



THE ULTIMATE

holiday

GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 HOLIDAY HOSTING TIPS/SCHEDULING

2 PRINTABLE INVITATIONS & PRINTABLE NAME CARDS

3 TABLE SETTING & EASY DECOR

4 THE FOOD

1. Planning your menu: how much food to prepare
(PRINTABLE: holiday dinner cheat sheet)
2. Food Preparation Schedule and Notes
(PRINTABLE: thanksgiving cheat sheet: food
preparation schedule & notes)

5 RECIPES

6 HOLIDAY GAME IDEAS (PRINTABLE GAME CARDS)

7 PRINTABLE HOLIDAY BUCKET LISTS

**HOLIDAY HOSTING
TIPS / SCHEDULING**



HOLIDAY HOSTING TIPS/SCHEDULING

1. SET THE DATE (Months in Advance)

Choose a date well in advance so that you can **start preparing early**. Typically a month ahead (during the busy holiday season), you'll want to send out invites.

Order printed invitations (free printable invitations in this guide!) or set up a guest list on an online invitation website and send out e-invites.

2. PREPARE YOUR HOUSE (Months in Advance)

- Finish household chores now while there's plenty of (stress-free) time to get everything done. Take care of **seasonal tasks** like raking leaves, washing windows, cleaning carpets, etc.
- **Declutter the Kitchen:** hosting during the holidays really puts your kitchen to the test! You'll need plenty of room to prepare dishes and lay out the dinner spreads. Clear out the fridge, freezer, and pantry of expired foods and make as much room as possible for all the food for the party. Clean out the oven and consolidate/organize cabinet contents
- **Organize serving dishes:** consolidate all the serving dishes/platters/containers you'll use for the party and make sure you have what you need. If you have your serving platters/utensils all figured out ahead of time — you won't need to scramble at the last minute.
- **Deck the Halls:** Focus on one area at a time in your house and gradually decorate for the holidays. Pick a day to decorate outdoors and then divide up interior decorations onto different days. This way you aren't getting overwhelmed with decorating all at once.

3. MAKE A GAME PLAN (Month of the Party)

- In my opinion, the ultimate way to create a stress-free holiday is to live by a list. Or multiple lists :)
- Plan as far ahead as possible and don't be afraid to ask for help. Know what you're capable and comfortable doing and give
- other people things to do. Designate friend(s) or family member(s) to bring something like a salad, appetizer, side dish, or drink. The more you can get help with, the less you have to stress about.
- Gather recipes and make time for a trial run

of new recipes. Remember to go with what you know. If you're famous for a recipe, make it. Knowing you're serving a tried and tested (by you) recipe will take a lot of pressure off. Of course, there's nothing wrong with trying a new recipe, just give it a trial run before serving it to a crowd. This way you get familiar with the recipe and feel confident making it the day of (this confidence is important when you're preparing a lot the day of!) As you are preparing lists of recipes to try, make sure you find out if your guests have any specific dietary restrictions.

- Plan the amounts of food you'll need: Check out my Holiday Dinner Cheat Sheet to see exactly how much food you'll need depending on how many guests you're hosting for.

4. GET PARTY READY (Week of the Party)

- Shop for a centerpiece or order flowers.
- Wash or press tablecloths and napkins, or take them to the cleaners.
- If you need to rent/borrow tables or chairs, pick some up at a local store or borrow them ahead of time.
- Grab air fresheners/Candles: I personally

- Plan the Recipe Timing: Pick dishes that get better with time or that can be served at room temperature. That way you don't need to stress about getting things to the table as soon as they're done. The more you can make ahead of time, the better! Take advantage of using slow cookers so you aren't relying completely on the oven(s) to do all the cooking.

- Make a grocery list of the recipes (the final menu) you decide to prepare. Then check your recipes again against that grocery list. You don't want to be halfway through the recipe and realize you're out of eggs!
- Order any food you aren't cooking yourself. Around the holidays bakeries/restaurants get more booked out than usual so give yourself plenty of time to order food.

love seasonal candles burning for a holiday party! It makes the home feel more cozy and inviting

- Prepare the music: if you'll be playing background music, prepare the playlist ahead of time and test to make sure all the electronics work properly.

5. PREPARE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN IN ADVANCE (Day before the Party)

- Trash & Recycling Bins. Before each gathering empty all the trash & recycling bins and have them ready to fill in easy access for party guests.
- Shop for all the ingredients on your grocery list. Also purchase any store-bought items you won't be making. A couple of well chosen store bought items — delicious cheese, fancy bread or even a really good appetizer.
- Make As Much As You Can in Advance. The less you have to think about the day-of, the better. I like to make salad dressings, desserts (especially pies), and prep veggies the day before. Organize ingredients in your fridge for what recipe they'll go with. A lot of side dishes can be made ahead and then cooked the day of (Check out the recipes in

this book for make ahead tips). If you have some help the day before, knock out as many as those side dishes (or at least the prep for them) beforehand. Cook what you can ahead of time such as soups and stews. Then you can throw them in a slow cooker for the day of.

- Set the Table. If you can, set the table and your serving platters out. This way you can take your time and tweak the decor. Plus, one last thing to do the day of!
- Get your home in shape fast with these techniques: Use a laundry basket to go from room to room collecting clutter, grab some all purpose cleaner, paper towels, and a vacuum for spot cleaning. (You already did a big cleaning, so this should be sufficient.)

6. PARTY-PERFECT (Day of the Party)

- Cooling Tub: Set aside a tub of ice water to quick-chill drinks. If you have the room, this will keep your fridge free for food. Add a few towels to the side of the tub to wipe off the chilled beverage.
- Go through your list and prepare everything you have left to make. The more organized your lists are, the more smoothly this will go! MORNING: Your turkey/ham will likely begin in the morning. If you didn't prepare the stuffing or sweet potato casserole the day before, you can prep those in the morning and bake later. Start your slow cooker going with a recipe. 1-2 HOURS TO GO: Arrange/Set out appetizers/cheese platters. Make rolls and mashed potatoes. Finish assembling salads (if you made the dressing and prepped the ingredients the day this doesn't take long!) 30 MINUTES TO GO: Carve the turkey, make the gravy, and finish those side dishes in the oven.
- Be in the Moment: You've made it!! Of course you want to be conscious that your guests are enjoying themselves and have what they need, but make sure you enjoy the party yourself! Enjoy the food, enjoy the company, and be proud of what you've done!

**INVITATIONS/
PRINTABLE
NAME CARDS**



PLEASE JOIN US FOR A

Christmas



COOKIE

exchange party

DATE:

PLACE:

TIME:

RSVP:



PLEASE JOIN US FOR A

Christmas



COOKIE

exchange party

DATE:

PLACE:

TIME:

RSVP:

LET'S Boogie!



JOIN US FOR A
Halloween
PARTY!

DATE:
TIME:

PLACE:
RSVP:

LET'S Boogie!



JOIN US FOR A
Halloween
PARTY!

DATE:
TIME:

PLACE:
RSVP:

HAPPY
Halloween

JOIN US FOR A
Costume Party



DATE:

PLACE:

TIME:

RSVP:

HAPPY
Halloween

JOIN US FOR A
Costume Party



DATE:

PLACE:

TIME:

RSVP:

PLEASE JOIN US FOR

Thanksgiving DINNER



DATE:

PLACE:

TIME:

RSVP:

PLEASE JOIN US FOR

Thanksgiving DINNER



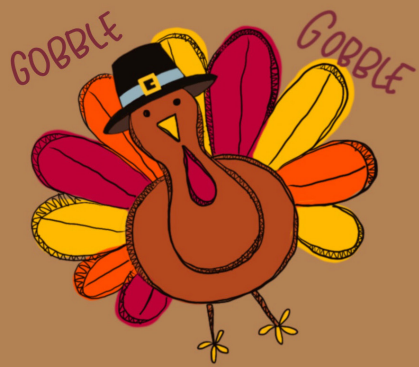
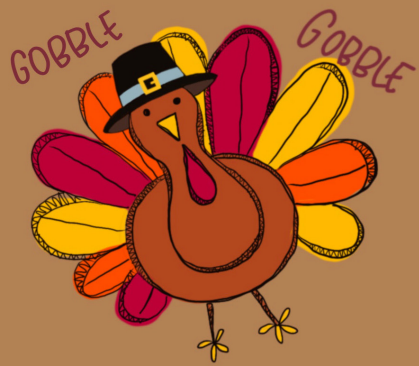
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PLACE:

TIME:

RSVP:





**TABLE SETTING &
EASY DECOR**

TABLE SETTING & EASY DECOR

Repurpose a Cake Stand (Christmas or Thanksgiving)



Use your favorite cake stand and add 2 or 3 of your favorite holiday candles. For the best look, stagger the candles in different heights. Before adding the candles to the cake stand, add white sparkling sugar (find near sprinkles; made by Wilton) or Epson salt for the appearance of snow. Add some fresh pine around the cake stand(s) and your table is complete!

