

Across the Fence

Holiday Recipes – December 2018

Heather Fischer's Recipes

Oreo Peppermint Bark

16 oz. semi-sweet chocolate, chopped
16 oz. white chocolate, chopped
¼ tsp. canola, coconut, or vegetable oil
⅛ tsp. salt

½ tsp. peppermint extract, divided
6 candy canes, crushed
12 Oreo® cookies, chopped

Line the bottom and sides of a 9x13x2-inch rectangle baking pan with parchment paper. Place the semi-sweet chocolate into a medium-sized bowl. Melt in the microwave, in 20 second increments, stirring with a spatula and scraping down sides after each increment, until chocolate is completely melted and can be stirred completely smooth. Once melted, stir in a ¼ tsp. of the peppermint extract. Quickly pour the melted semi-chocolate into the prepared baking pan, spreading with spatula into a thin smooth layer. Place the baking pan in the refrigerator for 20 minutes; it will not be completely set. Prepare the next chocolate layer; combine the white chocolate and oil in a medium-sized bowl according to the same instructions you followed to melt the semi-sweet chocolate. Once melted, stir in remaining ¼ tsp. peppermint extract and whisk smooth. Sprinkle half of the crushed candy canes and half of the chopped Oreo cookies on top of the semi-chilled chocolate. Then pour all of the white chocolate on top. Carefully spread into a smooth layer. Evenly sprinkle remaining crushed candy canes and Oreo cookies on top of the wet chocolate. Refrigerate the bark until completely hardened, about 1 hour. Once completely set, remove the chocolate from the pan and discard the parchment paper. Break into pieces large or small, or use a very sharp knife to cut it into large or small squares. Store bark in the refrigerator and bring to room temperature right before serving.

Christmas Magic Bars

30 Oreo® cookies crushed into fine crumbs
½ cup unsalted butter, melted
1 can (14 oz.) sweetened condensed milk
½ cup Heath® toffee bits
½ cup salted and roasted peanuts
½ cup pretzels broken into small pieces

16 Winter Oreo® cookies with red vanilla filling broken into small pieces
1 cup red and green M&M's®
1 bag holiday semi-sweet chocolate red and green morsels

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9x13x2-inch baking pan with non-stick aluminum foil. Mix crushed Oreo cookies with melted butter. Press into an even layer in the 9x13x2-inch baking pan. Sprinkle on toffee bits, peanuts, and pretzels. Pour sweetened condensed milk over top and spread evenly. Add the pieces of red cream filled Oreos cookies, ½ cup of the red and green M&M's and ½ of the bag of holiday morsels. Bake for 25 to 27 minutes until the sweetened condensed milk has caramelized. Remove from oven and sprinkle on the remaining red and green M&M's and holiday chocolate morsels. Return to oven for 3 minutes. Remove pan from oven, and tap it on the counter a few times. This will help secure all the M&M's. Cool completely. Peel off foil. Cut into 24 to 30 squares. Store in an airtight container for up to a week.

6-Layer Dip Christmas Wreath

1 can (16 oz.) refried beans	1 container store bought guacamole
1 can (6 oz.) black olives	¼ cup chopped cilantro
2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese	2 cherry tomatoes
1 container (14 oz.) sour cream	1 red bell pepper
1 container (16 oz.) salsa	1 bag tortilla chips

Prepare your spring form pan and place a glass in the center in order to create a void in the food. Make one layer of each of the above ingredients (except the cilantro, tomatoes, and bell pepper), making sure not to mix the layers as you go. Sprinkle the top of the guacamole layer with finely chopped cilantro. Make the bow out of two cherry tomatoes, and two small pieces of bell pepper. Display on a platter with tortilla chips!

