

Holiday Magic

VJJE Publishing Co.

Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	1
<u>Personalized Cooking Aprons</u>	2
<u>Amish Christmas Cookies</u>	3
<u>Bacardi Rum Holiday Celebration Cake</u>	4
<u>Banana Rum Fudge Cake</u>	5
<u>Beefy Cheese Ball</u>	6
<u>Berlin Croncler</u>	7
<u>Berry Christmas Fudge</u>	8
<u>Biscuits For a Friend Wreath</u>	9
<u>Black Pepper Cheese Logs</u>	10
<u>Bourbon Fruit Balls</u>	11
<u>Brandied Apricot Cake Roll</u>	12
<u>Brandied Bleu Cheese</u>	13
<u>Brandied Chocolate Covered Cherries</u>	14
<u>Brandy Bars</u>	15
<u>Brandy Logs</u>	16
<u>Braunschweiger Mold (T&T)</u>	17
<u>Buche De Noel</u>	18
<u>Candied Cranberries</u>	19
<u>Candied Grapefruit Peel</u>	20
<u>Candied Lime Peel</u>	21
<u>Candy Cane Bark</u>	22
<u>Candy Cheesecake</u>	23
<u>Candy Cane Coffee Cake</u>	24

Table of Contents

<u>Candy Cane Cookies</u>	25
<u>Candy Cane Cookies</u>	26
<u>Candy Cane Puffs</u>	27
<u>Candy Canes</u>	28
<u>Cathedral Window Candies</u>	29
<u>Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire</u>	30
<u>Chocolate–Almond Yule Log</u>	31
<u>Chocolate Amaretto Truffles</u>	32
<u>Chocolate Candy Cane Stirrers</u>	33
<u>Chocolate Candy Cane Trifle</u>	34
<u>Chocolate–Dipped Apricots</u>	35
<u>Chocolate–Dipped Glazes Fruits</u>	36
<u>Chocolate Eggnog Layer Cake</u>	37
<u>Chocolate–Hazelnut Panforte (Italian Fruitcake)</u>	39
<u>Chocolate Liqueur Shells</u>	41
<u>Chocolate Mint Christmas Trees</u>	42
<u>Chocolate Raspberry Linzer Cookies</u>	43
<u>Chocolate Raspberry Truffles</u>	44
<u>Chocolate Teddy Bears</u>	45
<u>Chop Suey Loaf</u>	46
<u>Christmas Almond Shortbread</u>	47
<u>Christmas Biscotti</u>	48
<u>Christmas Caramel Crunch</u>	49
<u>Christmas Cheese Cake</u>	50

Table of Contents

<u>Christmas Casserole Cookies</u>	51
<u>Christmas Cheesecake Cookies</u>	52
<u>Christmas Cherry Fudge</u>	53
<u>Christmas Chocolate Mousse</u>	54
<u>Christmas Coffee</u>	55
<u>Christmas-Comes-But-Once-A-Year Chocolate Cake</u>	56
<u>Christmas Cordial</u>	58
<u>Christmas Cornish with Walnut-Apple Stuffing</u>	59
<u>Christmas Crock Cheese</u>	60
<u>Christmas Crunch</u>	61
<u>Christmas Dump Cake</u>	62
<u>Christmas Eggnog Cherry Nut Loaf</u>	63
<u>Christmas Eggnog Ice Cream</u>	64
<u>Christmas English Gingerbread</u>	65
<u>Christmas Eve Coffee</u>	66
<u>Christmas Eve Rainbow</u>	67
<u>Christmas Fruit Balls</u>	68
<u>Christmas Fruit Cake Cookies</u>	69
<u>Christmas Fruit Rolls</u>	70
<u>Christmas Gelatin Salad</u>	71
<u>Christmas Goodies</u>	72
<u>Christmas Jam</u>	73
<u>Christmas Marshmallow Balls</u>	74
<u>Christmas Marshmallow Squares</u>	75

Table of Contents

<u>Christmas Mice</u>	76
<u>Christmas Ornament Cookies</u>	77
<u>Christmas Peppermint Candy Cheesecake</u>	78
<u>Christmas Peppermint Pie</u>	79
<u>Christmas Pickles</u>	80
<u>Christmas Pineapple Cake</u>	81
<u>Christmas Plum Pudding</u>	82
<u>Christmas Plum Pudding with Brandied Cider Sauce</u>	83
<u>Christmas Porridge (Julgrot)</u>	84
<u>Christmas Pound Cake</u>	85
<u>Christmas Pudding</u>	86
<u>Christmas Ribbon Salad</u>	87
<u>Christmas Veggie Tree</u>	88
<u>Christmas Whiskey Pecans</u>	89
<u>Christollen Bread</u>	90
<u>Cinnamon Balls</u>	91
<u>Cinnamon Rock Candy</u>	92
<u>Coconut Holiday Eggnog</u>	93
<u>Colored Snowballs</u>	94
<u>Cranberry Daiquiris</u>	95
<u>Cranberry Rum Brie</u>	96
<u>Cream Cheese Christmas Tarts</u>	97
<u>Crème De Menthe Balls</u>	98
<u>Date Balls</u>	99

