

# Homemade holiday treats are simply spectacular

See related 2 Unique column on Taste front.

**SIMPLY SPECTACULAR ALMOND POPPY SEED BREAD**

3 cups flour  
2 cups sugar  
3 eggs  
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder  
2 tablespoons poppy seeds  
1 1/2 cups milk

3/4 cup vegetable oil  
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
1 1/2 teaspoons almond extract  
1 1/2 teaspoons butter extract

Preheat oven to 350°F. Combine all ingredients in a large mixer bowl. Beat at medium speed for 2 minutes. Divide batter into two greased 9-by-5-inch loaf pans.

Bake for 60-65 minutes. Remove from pans and cool completely.

**SUGARED PECANS**

1 egg white  
1 tablespoon cold water  
1 pound whole pecan halves  
1 cup sugar  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1 teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 250°F. In a large bowl, beat egg white and water until medium peaks form. Stir in pecans until thoroughly coated. In a small bowl, combine sugar, cinnamon and salt. Add to pecan mixture; mix thoroughly. Spread coated pecans on lightly buttered cookie sheet.

Bake 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. (Pecans will separate.) Remove from oven; cool. Store in

tightly covered container or sealed plastic bag.

**WHITE CHOCOLATE VERY BERRY NUT BARK**

1/4 pound dried cranberries or cherries  
1/4 pound dried blueberries  
1/4 pound dried apricots, chopped  
1/3 pound pecans, chopped

2 1/2 pounds white chocolate, chopped

Prepares a large baking sheet by lining with parchment paper or waxed paper. Melt white chocolate over a double boiler with barely simmering water. All the chocolate should be melted and smooth.

Stir dried fruits and nuts into white chocolate. Pour onto baking sheet and allow to harden. Break into pieces.

# Celebrate the Festival of Lights

Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated by Jewish families for eight days to commemorate the rededication of the ancient temple in Jerusalem, when the last remaining container of undefiled oil miraculously lasted for eight days. This year Hanukkah begins at sundown on Tuesday, Dec. 23.

The Menorah, a candle holder used during Hanukkah, is lit each night by different family members. After the candles are lit, it is traditional for families to sing and celebrate with a light meal. The most popular meal during Hanukkah is latkes (potato pancakes) served with sour cream or apple sauce.

While tea is not a traditional part of a Hanukkah celebration, it certainly complements this special day.

**APPLE-CRANBERRY SPARKLER**

2 cups water  
1 cup size tea bags  
1 cup chilled cranberry juice

cocktail  
1 cup apple juice  
2 teaspoons sugar

In medium sauce pan, bring water to a boil. Remove from heat and add tea bags; cover and brew 5 minutes. Remove tea bags. In pitcher, combine tea, juices and sugar; chill. Makes about 4 (8 ounce) servings.

**Recipe from The Lipton Kitchens.**

Here are some traditional potato latke recipes for Hanukkah from "Everyday Cooking for the Jewish Home: More Than 350 Delectable Recipes," by Ethel G. Hofman (HarperCollins Publishers, 1997, \$26).

**CLASSIC POTATO LATKES**

Makes 24  
2 eggs  
1/4 small onion, cut into 3 pieces  
4 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces

1/4 teaspoon baking powder  
3 tablespoons flour  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
Vegetable oil for frying  
Applesauce or sour cream

Break eggs into a food processor. Add onion and potatoes. Process until potatoes are coarsely chopped. Add baking powder, flour, salt, and pepper. Pulse 3 or 4 times to mix.

Heat 1/8 inch of oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Drop rounded tablespoonfuls of potato mixture into skillet; press lightly with back of a spoon to flatten slightly. Cook on both sides until brown, about 3 minutes per side. Continue frying, adding more oil as needed, until all of batter is used up.

Drain on paper towels. Serve hot with applesauce for a meat meal or sour cream for a dairy meal.