Carolyn Peake's Recipes

Impossibly Easy Breakfast Bake

12 oz. bulk pork sausage	1 cup baking mix
1 medium chopped bell pepper (1 cup)	2 cups milk
1 medium onion, chopped (½ cup)	¼ tsp. pepper
3 cups frozen hash brown potatoes	4 eggs
2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese	

Heat oven to 400°F. Grease 9x13x2-inch baking dish. Cook the sausage, bell pepper and onion in a large fry pan over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the meat is no longer pink. Drain. Stir together sausage mixture, potatoes and 1½ cups of the cheese in the baking dish. Stir together baking mix, milk, pepper and eggs until blended. Pour into baking dish. Bake uncovered for 40 to 45 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake 1 to 2 more minutes or just until cheese is melted. Cool 5 minutes. **Yield:** 12 servings.

Super Easy Chocolate Bars

1 cup butter, softened	1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
½ cup sugar	½ cups chopped pecans or walnuts
2 cup all-purpose flour	½ tsp. vanilla
1 can (14 oz.) sweetened condensed milk	

Preheat oven to 350°F. For crust, in large bowl, beat the butter with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add sugar and beat until combined, scraping sides of the bowl occasionally. Add the flour and beat on low speed until combined. Press two-thirds of the crust mixture evenly in an ungreased 9x13-inch pan. For filling, in a medium saucepan combine milk and chocolate chips. Cook and stir over low heat until the chocolate melts and mixture is smooth. Remove from heat and stir in nuts and vanilla. Spread the hot mixture over the crust and sprinkle the remaining crust mixture over the chocolate mixture. Bake about 35 minutes or until golden brown. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Cut into bars. **Yield:** about 25 bars.

Cream Cheese-Berry Coffee Cake

8 oz. cream cheese
1 cup granulated sugar
½ cup butter, softened
1¾ cup flour
2 eggs
¼ cup milk

1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda
½ tsp. vanilla
½ cup seedless red raspberry jam
confectioners' sugar

Grease 9x13x2-inch baking pan. Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl combine the cream cheese, granulated sugar, and butter. Beat with electric mixer until smooth. Add ¾ cup of the flour, the eggs, milk, baking powder, baking soda and vanilla. Beat about a minute or until combined. Add the remaining 1 cup flour, beating on low speed just until combined. Pour batter evenly into prepared pan. In small bowl, stir jam until nearly smooth. Spoon the jam into 8 or 10 mounds on top of the batter. Using a thin spatula or knife, swirl jam into batter. Bake 30 to 35 minutes or until toothpick inserted into center of the cake comes out clean. Cool the cake in the pan for about 30 minutes. Dust with powdered sugar and serve warm. **Yield:** 24 servings.

Slow-Cooker Three Cheese Broccoli Soup

¼ cup butter
1 large onion, chopped, equal to 1 cup
¼ cup flour
1 can evaporated milk
1 can (32 oz.) chicken broth
1 bag (14 oz.) frozen baby broccoli florets, thawed

½ tsp. pepper
1 package (8 oz.) American cheese
1½ cups (6 oz.) shredded extra-sharp Cheddar cheese
1 cup shredded Parmesan cheese

Spray a 4-qt. slow cooker with cooking spray. In a large fry pan, melt butter over medium heat. Cook the onion for 4 minutes stirring occasionally, until tender. Stir in the flour. Cook for 1 minute, stirring occasionally. Gradually stir in the milk until smooth. Pour mixture into slow cooker. Stir in broth, broccoli and pepper. Cover and cook on low heat for about 4 hours or until bubbly. Add American cheese, cut into cubes and stir until melted. Add the Cheddar cheese and the Parmesan cheese, stirring until melted. If desired, sprinkle individual servings with additional shredded Cheddar cheese. **Yield:** 8 servings.

Holiday Cooking Tips

Assemble Salads in Advance: Add dressing to the bottom of the salad bowl, top with the heartiest ingredients, like cucumbers and tomatoes. Layer the fragile ingredients on top, such as the lettuce or herbs, and top that layer with garnishes like cheese or croutons. The salad will keep for a few hours without wilting; toss the salad and season before serving. **Cut Up Vegetables Before Cooking to Save on Time:** Fall vegetables that are a mainstay at the holiday table (think winter squash or root vegetables) take a while to cook, especially when left whole. Whether a dish requires boiling or roasting, the smaller the vegetables are cut, the less time it will take for each piece to cook through.