Table of Contents

<u>Date Pinwheels</u>	100
<u>Gift of the Magi Bread (T&T)</u>	101
<u>Gingerbread Birdhouse Ornaments</u>	102
<u>Gingerbread Cheesecake</u>	104
<u>Gingerbread Men</u>	105
<u>Gingerbread Tunnel Cake</u>	106
<u>Gingered Almonds</u>	108
<u>Glacéd Cherries and Nuts</u>	109
<u>Glazed Pecans</u>	110
<u>Grandma Cracker's Holiday Cake</u>	111
<u>Gumdrop Tree Centerpiece</u>	112
<u>Hawaiian Holiday Bread</u>	113
<u>Heirloom Holiday Fruit Drops</u>	114
<u>Holiday Banana Bread</u>	115
<u>Holiday Banana Pudding</u>	116
<u>Holiday Billy Goats</u>	117
<u>Holiday Bourbon and Eggnog Cake</u>	118
<u>Holiday Can Cakes</u>	119
<u>Holiday Cheddar Date Cake</u>	120
<u>Holiday Chocolate Log with Chocolate Truffle Cream Frosting</u>	121
<u>Holiday Coffee</u>	123
<u>Holiday Cranberry Wine</u>	124
<u>Holiday Crescents</u>	125
<u>Holiday Date Brownies</u>	126

Table of Contents

<u>Holiday Dressing</u>	127
<u>Holiday Eggnog</u>	128
<u>Holiday Eggnog Bread</u>	129
<u>Holiday Eggnog Pie</u>	130
<u>Holiday Fruit Bars with Vanilla Filling</u>	131
<u>Holiday Fruitcake with Louisiana Pecans</u>	132
<u>Holiday Peppermint Bars</u>	133
<u>Holiday Peppernuts</u>	134
<u>Holiday Rice Bread</u>	135
<u>Holiday Rum Balls</u>	136
<u>Holiday Slush Mix</u>	137
<u>Holiday Spumoni Meringues</u>	138
<u>Holiday Wassail</u>	139
<u>Holiday Wreath</u>	140
<u>Holly Cookies</u>	141
<u>Homemade Christmas Candy Canes</u>	142
<u>Houska (Bohemian Christmas Cake)</u>	143
<u>Irish Coffee Crunch</u>	144
<u>Jingle Bell Ginger Snaps</u>	145
<u>Johnny Appleseed Apples</u>	146
<u>Kahlúa Christmas Cake</u>	147
<u>Kahlúa Filled Cookie Cups</u>	148
<u>Khrustyky (Ukrainian)</u>	149
<u>Kris Kringles</u>	150

Table of Contents

<u>Liqueur Cakes</u>	151
<u>Liqueur Pound Cakes</u>	152
<u>Liqueur Truffles</u>	153
<u>M&M Holiday Bark</u>	154
<u>Macaroon Squares</u>	155
<u>Magic Rum Balls</u>	156
<u>Marshmallow Crème Marzipan</u>	157
<u>Marzipan</u>	158
<u>Maui Cheese Logs</u>	159
<u>Merry Cherry Cheesecake Bars</u>	160
<u>Mexican Mice</u>	161
<u>Mexican Orange Candy</u>	162
<u>Mint Meringue Trees</u>	163
<u>Missouri Colonels</u>	164
<u>Moravian Christmas Cookies</u>	165
<u>Napa Valley Chocolates Chocolate Candy Cane Stirrers</u>	166
<u>Napa Valley Chocolates Marshmallow Snowmen</u>	167
<u>Neapolitan Christmas Cake</u>	169
<u>Nesselrode Pie</u>	170
<u>No-Bake Fruit Balls</u>	171
<u>Norwegian Candied Nuts</u>	172
<u>Nut Loaf</u>	173
<u>Old Amish Christmas Cookies</u>	174
<u>Old-Fashioned Hard Candy</u>	175