Cinnamon Stick Table Runner (Christmas or Thanksgiving)

Link together full cinnamon sticks with a long piece of jute or twine and arrange it over a garland. It will add a delicious smell and a gorgeous (inexpensive) look to your holiday table!

Use Fresh Apples (Thanksgiving)

Place a large fresh (or fake) garland of leaves down the center of your table. Alternate either side with large and varied colors of fresh apples and small white candles.

Use Fresh Cranberries (Christmas)

Place large holiday candles in a clear vase and surround 3/4ths the way high with fresh, dried, or candied cranberries. Add a few vases of varying heights to add color and dimension to your holiday table. To candy cranberries: combine 1/2 cup white granulated sugar with 1/2 cup water in a medium sauce pan over medium heat. Stir until the sugar is dissolved and then stir in 1 (12 ounce) bag of fresh cranberries. Stir until the cranberries are well coated. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the cranberries to a wire rack and allow to dry for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Place out a large bowl with 1 and 1/2 cups additional granted sugar. Roll the dried cranberries in the sugar and let dry again for 1 hour before using.

Use Fresh Rosemary (Christmas)

Adding a sprig of fresh rosemary adds so much to the holiday table! Add a sprig of rosemary, tied with jute or twine around a linen napkin for a festive touch. You can also tie a sprig of rosemary into a circle to form a miniature wreath. Place a small name tag in the middle of the "wreath" to tell your guests where to sit. You can also make a centerpiece with rosemary plants! Repot young plants from your local nursery or grocery store into small, elegant, and various sized containers. Stagger the miniature containers of "Christmas trees" down the center of your table and allow guests to take one home at the end of the evening!



THE FOOD

PLANNING YOUR MENU: HOW MUCH FOOD TO PREPARE

HOLIDAY DINNER CHEAT SHEET

HOW MUCH FOOD DO I NEED?

Appetizers

Finger Appetizers

Per person: 2 - 3
8 guests: 16 - 24
12 guests: 24 - 36
20 guests: 48 - 72

Dips/ Spreads

Per person: 3 ounces
8 guests: 1.5 pounds
12 guests: 2.25 pounds
20 guests: 4.5 pounds

Cheese Board(s)

Per person: 4 ounces
8 guests: 1 pound
12 guests: 1.4 pounds
20 guests: 3 pounds

Side Dishes

Stuffing/ Dressing

Per person: 3/4 cup
8 guests: 6 cups
12 guests: 9 cups
20 guests: 18 cups

Mashed Potatoes

Per person: 3/4 cup
8 guests: 6 cups
12 guests: 9 cups
20 guests: 18 cups

Roasted Veggies

Per person: 1/2 cup
8 guests: 2 pounds
12 guests: 3 pounds
20 guests: 6 pounds

Green Bean Casserole

Per person: 1/2 cup
8 guests: 2 pounds
12 guests: 3 pounds
20 guests: 6 pounds

Sweet Potato Casserole

Per person: 1/2 cup
8 guests: 2 pounds
12 guests: 3 pounds
20 guests: 6 pounds

Cranberry Sauce

Per person: 1/2 cup
8 guests: 4 cups
12 guests: 6 cups
20 guests: 12 cups

Rolls

Per person: 1-2
8 guests:
12 guests:
20 guests:

Gravy

Per person: 1/3 cup
8 guests: 2.75 cups
12 guests: 1 quart
20 guests: 2 quarts

Salad

Per person: 1 cup
8 guests: 8 cups
12 guests: 12 cups
20 guests: 24 cups

Mac & Cheese

Per person: 1 cup
8 guests: 6 cups
12 guests: 9 cups
20 guests: 18 cups

Mains

Turkey

Per person: 1.5 pounds
8 guests: 12 pounds
12 guests: 18 pounds
20 guests: 36 pounds

Ham

Per person: 1.5 pounds
8 guests: 12 pounds
12 guests: 18 pounds
20 guests: 36 pounds

Pie

Per person: 1 slice
8 guests: 1 - 2 pies
12 guests: 2 - 3 pies
20 guests: 6 - 7 pies

Hot Chocolate

Per person: 1 cup
8 guests: 8 cups
12 guests: 12 cups
20 guests: 24 cups

Shepherd's Pie

Per person: 1 cup
8 guests: Make 2 pies
12 guests: Make 4 pies
20 guests: Make 8 pies

Cookies

Per person: 1-2
8 guests: 12 - 14
12 guests: 20 - 34
20 guests: 40 - 55

Fudge/ Toffee

Per person: 1- 2 pieces
8 guests: 12-14 pieces
12 guests: 20 - 34 pieces
20 guests: 40 - 55 pieces

THANKSGIVING CHEAT SHEET

- Food Prep Schedule -

1 Week To Go



Defrost Your Turkey



Plan Recipes & Give Assignments



Make a Grocery List

1 Day To Go



Prep the Turkey



Bake the Pies



Prep the Stuffing



Prep the Sweet Potato Casserole



Make Salad Dressings

Thanksgiving Morning



Roast the Turkey



Start a Side Dish in the Crockpot



Prepare the Rolls

1-2 Hours To Go



Assemble / Set Out Appetizer



Make Side Salad(s)



Make the Mashed Potatoes

30 Minutes To Go



Finish Sides in the Oven

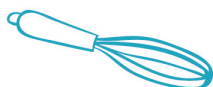


Make the Gravy



Carve the Turkey

After Dinner



Make Whipped Cream



Slice & Serve the Pies



Break out the Hot Chocolate

NOTES

- Food Prep Schedule -

1 Week To Go

1 Day To Go

Thanksgiving Morning

1-2 Hours To Go

30 Minutes To Go

After Dinner

| RECIPES

EASY ROASTED VEGETABLES

Deliciously seasoned roasted vegetables

Course:	Side Dish
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	15 minutes
Cook Time:	40 minutes
Total Time:	55 minutes
Servings:	6 -8 servings as a side
Calories:	239 kcal

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil (you may need a bit more)
- 3 medium carrots, peeled and cut into 1 - 1-1/2 inch chunks
- 1/2 pound (about 1-1/2 cups) large Brussels sprouts, outer leaves removed and halved
- 1 pound (about 4-1/2 cups) baby red potatoes, halved or quartered
- 1 large red onion, halved and cut into thick 1-inch pieces
- 1 pound (about 1-1/4 cup) sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 1/2-inch thick slices
- 3/4 tablespoon dried oregano
- 3/4 tablespoon dried CRUSHED rosemary
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- Freshly cracked pepper and sea salt
- Optional: fresh herbs (such as thyme or parsley) to garnish with

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Grab a large (11x17-inch) or 2 smaller sheet pans and set aside. Prepare the veggies: peel the carrots and cut into large chunks (if they are thick do 1 inch chunks if they are thinner do 1-1/2 inch chunks), remove the outer leaves of the brussels and halve them, halve the baby red potatoes (quarter especially large ones), halve the red onion and cut into thick 1-inch pieces, peel the sweet potato(s) and cut into large 1-1/2 inch chunks/slices.
- Place all the prepared vegetables in one even layer (do NOT overlap or you'll steam the veggies instead of roasting them) on the prepared baking sheet(s) and add the oregano, rosemary, thyme, and basil. Add salt and pepper to taste (I add about 1/2 teaspoon sea salt and about 3/4 teaspoon pepper). Add the olive oil and toss well, evenly coating all the vegetables with the seasonings and oil. (Add 1-2 more tablespoons of oil if the vegetables seem dry.)
- Place on middle rack in oven and bake for 35 to 40 minutes, flipping the veggies 20 minutes into baking time.
- Remove from the oven and enjoy immediately.



POMEGRANATE AND WILD RICE SALAD

Mixed greens with wild rice tossed in a simple lemon honey vinaigrette topped with roasted sweet potato, pomegranate arils, toasted almonds, and goat or feta cheese. This pomegranate and wild rice salad is simple to make and bursting with fresh & delicious Fall flavors.

