boil sugar, syrup, vinegar and butter until a drop crackles when dropped into cold water (about 300 degrees). Stir in baking soda. Pour over popcorn, stirring well. Grease fingers with more butter and shape into balls. Wrap each ball individually in plastic wrap.

## PRALINES

6 cups brown sugar  
2 cups white sugar  
1 1/2 cups milk  
4 cups shelled pecans  
1/4 stick butter  
2 teaspoons vanilla flavoring or extract

Heat brown sugars, white sugar and milk; stir until mixture begins to boil. Add pecans. Cook until a soft ball forms in cold water, about 135 degrees. Remove from heat. With a wooden spoon, stir in butter and vanilla. Beat until mixture is cloudy. Drop by teaspoons onto

waxed paper.

## PEANUT BRITTLE

1/2 cup water  
1 cup sugar  
1 cup light corn syrup  
1 pound raw peanuts  
1 tablespoon butter  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla

Heat water in a heavy frying pan. Add sugar and syrup; stirring until sugar dissolves. Cover; cool for 3 minutes. Uncover; cook to soft ball stage or 235 degrees on a candy thermometer. Add peanuts, butter and salt. Cook to 300 degrees on a candy thermometer or until golden brown, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat, add soda and vanilla; stir in quickly. Pour onto a large buttered cookie sheet or marble slab. Cool. Break into pieces.

# Culinary artist wins prize



KEELY WYGONIK

For the sixth year in a row, Mary Denning took home the first place best of category trophy in an annual cake decorating contest sponsored by the Detroit Metro Bakers & Allied Club.

This year's entry, a cake topped with a jolly snowman and two children made out of gum paste, was truly a work of art. The cake is on display at Mary Denning's Cake Shoppe, Inc., 8035 N. Wayne, Westland, 261-9680.

"I love doing cakes," said Denning, a Garden City resident whose dream came true in October when she opened her shop. "It's neat to get paid for doing something you really love. I'm trying to do special things that people can't get anywhere else."

In the front window is a festive gingerbread village. This year six of Denning's pastry class students at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn entered the gingerbread contest at the Festival of Trees in Detroit. Making gingerbread houses is one of the "special things," Denning does at her shop with help from daughter Jennifer Still who is studying elementary education at Eastern Michigan University, and working full-time in the shop.

Denning shared some secrets

for making gingerbread houses. She's also taking orders for gingerbread houses at the shop, prices range from \$5 to \$35.

Denning also offers beautiful cakes, tortes, and French pastries, a variety of holiday cookies, muffins, and a cupcake bouquet — an edible centerpiece.

Jennifer created the cute decorated brownies that look like sleds with a snowman on top.

"Our cookies are made with real butter, the way mom would make them," said Denning.

If you've tried, and failed at making gingerbread houses, Denning offers these tips — When you make the dough, roll it out on parchment paper, foil or a pan. Then cut out your pattern.

Chef Larry Jones recommends

baking the gingerbread house pieces on parchment paper, then cool them on a wire rack.

"People always wonder why their gingerbread houses fall apart after a couple of days," said Denning. "Let it (the gingerbread) age a couple of days before you assemble it. Gingerbread shrinks."

To make royal icing, for every 2 cups of powdered sugar, add 1 egg white, and 1 teaspoon of boiling water, and whip for 5 minutes.

Jones makes houses out of graham crackers instead of gingerbread, and assembles them with royal icing.

If you've got visions of "Chestnuts Roasting On An Open Fire," after our first real snow, here's a

tip from Rina Tonan of Cafe Cortina in Farmington Hills. "Place the chestnuts with a sharp knife. Wrap them in foil, or put in a pan covered with foil, in a 350 degree oven. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes."

Some of your favorite Joe Muer entrees like stuffed flounder, soups, and cocktail sauce are now available for carry-out at Vic's Quality Fruit Market at 31201 Southfield Road at 13 Mile in Beverly Hills.

In the spirit of the holidays, Vic Ventimiglia, owner of Vic's Quality Fruit Market, is sponsoring a fund raising program to benefit Children's Hospital of Michigan.

Through Dec. 24, Vic's program called "Twelve Days of Christmas" will provide, at Vic's expense, valet services noon to 6 p.m. for Vic's shoppers. Donations will be solicited by Santa's elves, the proceeds of which will be donated to Children's Hospital.

Santa Claus will also be on hand during those hours, greeting customers, and supplying entry forms to Vic's "Naughty or Nice Contest," which will award a lucky shopper a \$100 gift certificate for merchandise at Vic's.

Betty Crocker tip of the week: Plan a buffet — It's the easiest way to serve dinner to a holiday crowd. Arrange the dinner plates at one end of the server, then move on in logical order to the main course, vegetable, salad, bread, condiments, and finally the silverware and napkins.

# Wrap up a special hostess gift

"When you are invited to a holiday party the question of what to bring often arises," said Sylvia Trattman, home economist for the Oakland County Cooperative Extension Service. "Gifts you make yourself are very special, and

show how much you care."

Here are a few ideas to get you started: Bake small loaves of apple breads — wrap a red school bus for a teacher's gift.

Home-canned salsa and chips

— put in a terra cotta pot for a

"Mexican Fiesta."

For more help or answers to other food and nutrition questions, call the Food and Nutrition Hotline, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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