

Across the Fence

Holiday Recipes – December 2019

Marco Ayala's Recipes

Christmas Light Cupcakes

1 box devil's food cake mix
1½ cups heavy cream
8 oz. cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla
¼ tsp. salt
Black decorating gel
Mini M&Ms®

Preheat oven to 350°F and line two muffin tins with cupcake liners. Make cupcake batter according to package instructions and fill liners ³/₄ full with batter. Bake until a toothpick inserted in middle comes out clean, 18 minutes. Let cool completely. Make cream cheese frosting: In a large bowl, beat heavy cream until stiff peaks form. Set aside. In another bowl, beat together cream cheese, sugar, vanilla, and salt until light and fluffy. Gently fold in whipped cream. Transfer to piping bag or large Ziploc® bag. Frost cupcakes, making sure they are a good height. Trace a black line around frosting with decorating gel. Stick M&Ms along the black line, imitating rainbow lights.

Frosted Eggnog Cookies

¾ cup butter
½ cup sugar
½ cup light brown sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla
½ cup eggnog
2¼ cups all-purpose flour
2 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt

½ tsp. nutmeg
½ tsp. cinnamon

Frosting:

½ cup butter
3 to 5 Tbsp. eggnog
3 cups powdered sugar

Preheat the oven to 350°F and line two baking sheets with parchment paper. In a large bowl, cream together the margarine and sugars with a fork until fluffy. Whisk in the eggs, vanilla and eggnog. Sift in the flour, baking powder and spices and mix until combined. Scoop out the cookie dough by the tablespoon and roll into balls before flattening onto the baking sheet. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes. While the cookies are cooling, prepare the frosting by combining the ingredients in a food processor. Start with 2 tablespoons eggnog and add more as needed until the frosting is thick and creamy. Once the cookies are completely cool, frost generously and top with a sprinkle of nutmeg. **Yield:** 2 dozen cookies.

Toffee-Chocolate Chip Shortbread

1 stick unsalted butter, room temperature
¼ cup confectioners' sugar
1 tsp. vanilla
1 cup all-purpose flour

¼ tsp. salt
½ cup mini chocolate chips
½ cup toffee bits

Preheat oven to 350°F and line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Using an electric mixer on medium-high speed, cream together butter, confectioners' sugar and vanilla until smooth. Stir in flour and salt just until a dough forms. Fold in chocolate chips and toffee bits. Using your hands, roll dough into 1-inch balls. Place on prepared baking sheet, 1-inch apart, pressing down lightly on each one with a moistened palm. Bake until cookies are firm and just golden around edges, 12 to 14 minutes. Place baking sheet on a wire rack for 5 minutes, then transfer cookies to rack to cool. Repeat with remaining dough. Store cookies in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days.

Thumbprint Cookies

1 cup unsalted butter, softened
⅔ cup granulated sugar, plus 3 Tbsp. for rolling the cookies
2 large egg yolks at room temperature
1 tsp. vanilla
¼ tsp. salt
2⅓ cups all-purpose flour spooned and leveled
½ cup strawberry or apricot jam

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats and set aside. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, or in a large mixing bowl using a handheld mixer, cream together the butter and sugar for 1 to 2 minutes or until well combined. Mix in the egg yolks, vanilla extract, and salt until fully combined, then mix in the flour. The mixture will be a little crumbly at first but it will come together as you continue mixing it. Using a one-tablespoon cookie scoop or measuring tablespoon, measure out the cookie dough, roll into balls, roll each one in granulated sugar (optional), then place on the prepared baking sheets. Use your thumb (or the handle of a large wooden spoon) to press an indentation into each ball of cookie dough. Spoon 1/2 teaspoon of jam into the indentation in each one. Bake at 350°F for 12 to 14 minutes or until the cookies are set and the bottoms are lightly browned. Remove from the oven and cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes, then carefully transfer the cookies to a wire rack to cool completely.

Notes: Cookies may be stored in an airtight container at room temperature or in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

Freezing Instructions: Baked cookies will freeze well for up to 3 months, thaw to room temperature before serving. Cookie dough will also freeze well for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator, then roll in sugar and fill with jam right before baking.

Egg Yolks: It's best for the egg yolks to be at room temperature. If you forget to set them out ahead of time, simply place the eggs in a bowl of warm water for 5 to 10 minutes before separating them.