Course:	Salad
Cuisine:	American, Healthy
Prep Time:	20 minutes
Cook Time:	20 minutes
Total Time:	40 minutes
Servings:	6 servings
Calories:	306 kcal

Ingredients

- 2-3 medium (~2 and 1/2 cups) sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1 and 1/2 tablespoon olive oil
- Freshly cracked pepper and salt
- 1 package (4.3 ounces) Long Grain and Wild Rice Mix (or see homemade version in the blog post above)
- 1 cup Pomegranate Fresh Arils
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds
- 8-10 ounces mixed greens lettuce I use a 50/50 blend spinach & spring mix leaves
- 2-4 ounces Crumbled goat cheese or feta (add to preference)
- Lemon Honey Dressing
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 large lemon (2 tablespoons juice, 1/4 teaspoon zest)
- 3/4 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- Freshly cracked pepper and salt, to taste

Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Peel and chop the sweet potato into small chunks. Toss the potato chunks in olive oil and sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Toss to coat.
- Bake for 10 minutes, flip and return to the oven for another 10 minutes, and then flip once more and bake for 10 more minutes or until the potato chunks are tender and roasted through. Watch these carefully so you don't overcook the potatoes.
- Meanwhile, prepare the wild rice either according to the package directions if you are using a package mix OR according to the directions in the recipe included in the blog post (for a homemade version of seasoned wild rice). If you make the homemade wild rice, start with making that before roasting the sweet potato so they will be done around the same time.
- Combine the roasted sweet potato with the cooked wild rice in a large bowl and place in the fridge while prepping the dressing.
- For the dressing combine all of the ingredients in a mason jar of small bowl. Place the lid on the mason jar and shake (or whisk in the bowl) until combined. Taste and adjust (additional salt/pepper/honey)
- Add to the cooled potato + wild rice mixture. Toss with the lettuce and add the pomegranate arils plus almonds (you can toast almonds if desired by placing them in a dry skillet over medium heat and stirring until lightly fragrant watching carefully to not burn them.)
- Toss everything with the dressing and add in some feta or crumbled goat cheese to personal preference. Increase the amounts of cranberries or almonds if desired.
- Once dressed enjoy the salad the same day. If not finishing the salad in one day, store the salad separately from the dressing, almonds, and cheese.



CROCKPOT TURKEY BREAST

The most tender and deliciously seasoned crockpot turkey breast.

Course:	Dinner
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	10 minutes
Cook Time:	8 hours
Total Time:	8 hours 10 minutes
Servings :	4 -6 as a main dish

Ingredients

- 1 (5-6 pounds) bone-in turkey breast completely thawed
- 5 stalks celery
- 2 yellow onions
- ~12-15 baby carrots
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 6 tablespoons butter separated
- Seasonings
- 1 tablespoon dried minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1/4 teaspoon dried sage
- Optional: 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme

Instructions

- Make sure the turkey breast is completely thawed -- this can take 1-2 days in the fridge so be prepared. It isn't food safe to thaw a turkey in the crockpot. See notes in the post for more details about thawing your turkey breast. Pat the turkey down with paper towels.
- Spray a large crockpot (I use a 6 quart crockpot) with nonstick spray.
- Place the celery at the bottom. Cut one yellow onion into large chunks and add it to the bottom. Add the baby carrots. Pour the chicken broth on top.
- Cut off the skin of the turkey breast (OR leave it on, whatever you prefer-- see last paragraph of blog post for more notes on this)
- Place the turkey breast, BREAST DOWN on top of the vegetables. Make sure the turkey is ELEVATED on top of the onion/vegetables.
- Cut the other onion in half and place inside the turkey with 4 tablespoons butter.
- Stir together all of the seasonings and rub all over the turkey. If leaving the skin on, make sure to rub the seasonings under the skin.
- Melt the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter and, using a pastry brush, brush it all over the turkey.
- Cover the crockpot and cook on high for 1 hour and then low for 5-7 hours or until the turkey's internal temperature reaches 165 degrees F.
- Remove the turkey from the crockpot and turn so it is breast up.
- Start by removing the wishbone and then remove all the other bones. Take the large pieces of meat and slice them.
- TO MAKE GRAVY: Strain everything from the crockpot out into a large bowl (press down the veggies to extract all the flavor/liquid). Measure that liquid (you should have right around 2 cups) and then set aside. In a large saucepan, add 4 tablespoons butter and melt. Whisking constantly, add in 4 tablespoons white flour. Gradually add in the strained liquid from the crockpot, whisking constantly. Add salt, pepper, and any other seasonings needed. Serve warm with the turkey.



THE BEST CRISPY PARMESAN BRUSSELS SPROUTS

The BEST ultra crispy and flavorful parmesan brussels sprouts

Course:	Appetizer
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	15 minutes
Cook Time:	19 minutes
Total Time:	34 minutes
Servings:	4-6 servings

Ingredients

- 1.5 pounds brussels sprouts
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
- 1/3 cup Panko (breadcrumbs)*
- 1/3 cup + 2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese, separated
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon EACH: garlic powder, freshly cracked pepper

Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.
- Trim the brussels and slice large ones in half. Place in a large bowl and drizzle over olive oil, melted butter, Panko, 1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, salt, garlic powder, and pepper. Toss gently until everything is well combined.
- Transfer to a large baking sheet and spread the brussels so they aren't overlapping.
- Bake 16-19 minutes or until brussels are lightly browned, tender, and the Parmesan cheese is melted. Remove from the oven and sprinkle the remaining 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese on the hot brussels.
- Enjoy immediately.



PISTACHIO CRUSTED GOAT CHEESE BALL

A delicious and simple-to-make holiday appetizer: pistachio-crusted goat cheese ball/log with fresh herbs and dried apricot*

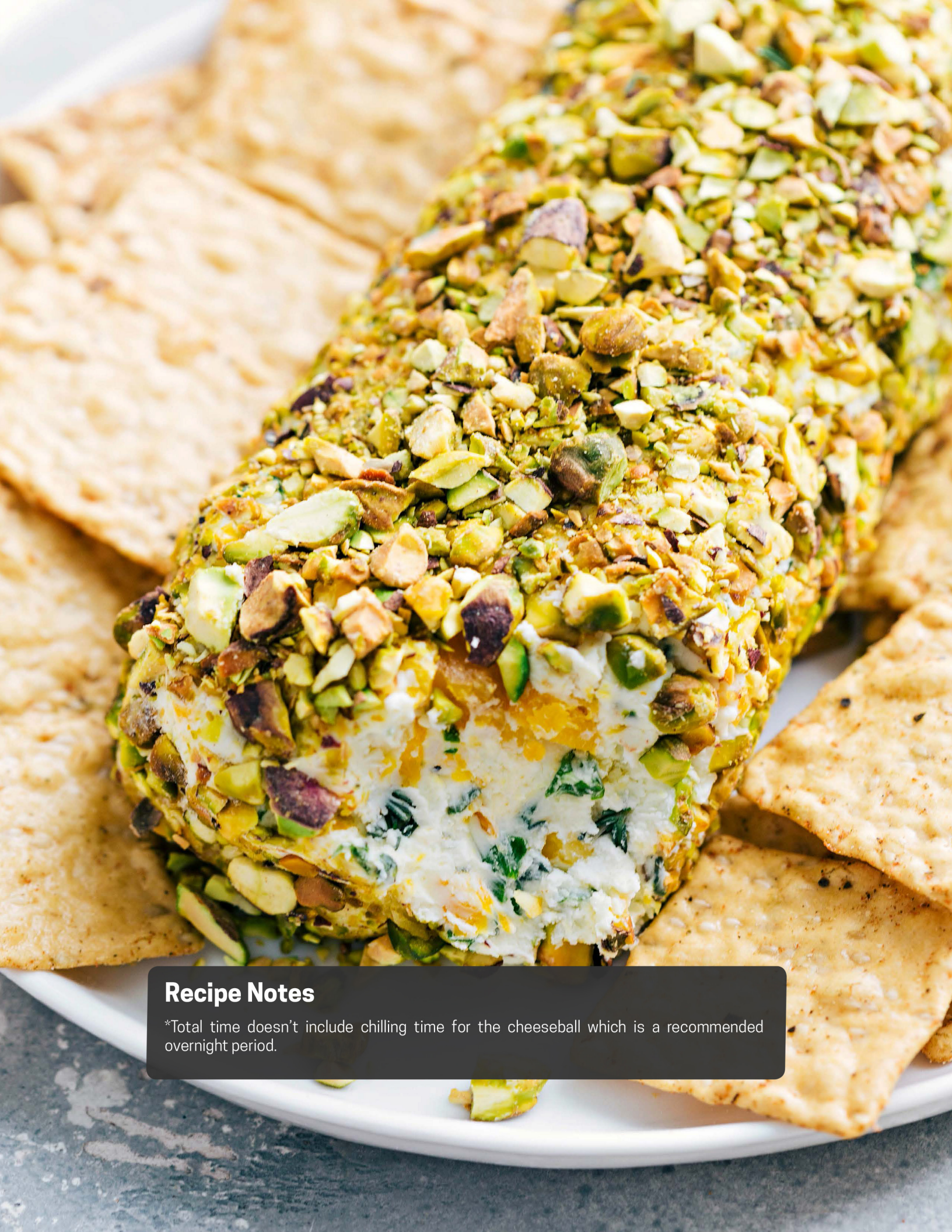
Course:	Appetizer
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	15 minutes
Total Time:	15 minutes
Servings:	16 as an appetizer
Calories:	96 kcal