**GLICK'S COLOSSAL BUTTERNUT LATKES**

1 pound butternut squash, peeled and shredded  
2 medium baking potatoes

(about 3/4 pound), coarsely grated  
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro  
2 eggs, beaten  
1/2 cup matzo meal  
2 teaspoons lemon pepper seasoning  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
1 teaspoon salt  
3 to 4 tablespoons peanut oil

In a large bowl, combine squash, potatoes and cilantro. Add beaten eggs, matzo meal, lemon pepper, ginger and salt. Mix well.

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a 7-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. Pour in 1/2 cups mixture. Cook until underside is browned and latke is firm enough to be flipped over, 5 to 7 minutes.

Reduce heat to medium-low and cook 6 to 7 minutes longer, until underside is browned. Keep warm. Repeat with remaining mixture, stirring well before transferring to skillet and adding more oil as needed. Serve hot. Makes 4 servings.

## Unique from page B1

Go today and buy your fresh produce and dairy products. Don't forget the eggnog and cinnamon.

**Day 3**

Pick up your fresh meats and any special orders for cakes you may have placed. Start processing vegetables, pick your green beans, cut your carrots, parsnips, etc. If you peel apples or potatoes in advance make sure you store them in water with a little lemon juice.

**Day 2**

OK - let's get cooking! go ahead and blanch your vegetables and place them in reheating pans with a little salt, pepper and butter so that on Christmas Day all you need to do is reheat in oven or microwave and serve. You could also put a little water in the bottom of the pan and steam it on the stove top for a few seconds. Boil, mash, stir and bake! Get all your side dishes ready to go. If you can make sauces ahead of time - go for it! Clean lettuce and greens and store with a wet towel covering them. Clean meat and season so it will be oven ready. Set the table.

**Day 1 - Merry Christmas!**

Because you were a planner, you can leisurely roll out of bed to enjoy the spirit of Christmas. It's really not about food - it's about enjoying your family and close ones. Since your table is set, your side dishes are ready to go, your silver clean, plates out, beverages to be laced one hour before. The only thing left to chance is to meet with family, and coordinate your meat preparation with meal time so that all runs smoothly. Make sure children non-kitchen participants do the clean up.

The 2 Unique family and myself wish you health, happiness, prosperity, tranquility and kindred spirit for the new year! And to all a good night!

*Chef Kelli L. Lewton is owner of 2 Unique Caterers and Event Planners in Bloomfield Hills. A graduate of Schoolcraft College's Culinary Arts program, Kelli is a part-time instructor at the college. Look for her column in Taste on the second Sunday of the month.*

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# Festive appetizer sure to please

See related story on Taste front. Recipe from HDS Services.

**PRUNE PORT CANAPE SANDWICH**

8 very thinly sliced pieces of Canadian bacon (1/2 ounce slices)  
2 cups port wine  
1/2 cup dried prunes  
1 boneless, skinless chicken breast

16 slices party rye bread  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
Pepper to taste  
1 tablespoon olive oil

Bake the Canadian bacon on a baking sheet at 350°F, until crisp. When finished, drain on a clean towel.

Combine the port wine and prunes in a sauce pan and cook about 16 minutes until the prunes have softened. Remove the prunes

and mash to a paste with one tablespoon of the port the prunes were cooked in.

In a sauce pot, simmer the remaining port until thickened and reduced to approximately 1/4 cup, set aside.

Season the chicken breast with the salt and pepper and then grill until done. Slice the chicken breast on the bias into eight pieces. Brush the bread with olive oil and

place under broiler until lightly toasted. Spread the prune mixture on half the bread slices on the oiled side. Place a slice of chicken on top. Add a slice of Canadian bacon. Drizzle the port wine sauce over top. Finish with another slice of rye to make a sandwich. Secure with a toothpick. Serves 8.

*Nutrition information per serving: Calories 200; protein 7.52g; Fat 4g.*

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