Table of Contents

<u>Orange Blossom Spritz</u>	176
<u>Orange Frosted Nuts</u>	177
<u>Peach Eggnog</u>	178
<u>Peach–Nut Holiday Bread</u>	179
<u>Pennsylvania Dutch Brownies</u>	180
<u>Peppermint Cake Roll</u>	181
<u>Peppermint Candy Cheesecake</u>	182
<u>Peppermint Christmas Punch</u>	183
<u>Peppermint Frosting</u>	184
<u>Peppermint Marshmallow Sauce</u>	185
<u>Peppermint Meringues</u>	186
<u>Peppermint Panache Cheesecake</u>	187
<u>Peppermint Patties</u>	188
<u>Peppermint Pound Cake</u>	189
<u>Peppermint Presents</u>	190
<u>Peppermint Snowballs</u>	191
<u>Peppermint Stick</u>	192
<u>Pine Cone Cheese Ball</u>	193
<u>Pink Peppermint Holiday Fudge</u>	194
<u>Planters Holiday Chocolate Nut Squares</u>	195
<u>POINSETTIA</u>	196
<u>Poinsettia Cookies</u>	197
<u>Polish Angel Wings</u>	198
<u>Rainbow Cookies</u>	199

Table of Contents

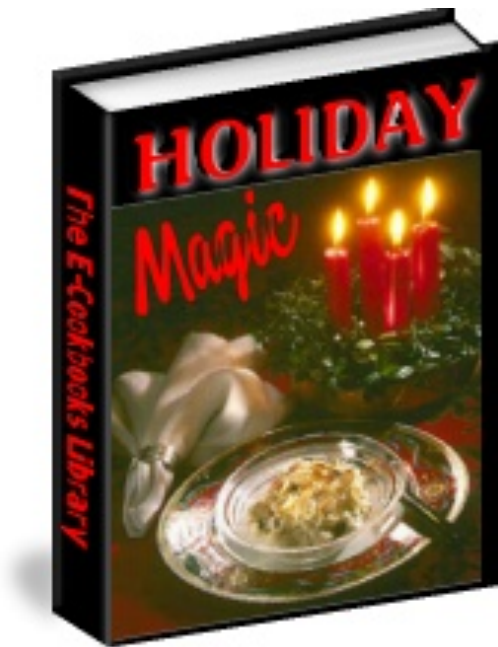
<u>Rainbow Pretzels</u>	201
<u>Raspberry Cheesecake Cookie Pizza</u>	202
<u>Raspberry Fudge Balls</u>	203
<u>Reindeer Cookies</u>	204
<u>Reindeer Toffee</u>	205
<u>Roasted Mixed Nuts</u>	206
<u>Roasted Salted Brandied Nuts</u>	207
<u>Rocks</u>	208
<u>Rum Balls</u>	209
<u>Rum Cake</u>	210
<u>Rum Raisin Bundt Cake</u>	211
<u>Rum Raisin Cheesecake</u>	212
<u>Rum–Raisin Fudge</u>	213
<u>Santa's Blanket Salad</u>	214
<u>Santa Claus Milk</u>	215
<u>Santa's Surprises</u>	216
<u>Santa's Trail Mix</u>	217
<u>Santa's Whiskers</u>	218
<u>Scandinavian Christmas Fruit Bread</u>	219
<u>Scented Ornaments</u>	220
<u>Seven–Flavor Pound Cake</u>	221
<u>Sherried Nuts</u>	222
<u>Shrimp Christmas Tree</u>	223
<u>Speculaas Bars</u>	224

Table of Contents

<u>Spiced Christmas Coffee with Brandied Whipped Cream</u>	225
<u>Spiced Eggnog Cheesecake</u>	226
<u>Stained Glass Holiday Bars</u>	227
<u>Strawberry Champagne Christmas Punch</u>	228
<u>Sugar Plums</u>	229
<u>Sugarplum Squares</u>	230
<u>Sugarplums</u>	231
<u>Super Liqueur Balls</u>	232
<u>Superb English Plum Pudding</u>	233
<u>Swedish Christmas Kola (Caramel Candy)</u>	234
<u>Swedish Christmas Rosettes</u>	235
<u>Swedish Limpa Bread</u>	236
<u>Sweet Spiced Nuts</u>	237
<u>Tiny Christmas Fruit Cakes</u>	238
<u>Traditional South Indian Christmas Cake</u>	239
<u>Twelfth Night Cake</u>	240
<u>Ultimate Cheese Ball</u>	241
<u>Venetian Christmas Cookies</u>	242
<u>Walnut–Rum Crunch</u>	243
<u>Warm Fruit Cider</u>	244
<u>Wexford Christmas Cake</u>	245
<u>White Chocolate Eggnog</u>	246
<u>White Chocolate Party Mix</u>	247
<u>White Christmas Bars in a Jar</u>	248

Table of Contents

<u>White Christmas Fudge</u>	249
<u>White Christmas Jewel Fudge</u>	250



Holiday Magic

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Personalized Cooking Aprons



a great gift idea for anyone ... including yourself!