Ingredients

- 8 ounces good quality goat cheese
- 1 package (8 ounces) full-fat cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup dried apricots, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons scallions or green onions, finely chopped
- 3 teaspoons fresh thyme, leaves removed and chopped
- 1/2 cup roasted and salted shelled pistachios, coarsely chopped
- Freshly cracked pepper and salt, to taste
- Harvest Stone Crackers, for serving

Instructions

- Allow the goat cheese and cream cheese to come to room temperature (soften the cream cheese in the microwave for just a little if needed) and then place in a bowl attached to a stand mixer.
- Beat the two until just combined.
- Add in the finely chopped dried apricots, finely chopped scallions or green onions, and chopped fresh thyme. Add salt and pepper to taste (remembering the nuts are also salted).
- Beat until the ingredients are combined and then scoop the mixture onto a large sheet of plastic wrap.
- Using the wrap, knead the mixture together and form a long log or cheese ball. Wrap tightly in the plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight or until firm. (I like to chill it overnight to allow the flavors to really meld!)
- Coarsely chop the shelled pistachios on a cutting board and then unwrap the cheese ball or log right on top of the chopped nuts. Roll the ball around and use your hands to gently attach the pistachios to the ball or log until it is completely coated in nuts.
- Serve with crackers!



Recipe Notes

*Total time doesn't include chilling time for the cheeseball which is a recommended overnight period.

THANKSGIVING DRESSING

A delicious Thanksgiving dressing packed with the perfect combination of herbs and ingredients

Course:	Side Dish
Cuisine:	American, thanksgiving
Prep Time:	20 minutes
Cook Time:	45 minutes
Total Time:	1 hour 5 minutes
Servings:	10 servings
Calories:	300 kcal

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup + 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 10 cups good quality, day-old white bread , such as sourdough or ciabatta
- 2 medium yellow onions, diced (~2 and 1/2 cups)
- 6-8 stalks celery, sliced into 1/4th inch thick slices (~1 and 1/3 cups)
- 1/2 cup flat-leaf parsley, finely diced
- 1 package fresh poultry herb blend mix (by other packaged fresh herbs in the refrigerated produce section of the grocery store or see notes for individual herbs)
- 1 teaspoon fresh oregano, chopped; optional
- Kosher salt and freshly cracked pepper
- 2 and 1/2 cups high quality chicken stock, separated
- 2 large Eggland's Best Eggs

Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 250 degrees F. Generously grease a 9 x 13 inch baking pan with nonstick spray and set aside. Cut the bread into equal one inch pieces and place on a large rimmed baking sheet. Place in the preheated oven and bake for 45 minutes, stirring the bread cubes every 15 minutes, or until completely dried out. Let the bread cool completely and then transfer the bread cubes to a very large bowl.
- Meanwhile, melt the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chopped onions and celery. Stir often until just beginning to lightly brown and the ingredients have become tender, about 10 minutes. Stir in all of the fresh chopped herbs: 2 tablespoons sage, 1 tablespoon rosemary, 1 teaspoon fresh oregano, and 1 and 1/2 tablespoons thyme. Add salt and pepper to taste (I use about 2 teaspoons salt and 1 teaspoon pepper)
- Add the vegetable + herb mixture to the bowl with the dried-out bread cubes. Add in 1 and 1/4 cups chicken stock and very gently toss all of the ingredients together.
- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. In another small bowl, whisk the remaining 1 and 1/4 cups chicken stock with the 2 room temperature eggs. Whisk until smooth. Add this mixture to the large bowl with the bread cubes. Fold very gently until all ingredients are completely combined.
- Transfer this mixture to the prepared 9 x 13-inch baking dish. Bake for 40-45 minutes until browned and crisp on top (you may need longer if your dressing was refrigerated overnight). Remove and serve immediately.



Recipe Notes

I buy 1 package fresh poultry blend which has sage, thyme, and rosemary. You'll want to have a total of 2 tablespoons fresh sage, and 1 and 1/2 tablespoons fresh thyme and 1 tablespoon rosemary.

WINTER FRUIT SALAD

The best winter fruit salad with a simple (and healthy) lemon poppyseed dressing

Course:	Salad
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	10 minutes
Chilling Time:	30 minutes
Total Time:	40 minutes
Servings:	4 -6 servings
Calories:	171 kcal

Ingredients

- 2 cans (15 ounces EACH) mandarin oranges, drained
- 1 large Bartlett pear, diced
- 2 small apples (fuji or gala), thinly sliced
- 5 kiwis, peeled, sliced, and halved
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 and 1/2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon poppyseeds
- 1 container (4.3 ounces) Pomegranate Fresh Arils
- Fresh mint, optional

Instructions

- In a large bowl, toss together the drained mandarin oranges, the diced Bartlett pear, the thinly sliced apples, and the peeled, sliced, and halved kiwis. Set aside.
- In a small bowl, whisk together the honey, lemon juice, lemon zest, and poppyseeds. Pour over the salad and toss gently. Cover and refrigerated for 30 minutes.
- Remove and top with the pomegranate arils and fresh (chopped) mint if desired. Serve immediately.
- Any leftovers are delicious blended up in a smoothie the next morning :)



PECAN STREUSEL PUMPKIN PIE

The ultimate mash-up of two holiday favorites: the best pumpkin pie topped with a pecan streusel! Maple whipped cream perfectly finishes this treat!

Prep Time: 30 minutes
Cook Time: 50 minutes
Total Time: 1 hour 20 minutes
Servings: 1 9-inch pie

Ingredients

Crust

- 1 and 1/2 cups white flour
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 tablespoon white sugar
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter COLD
- 3 tablespoons shortening butter-flavored, COLD
- 3-4 tablespoons ice cold water
- 1 large egg + 1 tablespoon milk

Pumpkin Filling

- 1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin puree
- 4 large eggs separated, (you will use 1 whole one and 3 yolks)
- 1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Streusel

- 3/4 cup Diamonds of California pecans
- 1/3 cup brown sugar lightly packed
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

Optional Maple Whipped Cream

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 3 and 1/2 tablespoons maple syrup

Instructions

Crust

- Toss together the flour, salt, and sugar.
- Dice the extremely cold butter into small pieces and add to the bowl along with the cold shortening.
- Cut the butter and shortening into the flour with a pastry blender or two knives until the dough forms coarse crumbs.
- Very slowly, add in 4 tablespoons of ice cold water -- add 1 tablespoon at a time until the dough can form into a ball.
- Stir the mixture a few times with a wooden spoon and then spoon it all onto a large sheet of plastic wrap.
- Knead just a few times to get it into a ball and then wrap tightly in the plastic wrap. Chill for at least 30 minutes up to overnight.

Filling

- Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
- Whisk the pumpkin puree with 1 large egg, and 3 egg YOLKS. Once combined whisk in the sweetened condensed milk.
- Add in the cinnamon, ginger, salt, nutmeg, and vanilla extract. Whisk until combined.
- Roll out the pie dough (I roll the dough in between two sheets of plastic wrap) and fit it into a 9-inch pie pan. Fold the edges up one time and then crimp those edges with your fingers.
- In a small bowl, whisk together the egg and milk and brush that over the crust.
- Add pie weights to the crust (Or put foil in the bottom and fill it with dried beans or rice). In a small bowl, whisk together the egg and milk and brush that lightly over the edges of the crust.
- Bake just the crust for 10 minutes.

- Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.
- Remove the pie and pour the filling into the pie pan. Tap a few times to release extra air.
- Put in the oven and bake for 15 minutes at 425 degrees F. Then reduce the heat to 350 degrees and cook for another 25-30 minutes.