Crème Brulee Sugar Cookies

Cookies:

¾ cup butter, softened
½ cup packed brown sugar
½ cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
1 Tbsp. vanilla
2 cup all-purpose flour
2 tsp. cornstarch

1 tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. kosher salt

Frosting:

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
1¼ cup confectioner's sugar
1 tsp. vanilla
¼ cup granulated sugar

Preheat oven to 350°F and line two cookie sheets with parchment. Cream butter and sugars until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. Mix in egg and vanilla. In another bowl, whisk together flour, cornstarch, baking soda, and salt, then add mixture to wet ingredients and mix until smooth. Dough will be thick. Using a small cookie scoop, place tablespoon balls of dough onto parchment-lined cookie sheets. Press down lightly on each cookie to flatten slightly. Bake until edges are just starting to brown, 9 to 10 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool 2 to 3 minutes, then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely. Make frosting: Beat cream cheese until smooth. Add powdered sugar and vanilla and mix until smooth. Put sugar into a small bowl. Spread about a tablespoon of frosting onto tops of each cookie, then press into granulated sugar, coating frosting with sugar. Just before serving, use a kitchen torch to caramelize sugar on top, then set aside to cool. Store cookies in the fridge for up to 4 days.

Cranberry Hazelnut Turkey Wellington

2 sheets frozen puff pastry, thawed
1½ to 2 lbs. uncooked turkey breast
1 Tbsp. olive oil
2 Tbsp. butter
2 cloves minced garlic
¼ cup chopped onion
½ cup chopped hazelnuts

2 cups dry bread crumbs
A few tablespoons of turkey or chicken stock
1½ Tbsp. dry chopped fresh thyme
Salt and pepper to season
½ cup fresh or frozen cranberries
1 egg plus 2 Tbsp. water, beaten together
for an egg wash

Begin by sautéing the garlic and onions in the olive oil and butter for a minute or two. Add the bread crumbs and toss until they begin to brown slightly. Add the hazelnuts, thyme, cranberries, salt and pepper. Add only enough turkey stock to make the stuffing hold together. Place the first pastry sheet on a parchment lined cookie sheet. Place the turkey breast along the center line of the pastry sheet. Brush the edges of the pastry with the egg wash. Place the stuffing on top of the turkey. Place the second pastry sheet over the turkey and stuffing. Trim the edges to form an oval shape. Save the trimmings in the fridge.

Bring the edges of the dough together by pinching them together to seal. Roll the dough from the bottom layer over the top layer and press down all the way around the perimeter of the pastry. This creates a tighter seal. Brush the egg wash over the entire surface of the pastry. Decorate with additional pastry leaf shapes if desired. Just cut leaf shapes out of the trimmed pastry and score leaf veining into them with the tip of a sharp knife. Cut four ½-inch slots in the top of the pastry to let steam escape. Chill for 20 minutes or longer in the fridge before baking. This helps the pastry to puff. Bake at 400°F for about 15 to 20 minutes then reduce the heat to 350°F. Use a meat thermometer to make sure that the center has reached at least 170°F to be sure the turkey is completely cooked, about 35 to 45 minutes longer. Let rest for 10 minutes before cutting into individual servings.

Ham and Cheese Pinwheels

1 tube (12-oz.) crescent roll dough
½ lb. deli sliced ham
2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
8 oz. sliced Swiss cheese

4 Tbsp. butter, melted
¼ tsp. garlic powder
2 Tbsp. chopped parsley
1 tsp. poppy seeds

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease an 8x8-inch baking pan with cooking spray. On a lightly floured surface, unroll dough and separate the sheet into rectangles. Pinch the perforations to seal. Spread mustard onto each rectangle. Top with sliced ham and cheese. Starting with one short side, roll up each rectangle. Pinch edges to seal. Cut each roll into 5 to 6 slices. Place cut side up in baking pan. In a small bowl, whisk together melted butter, garlic powder and parsley. Brush over pinwheels, then sprinkle poppy seeds on top. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, until the rolls are golden.

Carolyn Peake's Recipes

Slow-Cooker Alfredo Green Bean Casserole

2 bags (1 lb. each) frozen, cut green beans
1 can 8 oz. sliced water chestnuts, drained
½ cup roasted red bell peppers (from 7-oz jar), cut into small strips
1 container (10 oz.) refrigerated Alfredo pasta sauce
1 can (2.8 oz.) French's® fried onions

Spray inside of a 3 to 4 quart slow cooker with cooking spray. In a large bowl, mix all ingredients except onions. Stir in half the onions and spoon mixture into slow cooker. Cover and cook on LOW heat setting for 3 to 4 hours, stirring after 1 to 1½ hours. About 5 minutes before serving, in a small skillet, heat the remaining half of the onions over medium-high heat for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring frequently, until hot. Stir bean mixture and sprinkle with onions. **Yield:** 10 servings.

Honey-Garlic Glazed Meatballs

2 eggs
¾ cup milk
1 cup dry bread crumbs
½ cup finely chopped onion
2 lbs. ground beef

4 garlic cloves, minced
1 Tbsp. butter
¾ cup ketchup
½ cup honey
3 Tbsp. soy sauce

In a large bowl, combine the eggs and milk then add the bread crumbs and onion and mix together. Crumble the ground beef into the mix and combine very well. Shape into 1-inch balls. Grease two 15x10x1-inch baking pans and place the meatballs onto them. Bake, uncovered, at 400°F for 12 - 15 minutes or until meat is no longer pink. While those are cooking, sauté the garlic and butter in a large saucepan until the garlic is tender. Stir in the ketchup, honey and soy sauce. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and cover and simmer for 5 minutes. Drain the meatballs and place in the sauce mixture. Carefully stir to evenly coat and cook for 5 to 10 minutes. **Yield:** about 5½ dozen. **Note:** Once these are cooked they can be placed in a slow cooker on low to be kept warm for serving.