Marco Ayala's Recipes

Easy Honey BBQ Ribs

1 slab pork ribs, approximately 4 lbs.
3 Tbsp. honey
1 jar (18 oz.) barbecue sauce

1 Tbsp. paprika
2 Tbsp. brown sugar
½ tsp. salt

Line a lipped baking sheet with aluminum foil. Place ribs, meaty side up, on foil. Combine honey and barbecue sauce in a small bowl. Brush sauce over ribs. Combine paprika, brown sugar, and salt in a small bowl. Sprinkle sugar mixture evenly over sauce on ribs. Using your fingers, rub sauce and sugar mixture around to evenly cover ribs. Bake ribs, uncovered, at 300°F for one hour. Pour remaining barbecue sauce over ribs, loosely cover with aluminum foil. Bake for another 60 minutes, until ribs are fork-tender. Let stand for 3 to 5 minutes. Slice between ribs for single-bone sections. **Yield:** 4 servings

Snowflake Sugar Cookies

Cookies:

3 sticks unsalted butter, room temperature
1½ cups sugar
2 large eggs

2 tsp. vanilla extract
½ tsp. almond extract (optional)
4½ cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking powder

Icing:

2 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
1 tsp. vanilla
4 Tbsp. water or milk

Cookies: In a large bowl, use an electric mixer to beat the butter and sugar on medium-high speed until well-combined and smooth, about 3 minutes. Add the eggs, vanilla, and almond extract and beat until combined. On low speed, slowly add in the flour and baking powder and beat until incorporated. Divide the dough into 2 equal portions. Place one dough portion between two sheets of parchment and roll out to ¼-inch thickness. Repeat with the remaining portion of dough. Place the two sheets of dough on a baking sheet and chill for at least 1 hour or up to 1 day. You can also freeze for 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats. Remove the dough from the fridge and cut into shapes with a cookie cutter, rerolling any scraps and cutting more shapes. Transfer the shapes to the prepared baking sheets. If the dough is warm, freeze for 15 minutes or until firmed again. Bake for 10 minutes, or until the cookies are set and begin to brown. Be careful not to over-bake. Let the cookies cool for 5 minutes before removing to a wire rack to cool completely. Baked un-iced sugar cookies can be frozen in an airtight container for up to 1 month. Icing: In a small bowl, use a fork to beat together all the ingredients. The mixture should be very thick but still pourable. Transfer the icing to a squeeze bottle using a funnel. You can also scoop into a pastry bag fitted with a very small plain tip. Before you begin icing any cookies, take a few moments to practice on a piece of parchment paper to get the feel of the icing. Holding the bottle or bag tip directly over one corner of a cookie, create lines to form a snowflake. If desired, garnish with edible glitter, or sprinkles. Let the icing set before serving.

Santa Cookies

1 pkg. Golden Oreo® cookies
3 cubes white candy coating
3 cubes red candy coating

red M&M's®
mini marshmallows
black decorating gel

wax paper

In separate bowls, melt the red and white candy coatings according to the product package instructions. Dip the top of each Oreo into the red candy coating. Place on wax paper to cool until coating is set. Place the mini marshmallows to mimic the fur lining of hat, and place one for the pom pom on top of the hat. To speed hardening, place in the refrigerator until firm, about 10 minutes. When the red coating is set, dip the lower half of each cookie into the white candy coating. Place the cookies onto wax paper, but do not allow the white coating to set, while candy coating is still wet, affix an M&M nose onto the top center edge of the dipped white section. Create two eyes with the black gel. Fun decorating project for with kids.