Streusel

- Meanwhile, chop the pecans into small pieces.
- Toss the pecans with the brown sugar, flour, and cinnamon.
- Finely dice the cold butter and then using a pastry blender (or your hands), cut it in with the other ingredients until a thick streusel is formed.
- Remove the pie after cooking for 25-30 minutes and top it evenly with the streusel.
- Return to the oven for another 10-15 minutes or until set at the edges and barely jiggles in the middle. (If needed, use a pie shield to keep the crust from browning too much)
- Remove from the oven and let cool completely.
- Serve the pie chilled or at room temperature.

Optional Maple Whipped Cream

- In a bowl of a stand mixer, pour in the cold heavy whipping cream. Whip for 1-2 minutes and then gradually pour in the maple syrup.
- Whip until soft peaks form.
- Chill until ready to serve.
- Generously spoon the maple whipped cream over the pie and enjoy!



CANDIED ALMOND, MANDARIN, AND APPLE SALAD WITH AN ORANGE POPPYSEED DRESSING

A great holiday entertaining salad — mandarin orange, apples, cranberries, feta cheese, and easy stovetop candied almonds all covered in a delicious orange poppyseed dressing.

Course:	Salad
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	15 minutes
Total Time:	15 minutes
Servings:	6-8 as a side

Ingredients

Salad

- 1 cup sliced almonds
- 1/4 cup + 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 10 ounces mixed green lettuce or fresh spinach
- 1 can (15 ounces) mandarin oranges
- 2 large apples thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 3/4 cup dried cranberries
- 3/4 cup crumbled feta

Dressing*

- 1/2 cup vegetable oil or olive oil
- 1 large orange (2 teaspoons zest and 4 tablespoons juice)
- 1 large lemon (1/2 teaspoon zest and 2 tablespoons juice)
- 2 and 1/2 tablespoons honey
- 2 teaspoons dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon Morton fine sea salt
- 2 teaspoons poppy seeds

Instructions

- In a large skillet, add the sliced almonds and white sugar. Place the heat to medium-high and stir near constantly. The sugar will begin to melt and become a sticky liquid and then stick to the almonds. This takes about 3-4 minutes -- watch carefully and stir near constantly to avoid burning the nuts.
- Dump the candied almonds onto a sheet of parchment paper and let harden. Break apart.
- Thinly slice the apples and toss with lemon juice.
- In a large bowl, toss together the lettuce, well-drained mandarin oranges, sliced apples, dried cranberries, and feta cheese.
- For the dressing: combine all of the ingredients together except for the oil and poppyseed in a blender. Blend until all ingredients are well incorporated. Slowly add in the oil in a steady stream and pulse until combined.
- Stir in the poppyseeds.
- Right before enjoying, add the dressing (add to taste -- you may not need it all) and candied almonds. Toss and enjoy immediately.



Recipe Notes

*If you plan on having leftovers, only toss the dressing and almonds with what will get eaten to avoid a soggy salad. This dressing makes enough for 2 full salad recipes. If you want the halved version (I do this often so nothing goes bad) it is:

1/4 cup vegetable oil or olive oil, 1 large orange (1 teaspoons zest and 2 tablespoons juice), 1 large lemon (1/4 teaspoon zest and 1 tablespoons juice), 1 and 1/4 tablespoons honey, 1 teaspoon dijon mustard, heaping 1/8 teaspoon fine sea salt, 1 teaspoon poppy seeds

THE BEST CREAMY MASHED POTATOES

Gorgeously creamy and robustly flavorful mashed potatoes — a must addition to your holiday table!

Course:	Side Dish
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	20 minutes
Cook Time:	20 minutes
Total Time:	40 minutes
Servings:	8 servings, as a side

Ingredients

- 3 pounds russet or yukon gold potatoes peeled and cut into large cubes
- 1 tablespoon fine sea salt
- 2 bay leaves, separated
- 2 cloves garlic, mashed
- 10 tablespoons (1/2 cup + 2 tablespoons) unsalted butter, separated
- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- 3/4 cup sour cream
- Freshly cracked pepper and additional fine sea salt
- Optional: fresh chives

Instructions

- Cube the potatoes into golf-ball sized pieces. Place in a strainer and rinse under cold water until the water rinsing through comes out clear. Place in a large pot and cover with cold water. Add 1 tablespoon fine sea salt and 1 bay leaf, stir, and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer until the potatoes are fork-tender; about 15-20 minutes. When a potato can easily be pierced, drain the potatoes and make sure you get rid of ALL the extra moisture. Let them dry for about 5 minutes. Discard the bay leaf.
- Meanwhile, melt 8 tablespoons butter on a low heat in a small saucepan. Add the bay leaf, and 2 cloves of garlic (mashed) if desired. Add in the heavy cream and sour cream. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Once the mixture is combined and smooth, remove from the heat and discard the bay leaf and garlic. OR you can mince the garlic and add it to the final potatoes for extra garlicky potatoes. We like a barely garlic infused mashed potato, so we discard here.
- While potatoes are still hot, put them through a ricer and add back into the pot you cooked them in. Pour the butter mixture over the riced potatoes. Stir with a wooden spoon until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- If desired, add fresh chives to the top and the remaining 2 tablespoons melted butter. Serve hot.



EASY SKILLET CHERRY CRISP

A simple-to-make skillet tart cherry crisp. This crisp requires a fraction of the effort required to make a cherry pie and tastes even better!

Prep Time:	20 minutes
Cook Time:	40 minutes
Total Time:	1 hour
Servings:	6

Ingredients

Cherry Filling

- 1 container (21 ounces) cherry pie filling

Crumble Topping

- 1/2 cup white flour
- 1/2 cup old fashioned oats
- 2/3 cup brown sugar lightly packed
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 cup finely chopped pecans
- 1/3 cup unsalted butter at room temperature

Cherry Crisp Topping

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1-2 tablespoons heavy cream
- Vanilla bean ice cream

Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- Lightly grease an 8 inch cast-iron skillet or pan.
- In a large bowl, toss together the flour, oats, brown sugar, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, and chopped pecans.
- Cut the butter into small cubes and then cut that butter into the mixture.
- Use your fingers to work the butter into the mixture until a thick “dough” has formed.
- Pour the cherry filling into the prepared skillet/pan.
- Top the cherry filling evenly with the crumble. You’ll only need about 90% of the crumble and the rest you can eat or discard :)
- Place the skillet on a baking sheet (in case anything spills over) and in then in the oven.
- Bake for 35-40 minutes or until lightly golden brown on top.
- Remove and allow to slightly cool.
- While it’s baking, make the glaze: add the powdered sugar to a bowl and slowly beat, with hand mixers, in the heavy cream. Add the cream just until a thick glaze forms.
- Transfer the glaze into a small plastic bag and cut off the tip. Pipe the glaze over the crisp.
- Serve the crisp topped with plenty of vanilla bean ice cream!



CROCKPOT TOASTED MARSHMALLOW HOT CHOCOLATE

The best creamy hot chocolate with toasted marshmallows — everyone loves this festive holiday drink! And it's made simple in the slow cooker!

Course:	Drink
Prep Time:	15 minutes
Cook Time:	3 hours
Total Time:	3 hours 15 minutes
Servings:	8 -10 people

Ingredients

- 2 packages (4 ounces EACH) semi-sweet baking bars (milk or dark chocolate for very rich cocoa), or about 2 and 1/4 cups chocolate chips
- 6 cups milk (not skim, 1%, 2%, or whole)
- 1 and 1/2 cups heavy whipping cream (not whipped)
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt
- 1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
- 2 and 1/2 cups miniature marshmallows

Instructions

- Chop the chocolate bars to the size of chocolate chips. Alternatively use chocolate chips.
- Add the chopped chocolate or chocolate chips to the slow cooker. (I use a 6 quart crockpot and it get's over 1/2 the way full)
- Add in the milk, I use 1 or 2% (whole would be ultra rich), heavy whipping cream, vanilla, salt, and the can of sweetened condensed milk.
- Stir together and set on low in the crockpot.
- For the toasted marshmallow: preheat the oven to Broil at 550 degrees F. Move the oven rack to the highest position.
- Cover a cookie sheet with foil and then generously spray the foil with non stick spray.
- Lay the marshmallows evenly on top of the foil.
- Place in the oven on the top rack and leave the oven door slightly ajar. Watch the marshmallows the entire time and pull them out when they look toasted. Watch carefully because they can go from perfectly toasted to burned very quickly!
- Remove and then add into the hot chocolate. Stir and cover.
- Cook on low for 2-3 hours or until all the chocolate and marshmallows are melted.
- Carefully transfer the mixture (in 2-3 batches) to a blender.
- Blend each batch for at least 30 seconds. This allows a great immersion and a delicious frothier texture.
- Return to the slow cooker and keep on warm for guests.