We'll inscribe two lines of YOUR text in a variety of colors YOU choose. You can be like a professional chef with a name and title! Create a personalized cooking apron for yourself or as a great gift idea for anyone that cooks.

Or, choose from over three hundred professionally designed styles of aprons with popular themes.

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Amish Christmas Cookies

1/2 cup butter
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup light molasses
1 egg, beaten
4 cups flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease cookie sheets.

Cream butter and sugar. Blend in molasses and eggs.

Sift dry ingredients together and stir into molasses-egg mixture. Roll out dough on lightly floured board and cut into shapes with cookie cutters. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes.

Bacardi Rum Holiday Celebration Cake

3 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup (2 sticks) butter, room temperature
2/3 cup milk
1/3 cup Bacardi Gold rum, flavored rum, or other spirit
3 eggs
2 cups chopped pecans (divided use)
Rum glaze (recipe follows)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease and flour a 10-inch Bundt pan.

Combine flour, sugars, baking powder, and salt in the bowl of a mixer. Add butter and mix on low speed until butter is worked in completely; the mixture will have a sandy appearance.

In a small bowl, combine milk, rum, and eggs. Whisk to blend. With mixer on low, add milk mixture to dry ingredients and beat on medium speed for 3 minutes. Stir in 1 1/2 cups pecans. Pour batter evenly into pan. Bake 55 to 60 minutes, until top of cake springs back when touched.

While the cake is baking, make rum glaze. When cake is done, remove from oven and let cool 10 minutes in pan. Invert the cake onto a rack with a large plate underneath. With a wooden skewer or toothpick, pierce cake all over, spacing marks about 1 inch apart. Spoon reserved rum syrup over cake to soak in. Transfer cake to a clean plate and pour thickened glaze over top. Immediately sprinkle with reserved pecans.

Makes 16 servings.

Rum glaze: In a saucepan, combine 1 1/4 cups granulated sugar and 1/3 cup water and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Add 1/2 cup rum, then turn off heat. Add 4 tablespoons butter and stir until melted. Pour 3/4 cup of syrup into a separate container for moistening the cake. To the syrup in the pan, add 2 cups confectioners' sugar and whisk until blended. Add 1 more cup confectioners' sugar and whisk until smooth. Add up to 1 more cup confectioners' sugar, as needed to make a thick, pourable glaze.

NOTE: The cake can be baked and soaked several days in advance; store it wrapped in plastic wrap. Glaze and decorate the cake the day it will be served.

Banana Rum Fudge Cake

1 box Pillsbury Plus dark chocolate cake mix
1 cup (2 or 3 medium) mashed bananas
1/2 cup water
1/4 cup dark rum
3 eggs
1 ounce semisweet chocolate
1/2 cup walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease and flour a 13 x 9-inch cake pan.

Combine cake mix, bananas, water, rum and eggs. Beat in bowl of electric mixer at medium speed for 4 minutes. Pour into prepared pan. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean; cool completely.

Prepare frosting. Spread evenly over cooled cake. Sprinkle with grated chocolate and nuts. Store covered in refrigerator at least 1 hour before serving. Makes 12 servings.

Frosting

1 (3 3/4 ounce) package instant banana pudding and pie filling
1 cup cold milk
1 tablespoon rum
1 (8 ounce) carton frozen whipped topping, thawed

In a large bowl of an electric mixer, combine pudding mix, milk and rum. Beat at medium speed until thick. Fold in whipped topping. Decorate with candied red or green cherries or anything you might desire.

Beefy Cheese Ball

1 jar sliced dried beef, rinsed and finely chopped
8 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup dairy sour cream
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 teaspoon prepared horseradish

Combine 1/4 cup of the dried beef, cream cheese, sour cream, Parmesan cheese and horseradish; blend thoroughly. Refrigerate mixture for 15 minutes.

Form into a ball and roll in remaining dried beef. Chill thoroughly.

Serve with crackers.

Berlin Croncler

1 pound butter
4 cups flour, sifted after measuring
2 1/4 cups granulated sugar, divided
4 egg yolks, beaten
Yolks of 4 hardboiled eggs, mashed
1 egg white
1/4 cup finely chopped pecans

Cut together butter and flour as for pie crust. Add 2 cups sugar and both raw and cooked egg yolks and mix, kneading thoroughly. Form into a long roll and cut into lengthwise strips. Cut strips into small squares of equal size. Roll squares with hands into thin strips 4 or 5 inches long. Cross ends firmly, making a shape like a circle with the ends overlapping and extending downward. Dip one side of the cookie into unbeaten egg white. Then dip into a mixture of pecans and 1/4 cup sugar. Place on greased cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees F until light brown. Keeps well in a cookie tin.