Bran Refrigerator Rolls

1³/₄ cups boiling water
1 cup all-bran cereal
2 pkgs. (1/4 oz. each) active dry yeast
1/4 cup warm water
1/2 cup shortening

1/2 cup sugar
1 1/2 tsp. salt
2 eggs
5 1/2 to 6 cups all-purpose flour

In a small bowl, mix the 1³/₄ cup boiling water and bran and set aside to cool. In another small bowl, dissolve yeast in the 1/4 cup warm water and set aside. In a large mixing bowl, cream shortening, sugar and salt then add the eggs. Add yeast mixture and mix well. Add the bran mixture plus two cups of flour, again mixing well. Gradually add enough of the remaining flour to form a soft dough. Turn onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic, about 6 to 8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once so the top is also greased. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Punch the dough down, form into rolls, and place on greased baking sheet or into greased muffin cups. Cover and let rise until doubled, about 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Bake at 375°F for 15 minutes or until lightly brown. Remove from pan and cool on wire racks. **Yield:** 3 1/2 dozen.

Saltine Toffee Bark

40 saltine crackers
1 cup butter, cubed
3/4 cup sugar

2 cups (12 oz.) semisweet chocolate chips
8 oz. milk chocolate English toffee bits

Line a 15x10x1-inch baking pan with heavy duty foil. Arrange saltines in a single layer on foil and set aside. In a large heavy saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Stir in sugar. Bring to a boil cooking and stirring 1 to 2 minutes or until sugar is dissolved. Pour evenly over crackers. Bake at 350°F for 8 to 10 minutes or until bubbly. Immediately sprinkle with chocolate chips. Allow chips to soften for a few minutes, then spread over the top. Sprinkle with toffee bits. Cool. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour or until set. Break into pieces. Store in an airtight container. **Yield:** 2 pounds. **Note:** For a different flavor, sprinkle finely crushed candy canes over the chocolate instead of the toffee bits.

Quiche Lorraine

1st Place Winner at the Champlain Valley Expo 2019

Bill Wargo – South Burlington, Vt.

Pastry for a one-crust 9-inch pie
4 strips bacon
1 onion, thinly sliced
1 cup Gruyere or Swiss cheese, cubed
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
4 eggs, lightly beaten

2 cups heavy cream or 1 cup each milk
and cream
1/4 tsp. nutmeg
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. white pepper

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line a nine-inch pie plate with the pastry. By all means build a rim with the pastry and flute it. This is essential for the amount of custard indicated in this recipe. Bake for 5 minutes. Cook the bacon until crisp and remove it from skillet. Pour off all but one tablespoon of the fat remaining in the skillet. Cook the onion in the remaining fat until the onion is transparent. Crumble the bacon and sprinkle the bacon, onion and cheeses over the inside of the partly baked pastry. Combine the eggs, cream, nutmeg, salt, pepper. Strain the mixture over the onion-cheese mixture. Slide the pie onto a baking sheet. Bake the pie for 15 minutes, then reduce heat to 350°F and cook for about 10 minutes longer or until a knife inserted one inch from the pastry edge comes out clean. Remove to a wire rack. Let stand five minutes before serving.

Holiday Honeycrisp Salad
Brenda Pitmon – South Hero, Vt.

½ cup light vegetable oil such as sunflower
or safflower
¼ cup apple cider vinegar
¼ cup unsweetened apple juice or
apple cider
2 to 3 Tbsp. honey
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
½ tsp. salt
Black pepper to taste

3 medium Honeycrisp apples (about
1 lb.) thinly sliced
Juice of ½ lemon
12 oz. salad greens spring mix, baby
spinach, arugula, baby romaine
1 cup pecan halves toasted or candied
¾ cup dried cranberries or dried cherries
4 oz. crumbled blue cheese

To prepare Apple Cider Vinaigrette, measure oil, apple cider vinegar, apple juice/cider, honey, lemon juice, salt, and pepper into a mason jar. Tightly screw on lid and shake vigorously until everything is thoroughly combined. Alternatively, you may briskly whisk the ingredients together in a medium bowl, or blend them in a blender or mini food processor. Place apple slices in a large plastic baggie and squeeze the fresh lemon juice (from the lemon half) over them. Close bag and shake to coat. In a large salad bowl, layer salad greens, apple slices, pecans, dried cranberries, and blue cheese. Just before serving, dress with desired amount of Apple Cider Vinaigrette and toss until salad ingredients are evenly coated.

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