Recipe Notes

This hot chocolate does store well. Transfer to an airtight container in the fridge. When ready to enjoy again you will likely need to blend the mixture again and then just warm it up. Can be made 2-3 days in advance.

SHEPHERD'S PIE

The best way to use your holiday leftovers! A delicious and rich shepherd's pie topped with the ultimate creamy mashed potatoes.

Course:	Dinner
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	30 minutes
Cook Time:	30 minutes
Total Time:	1 hour
Servings:	4 -6 servings

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil, separated
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups mirepoix (mix of carrots, onion, & celery), finely chopped (I chop 1 small yellow onion, 1 celery rib, & 1 carrot to get 2 cups)
- 1.2 pounds ground chuck round
- 1/4 cup white flour
- 1/2 cup frozen sweet peas or corn
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) fire-roasted diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 and 3/4 cups beef stock (low sodium) (can use low sodium beef broth)
- 1/2 cup 100% grape juice
- 1 beef bouillon cube
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 3 bay leaves, separated

Topping

- 2 and 1/2 pounds potatoes (I use an equal mix of Yukon Gold and Russet; if just using one use Yukon Gold)
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup sour cream (can use fat free)
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
 - Fine sea salt and freshly cracked pepper
- Optional: fresh parsley or fresh thyme, for topping

Instructions

- Pour 1 and 1/2 tablespoons olive oil in a large (oven-safe to save a dish!) skillet over medium high heat. Add garlic cloves and finely chopped onion and cook, stirring frequently for about 1 minute. Add the finely chopped carrots and celery and cook for another 2-3 minutes or until veggies are softened.
- Increase heat to high and add in the beef. Cook, breaking up the beef, until browned through. If there is excessive grease, drain off that additional fat. Add in the flour and cook an additional minute to cook off the flour taste. Reduce heat to medium-high and add in the frozen peas or corn, can of diced tomatoes, tomato paste, beef stock, grape juice, beef bouillon cube, Worcestershire sauce, dried thyme, and 2 bay leaves.
- Bring this mixture to a simmer then reduce heat to medium and bring the mixture to a rapid simmer. Cook for 25-35 minutes at medium heat, stirring every 5 or so minutes, until you have a good thickened gravy. Remove from heat, cover, and refrigerate until ready to bake. (I like making in the morning and assembling before dinner). If making immediately, place in the fridge until potatoes are done :) If you didn't prepare in an oven-safe skillet, transfer to a 2 quart oven-safe dish.
- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Peel and then cube the potatoes into golf-ball sized pieces. Place in a strainer and rinse under cold water until the water rinsing through comes out clear. Place in a large pot and cover with cold water. Add 1 tablespoon fine sea salt and 1 bay leaf, stir, and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer until the potatoes are fork-tender; about 15-20 minutes. When a potato can easily be pierced, drain the potatoes in a strainer and make sure you get rid of ALL the extra moisture. Let them dry for about 3 minutes. Discard the bay leaf.
- While the potatoes are drying in the strainer, add the heavy cream, sour cream, and butter to the pot. Melt on low heat and stir to combine. While potatoes are still hot, put them through a ricer and add right on top of the butter/sour cream mixture. Stir with a wooden spoon until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper (I use about 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper). Cover and place in the fridge until ready to assemble pie! OR add these mashed potatoes to top the pie in an even layer.
- Use a fork to add marks into the surface of the potatoes. Drizzle with remaining 1/2 tablespoon olive oil.
- Bake in preheated oven for 25-30 minutes or until the potatoes are golden brown and the edges are bubbling. Broil for 1-2 minutes on high to get the very tops of the potatoes crispy! Remove from heat and garnish with fresh thyme or fresh parsley as desired. Serve hot :)



SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE

If you aren't sure whether to top your sweet potato casserole with a pecan streusel or marshmallows, this allows everyone to have their favorites! This sweet potato casserole is the most requested side at our holiday dinners!

Course:	Side Dish
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	25 minutes
Cook Time:	25 minutes
Sweet Potato Cook Time:	1 hour

Ingredients

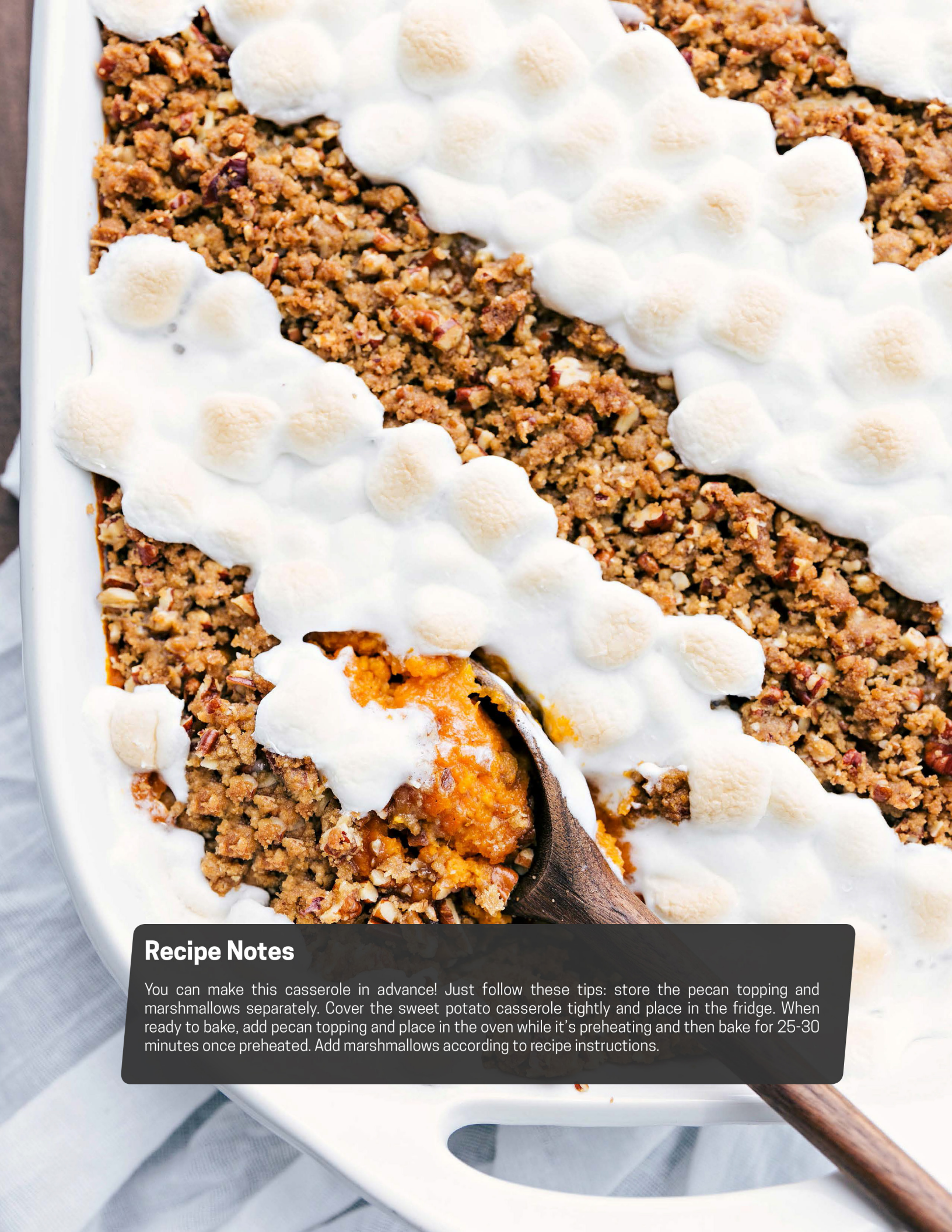
- 5 pounds sweet potatoes
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted (browned if desired)
- 1/3 cup white sugar
- 1/4 cup dark brown sugar, packed
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 3/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 3 large eggs
- 1/3 cup evaporated milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Topping

- 1/2 cup white flour
- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar, packed
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans
- 2 cups miniature marshmallows

Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Line a large sheet pan with parchment paper. Wash the sweet potatoes and then pierce each potato a few times with a fork. Place on the prepared sheet pan and bake for about 1 hour to 1 hour 15 minutes or until the potatoes are very tender when pierced with a fork. Remove and allow to slightly cool. Reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees F.
- Cut each potato in half, scrape the flesh out and pass through a ricer into a large mixing bowl. Add melted butter (brown the butter if desired), white sugar, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Mix with an electric hand mixer on low speed until ingredients are well combined. Add in the eggs, mix until well blended. Add in the evaporated milk and vanilla and again, mix until well blended. Smooth this mixture into a well-greased 9 x 13 pan in one even layer.
- For the topping: Combine the flour, brown sugar, butter and salt in a medium bowl until the mixture clumps together. Stir in the pecans. Spread this topping mixture in diagonal rows over mashed sweet potato mixture leaving about a 1.5 to 2 inch gap in between rows. Bake in preheated oven for 25 - 30 minutes (tent with foil if browning too quickly).
- Remove casserole from the oven and allow it to rest for 5 minutes, then sprinkle the marshmallows between the rows of pecan topping. Return to oven and bake until marshmallows are melty and lightly golden -- about 5 minutes. Serve hot!