Reindeer Cupcakes

Chocolate Cake:

1 box (15.35 oz.) devil's food cake mix
3 eggs
½ cup oil
2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 cup milk or buttermilk
½ cup sour cream

Chocolate Frosting:

1 cup butter
⅓ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 to 3 cups powdered sugar
2 Tbsp. milk

Decorations:

pretzels, for antlers
vanilla wafers, for muzzles
M&M's® for noses
candy eyes

Preheat oven to 350°F and line pans with cupcake liners. Sift cake mix into a small bowl and set aside. In a large bowl, combine eggs, oil, vanilla extract, milk and sour cream until smooth. Stir in cake mix. Fill cupcake liners ¾ full and bake for 16 to 20 minutes or until an inserted knife comes out clean. Let cool. Chocolate frosting: Beat butter. Add cocoa powder, 2 cups powdered sugar and milk. Slowly add more powdered sugar until you reach your desired consistency. Prep reindeer "faces" by using frosting to stick red or brown M&M's on wafers. Frost cupcakes, place the wafers onto cupcake, two pretzels for antlers, and 2 candy eyes. These cupcakes can be also be made into bears by replacing the antlers for a vanilla wafer cut in half and placed for ears instead of pretzels.

Twice Baked Potato Bites

1½ lbs. baby red potatoes about 14 to 17 potatoes, rinsed and drained well
1 Tbsp. olive oil
¼ tsp. salt
¾ cup shredded cheddar cheese divided
½ cup plus 2 Tbsp. sour cream divided

2 oz. cream cheese softened
¼ cup plus 2 Tbsp. bacon bits, divided
½ tsp. seasoned salt
fresh ground black pepper to taste
1 Tbsp. minced fresh chives

Preheat oven to 375°F. Place potatoes on a baking sheet, drizzle with olive oil and season with salt. Roast for 25 to 30 minutes, or until tender through to the center when pierced with a sharp knife. Remove from oven and allow to sit for about 15 minutes or until cool enough to handle. Slice the tops off the potatoes and use the tip of a sharp knife to outline the area you will scoop out, leaving a small rim on the inside of the skin so the potato skins will hold their shape. Use a melon baller or small spoon to scoop out and transfer the potato to a large mixing bowl. Add ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese, ½ cup sour cream, cream cheese, ¼ cup bacon bits, seasoned salt, and pepper. Use an electric mixer to combine until creamy. Spoon the mixture back into the potato skins, mounding slightly. Place back on baking sheet and sprinkle with remaining shredded cheddar cheese. Bake for an additional 5 to 7 minutes, until potatoes are warmed through and cheese has melted. Garnish each potato bite with a small dollop of remaining sour cream, a sprinkling of bacon bits, and chives. For smaller bites, slice the baby potatoes in half instead of slicing the tops off. **Yield:** 8 servings.

Viewer's Recipes

Cranberry and White Chocolate Shortbread

Elaine Drake – Malone, N.Y.

1¾ cups all-purpose flour	1 tsp. vanilla
½ cup corn starch	½ cup dried cranberries
½ tsp. salt	½ cup white chocolate chips
1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature	confectioners' sugar for dusting (optional)
¾ cup confectioners' sugar	

Preheat oven to 300°F. Line a 9x13x2-inch baking pan with parchment paper so that it overhangs ends for easy removal. In a large bowl, combine flour with corn starch and salt. In a separate bowl, beat butter with confectioners' sugar and vanilla until very creamy. Stir in flour mixture then cranberries and chocolate chips. Using floured fingers, pat evenly into prepared pan. Using fork, prick all over. Bake in preheated oven 40 to 50 minutes or until deep golden around edges. Let stand in pan on wire rack for 30 minutes. Using parchment paper lift out pan. Slice into bars while still warm. Cool completely. Dust with confectioners' sugar if desired.

Cranberry Salad

Theresa M. Carr – East Barre, Vt.

1 cup boiling water	1 can (15 oz.) mandarin oranges, drained
1 box (3 oz.) cran-raspberry or raspberry gelatin	1 can (20 oz.) crushed pineapple
1 can (14 oz.) whole cranberry sauce	1 medium diced apple (optional)
	1 cup walnuts (optional)

Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Add whole cranberry sauce (you will need to break it up). Add oranges and pineapple. Add apple and walnuts, if desired. Chill overnight. Very easy and delicious with chicken or turkey.

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