Recipe Notes

You can make this casserole in advance! Just follow these tips: store the pecan topping and marshmallows separately. Cover the sweet potato casserole tightly and place in the fridge. When ready to bake, add pecan topping and place in the oven while it's preheating and then bake for 25-30 minutes once preheated. Add marshmallows according to recipe instructions.

WATERGATE SALAD (PISTACHIO FLUFF)

A retro favorite dessert/side salad also known as “pistachio fluff” and sure to be a party hit! Pistachio flavored and deliciously creamy!

Course:	Side Dish
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	15 minutes
Chilling Time:	45 minutes
Total Time:	15 minutes
Servings:	8-10 servings, as a side

Ingredients

- 2 cans (8 ounces EACH) crushed pineapple, undrained
- 1 package (3.4 ounces) pistachio flavored instant pudding
- 1 can (14 ounces) mandarin oranges, well drained
- 3/4 cup mini marshmallows
- 1/2 cup pistachios, coarsely chopped (optional)
- 1 container (8 ounces) frozen whipped topping, completely thawed
- Optional: shredded coconut

Instructions

- Add the undrained pineapple and pudding mix in a large bowl. Stir until smooth. Add in the well drained mandarin oranges, mini marshmallows, and coarsely chopped pistachios. Gently fold together until combined.
- Using a spatula, gently fold in the thawed frozen whipped topping until all the ingredients are well covered. Cover and refrigerated for 45 minutes to an hour. Serve chilled with a sprinkle of shredded coconut if desired.



THE BEST EVER SNICKERDOODLE COOKIES

The best soft, chewy, and thick snickerdoodle cookies

Course:	Dessert
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	15 minutes
Cook Time:	10 minutes
Total Time:	25 minutes
Chilling Time:	60 minutes
Servings:	28 cookies
Calories:	134 kcal

Ingredients

- 16 tablespoons (1 cup) unsalted butter, 80% the way melted
- 2/3 cup white sugar
- 2/3 cup light brown sugar, packed
- 2 large eggs, separated
- 1/2 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 and 3/4 cup all-purpose white flour
- 1 and 1/2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Cinnamon Sugar Coating

- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 3 teaspoons ground cinnamon

Instructions

- In a large bowl add the 80% melted butter, sugar, and brown sugar. Whisk together until smooth. Add in 1 whole egg and 1 egg yolk (reserve the whites for a separate recipe or discard) and the vanilla extract. Whisk until just combined and smooth.
- In another bowl, stir together the flour, cream of tartar, salt, baking soda, and 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon. Whisk together.
- Add all of the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients and mix until JUST combined. Do not overmix the dough. Cover tightly and place in the fridge for 45 minutes to 1 hour.
- Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. (If you have a convection oven, do 325 degrees F at convection bake). In a small bowl stir together the white sugar and cinnamon.
- Remove the dough and roll tall balls of dough (see the 2nd photo in the post). If you have a kitchen scale, the balls of dough should be about 1.7 ounces. Roll the balls of dough generously into the cinnamon-sugar mixture.
- Place dough balls on a parchment or silpat lined sheet pan and bake for 9-11 minutes. Watch carefully being sure to not over-bake. I think slightly under-baked snickerdoodle cookies are the BEST!
- Remove and let stand on cookie sheet for 2 minutes before removing to a cooling rack.
- Cookies best enjoyed within 2-3 days.



FOUR-INGREDIENT RASPBERRY CHEESECAKE FLUFF

A simple dessert salad or side dish for the holidays — raspberry yogurt cheesecake fluff made with only four ingredients and in five minutes of prep time!

Course:	Salad/Dessert
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	5 minutes
Total Time:	5 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 container (32 ounces) low-fat vanilla yogurt NOT greek yogurt
- 2 packages (3.4 ounces EACH) cheesecake pudding mix dry*
- 1 package (12 ounces) frozen raspberries
- 1 container (8 ounces) frozen whipped topping thawed

Instructions

- Set out the frozen raspberries to thaw as you prep the other part of the salad.
- Make sure the frozen whipped topping is completely thawed.
- In a large bowl, briskly whisk together the vanilla yogurt, 1 full package of the cheesecake pudding mix, and 1/2 of the other full package of cheesecake pudding mix.
- Whisk very thoroughly until completely combined and no lumps remain.
- Stir in the frozen raspberries until well combined. The raspberries will break down a bit and begin to thaw more.
- Gently fold in the thawed whipped topping until completely combined.
- Either serve immediately or store in the fridge until ready to serve
- The longer it sits, the more pink the salad will be.
- Best enjoyed within 1-2 days.



Recipe Notes

*You won't use all of the second mix. Save to add to another salad!

FOOLPROOF MICROWAVE FUDGE

Creamy milk chocolate fudge that is made quickly and easily in the microwave!
No candy thermometer needed!

Course:	Dessert
Prep Time:	20 minutes
Cook Time:	2 hours
Total Time:	2 hours 20 minutes
Servings:	1 (8 x 9inch)pan

Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons SALTED butter melted
- 1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk*
- 3 cups high quality milk chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon vanilla or peppermint extract
- 1 cup Andes peppermint crunch chips or crushed peppermint

Instructions

- Line an 8 x 8 pan with parchment paper and set aside.
- In a large microwave safe bowl, add the butter and melt.
- Pour in the sweetened condensed milk on top of the butter and whisk to combine.
- Add in the chocolate chips and stir.
- Microwave in bursts of 15 seconds stirring in between each burst for 10 seconds until the mixture is melted.
- Remove and add in the extract. Stir.
- Spoon into the prepared 8 x 8 pan and smooth to make the fudge even.
- Top with the crunch chips or crushed peppermint.
- Cover and place in the fridge for about 2-3 hours until set up.



THE BEST PUMPKIN CAKE

The BEST ever moist and perfectly spiced pumpkin cake with a luscious cream cheese frosting and optionally garnished with candied pecans. Feel free to make this cake the night before, we like it best on the second day!

Course:	Dessert
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	20 minutes
Cook Time:	50 minutes
Total Time:	1 hour 10 minutes
Servings:	10 -12 slices
Calories:	378 kcal

Ingredients

- 1 can (15 ounces) or 1-3/4 cups solid-packed pumpkin (I highly recommend Libby's)
- 1 and 1/2 cups white granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed
- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups all purpose white flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 3/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1 package (8 ounces) full fat cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 3 cups powdered sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- Chopped (plain or candied) pecans, optional

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Generously grease and lightly flour a 10-inch bundt pan. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, add the canned pumpkin (if you have wet/fresh pumpkin make sure to drain off excess liquid), white sugar, brown sugar, eggs, oil, and vanilla extract. Beat with hand mixers until combined and well blended.
3. In another bowl, combine the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ground cloves, salt, ground ginger, ground nutmeg, and pumpkin pie spice. Whisk until combined. Add the dry ingredients into the wet and beat until just combined. Use a spatula to ensure all of the ingredients are fully incorporated.
4. Pour mixture into prepared bundt pan and bake for 50-65 minutes or until a toothpick when inserted into the center comes out clean or with moist cake crumbs. The cake should spring back when lightly touched. Remove from the oven and cool on a wire cooling rack for 10 minutes before inverting the cake onto the cooling rack to cool completely.
5. For the frosting: in a large bowl, beat ROOM TEMPERATURE cream cheese and butter until completely smooth. It's important the cream cheese and butter are at the same temperature so you don't get bumpy cream cheese! Add powdered sugar, pumpkin pie spice, vanilla and salt; beat until completely smooth. Pipe over the completely cooled cake. If desired, garnish with chopped candied or plain pecans. (See recipe notes for my candied pecan recipe).



THE BEST TOFFEE

Our staple holiday candy — the best foolproof toffee! Follow the directions carefully and make sure to use a candy thermometer and this recipe won't disappoint!

Course:	Dessert
Cuisine:	American
Prep Time:	15 minutes
Chilling Time:	2 hours
Total Time:	15 minutes
Servings:	1 (9 x 9 inch) pan

Ingredients

- 1 cup coarsely chopped almonds (measured after chopping)
- 1 cup (16 tablespoons) unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup milk chocolate chips
- 1/3 cup dark chocolate chips

Instructions

- Line a 9 x 9 inch baking pan with parchment paper leaving enough for an overhang to easily remove the toffee. Coarsely chop the almonds and spread along the bottom of the baking pan.
- In a heavy bottomed 3-quart pot, add the cut pieces of unsalted butter, white sugar, and salt.
- Stir frequently over medium low heat to dissolve the sugar. Make sure the sugar dissolves completely before the mixture begins to boil or you will end up with grainy toffee. Once the sugar is completely dissolved and butter melted, bring the mixture to a boil.
- Once the mixture is boiling, stir occasionally in a slow and even manner until the candy reaches 295 degrees F on a candy thermometer. Remove from the heat and add in the almond and vanilla extract carefully. Stir gently.
- Carefully pour this mixture over your chopped almonds and gently spread to an even layer. Let the mixture stand for 2-3 minutes without touching.
- Sprinkle the milk and dark chocolate chips over the toffee. Cover the pan with the bottom of a tray or foil to allow the chocolate to melt. After 5-7 minutes, remove the tray/foil and spread the soft chocolate into one even layer.
- Place in the fridge, uncovered, and allow to cool completely through; about 1.5 to 2 hours. Lift the parchment paper using the overhang and place on a cutting board. Use a knife to cut/break the toffee into smaller pieces.
- Store toffee pieces in a cool place in an airtight container and enjoy within 4-5 days.



**HOLIDAY GAME IDEAS
(PRINTABLE GAME CARDS)**

Minute To Win It

One of my favorite games to play with guests I'm hosting is "Minute to Win It." "Minute to Win It" was a game show where contestants participated in a series of 60-second challenges. The challenges generally use objects that are commonly available around the house. In this holiday hosting guide, I'm sharing a festive twist on a classically fun game! While I've included a Halloween "Minute to Win It" twist, all of these challenges can be tweaked to be played on various holidays.

To play "Minute To Win It" Print off the challenge cards (included in this guide). Cut out the challenge cards and collect all of the objects needed for each challenge. Separate the group into 2 equal teams. Alternate players on each team to pick a challenge card and then participate in that challenge. Complete the challenge on the card and award a winner on a score sheet. Once all the challenges have been completed, tally up the scores and announce the Minute to Win It winner!

Quiplash

Another favorite party game is Quiplash! To play, you'll use your phone or tablet and answer simple (and often silly) question prompts. There are no rules or correct answers so you can write in whatever you want! The answer you submit is then pitted against another player's answer and everyone in the audience votes for their favorite answer. You can read more about the game and download it here:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/quiplash/id1002623276?mt=12>

1

CAULDRON CANDY TOSS

ONE PARTNER HOLDS THE CAULDRON AND ANOTHER PARTNER TOSSES CANDY CORNS INTO THE CAULDRON SEVERAL FEET APART. TEAM WITH THE MOST CANDY CORNS IN CAULDRON AFTER 1 MINUTE WINS

SUPPLIES: PLASTIC CAULDRONS, CANDY CORNS

HALLOWEEN MINUTE TO WIN IT

2

CANDY COLLECTION

TEAMS SEPARATE COLORED CANDIES INTO THEIR RESPECTIVE COLOR

SUPPLIES: M&MS OR SKITTLES

HALLOWEEN MINUTE TO WIN IT

3

CANDY CORN STACK

BITE OFF THE END OF A CANDY CORN AND STICK IT TO A PAPER PLATE. PLAYER THAT HAS THE MOST STANDING CANDY CORNS AFTER 1 MINUTE WINS.

SUPPLIES: PAPER PLATES, CANDY CORNS

HALLOWEEN MINUTE TO WIN IT

4

CREEPING SPIDERS

ONE MEMBER FROM EACH TEAM BLOWS PLASTIC SPIDERS ACROSS THE TABLE USING PLASTIC STRAWS

SUPPLIES: PLASTIC STRAWS, PLASTIC SPIDERS

HALLOWEEN MINUTE TO WIN IT



5

MONSTER MASK

STICK AS MANY POST-IT NOTES TO YOUR PARTNER'S FACE AS POSSIBLE IN 1 MINUTE. PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MOST POST-IT NOTES STUCK TO A FACE IN 1 MINUTE WINS.

SUPPLIES: MINIATURE POST-IT NOTES

HALLOWEEN MINUTE TO WIN IT



6

HUNGRY VAMPIRES

ONE TEAM MEMBER TRANSFERS MARSHMALLOWS FROM ONE PLATE TO ANOTHER WITH THEIR MOUTH WHILE WEARING VAMPIRE TEETH; THE TEAM MEMBER WITH THE MOST TRANSFERRED MARSHMALLOWS WINS

SUPPLIES: VAMPIRE TEETH, MARSHMALLOWS

HALLOWEEN MINUTE TO WIN IT



7

HALLOWEEN CUP TOWER

STACK AS MANY HALLOWEEN CUPS INTO A TOWER IN ONE MINUTE. TEAM WITH THE MOST STANDING CUPS (IN A TOWER FORMATION) AFTER 1 MINUTE WINS.

SUPPLIES: HALLOWEEN-THEMED PLASTIC CUPS

HALLOWEEN MINUTE TO WIN IT

8

DON'T DROP THE PUMPKIN

ONE TEAM MEMBER HOLDS A PUMPKIN IN BETWEEN THEIR LEGS AND RUNS ACROSS THE ROOM TO ANOTHER TEAM MEMBER. THE NEXT TEAM MEMBER RUNS BACK WITH THE PUMPKIN IN BETWEEN THEIR LEGS. WHICHEVER TEAM HAS THE MOST COMPLETED RUNNERS IN 1 MINUTE WINS

SUPPLIES: MINIATURE PUMPKINS

HALLOWEEN MINUTE TO WIN IT

9

DIZZY MUMMIES

TEAM WRAPS ONE MEMBER IN AS MUCH TOILET PAPER AS POSSIBLE IN ONE MINUTE. BEST LOOKING MUMMY WINS!

SUPPLIES: TOILET PAPER

HALLOWEEN MINUTE TO WIN IT

10 PUDDING PICTIONARY

COVER A TABLE WITH A DISPOSABLE TABLECLOTH. EMPTY PUDDING CONTAINERS ONTO TABLECLOTH. WHISPER A HALLOWEEN WORD INTO TWO TEAM MEMBER'S EARS. TEAM MEMBERS SILENTLY DRAW IN THE PUDDING AND THE FIRST TEAM TO GUESS THE WORD WINS

HALLOWEEN MINUTE TO WIN IT



SUPPLIES: DISPOSABLE TABLECLOTHS, PUDDING



**PRINTABLE
HOLIDAY
BUCKET LISTS**

RANDOM Acts OF Kindness

Decorate THE HOUSE

BAKE A New Treat

GO Sledding

DRINK Hot Cocoa

WRAP Gifts

Caroling DAY

Write A Letter TO SANTA

Kiss UNDER THE Mistletoe

FEED A Reindeer

Read Story A CHRISTMAS

Winter Bucket List

Send CHRISTMAS CARDS

EAT Candy Canes

GO Ice Skating

HANG Stockings

Bake COOKIES

TAKE A FAMILY Photo

CHRISTMAS Party

HANG Ornaments

BUILD A Snowman

LEAVE Cookies FOR SANTA

Wear MATCHING Christmas Pajamas

LISTEN TO Christmas Music

LOOK AT Christmas Lights

MAKE A Gingerbread House

Play IN THE Snow

Go Apple PICKING



DRINK Apple Cider



BAKE A Pumpkin Treat



BAKE Apple Pie



VISIT A Pumpkin Patch



HOST A Bonfire



CARVE A Pumpkin



VISIT A Haunted House



GO Apple Bobbing

VISIT A Corn Maze



MAKE S'mores



GO ON A Hayride



CREATE A Leaf Craft



Fall Bucket List

BUY Candy



CAN Pie Filling



EAT Candy Corn



Decorate FOR FALL



BUILD A Scarecrow



WATCH Football



CREATE YOUR Halloween COSTUME



EAT A Caramel Apple



HAVE A Movie Night



Jump IN A Pile OF Leaves



BURN Fall Candles



ROAST Marshmallows



MAKE Apple Cider



DRINK Hot Cocoa