Makes 12 dozen cookies.

Berry Christmas Fudge

8 ounces cream cheese
2 pounds confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon almond extract
Christmas green paste food coloring
1 cup chopped almonds
1 cup fresh cranberries (or frozen), rinsed and drained

In a bowl, mash cream cheese until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar. Beat in almond extract and food coloring. Knead in almonds.

Line a 9–inch square pan with foil and press half of the fudge into an even layer. Place cranberries evenly over fudge. Cover with remaining fudge and press until even. Chill for several hours.

Cut into 1–inch squares with a sharp knife. Store in refrigerator until ready to serve.

Makes 80 (1–inch) squares.

Makes about 5 dozen candies.

Biscuits For a Friend Wreath

1 (10-inch) diameter willow or grapevine wreath

Hunter green acrylic paint

Round brush

10 to 12 dog biscuits

Green florist's wire

3 yards 1/4-inch wide Christmas red paper ribbon

1 yards 1 1/2-inch wide Christmas print paper ribbon

Wire cutter

Glue gun/glue sticks

Spray wreath with warm water until saturated. Apply acrylic paint to all surfaces. Allow paint to dry completely.

With florist's wire attach biscuits to wreath. Tie 8-inch pieces of red ribbon around biscuits to conceal wire. Tie ribbon into bows.

Using print ribbon, make a double-loop bow, 5 inches wide overall with streamers. Finish streamer ends in an inverted "V" shape. Glue bow to top of wreath.

Black Pepper Cheese Logs

8 ounces cream cheese, softened

1 tablespoon milk

1 clove garlic, crushed

1 teaspoon chopped fresh chives

2 tablespoons dried parsley flakes

Coarsely ground black pepper

Combine first 5 ingredients. Shape mixture into two 5-inch logs. Roll in coarsely ground black pepper. Cover and chill at least 3 hours.

Serve with assorted crackers.

Makes about 1 cup.

Bourbon Fruit Balls

**1 (9 ounce) package None Such® Condensed
Mincemeat, finely crumbled
2 cups vanilla wafer crumbs (about 56 cookies)
1 cup flaked coconut
1 cup confectioners' sugar
1/4 cup bourbon or rum
3 tablespoons light corn syrup
2 tablespoons water
Additional confectioners' sugar**

In large bowl, combine all ingredients except additional confectioners' sugar until well blended. Chill 4 hours or overnight.

Dip hands in confectioners' sugar; shape mixture into 1-inch ball. (Re-chill if mixture become too soft.) Roll in additional confectioners' sugar. Place on wax paper-lined baking sheets; chill 2 hours or until firm. Store tightly covered at room temperature. Re-roll in confectioners' sugar before serving if desired.

Brandied Apricot Cake Roll

4 eggs (at room temperature)
3/4 cup granulated sugar
3/4 cup sifted cake flour
3/4 teaspoon double acting baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Grease the bottom and sides of a jellyroll pan (15 x 10 x 1-inch). Line the pan with wax paper and then grease the paper. Reserve.

Sift together the cake flour, baking powder and salt. Beat eggs very well in large bowl of mixer. Add sugar gradually and beat until mixture becomes fluffy, thick and light-colored (about 5 minutes). Fold in sifted dry ingredients and then the vanilla extract. Pour batter into jellyroll pan and bake at 400 degrees F for 13 minutes.

Cover a clean dish towel with confectioners' sugar. Turn cake onto towel. Peel off wax paper and roll cake from the short end, rolling cloth in cake. Place on rack to cool, end side down. When cool, unroll and spread with filling. Re-roll and place on serving platter, leaving end of cake underneath.

Brandied Apricot Filling

1/2 cup apricot preserves
1/4 cup cognac or whiskey

Mix preserves and whiskey together; spread on cake.

Frosting

1/2 pint heavy cream
1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar
1/4 teaspoon cognac or whiskey

Whip cream with confectioners' sugar; fold in flavoring. Frost cake, garnish as desired and refrigerate until serving time.

Brandied Bleu Cheese

8 ounces cream cheese, softened

1/3 cup brandy

8 ounces Kraft bleu cheese, crumbled

Dash of ground nutmeg

Whip ingredients together. Serve with cocktail wafers.

Makes 2 cups.

Brandied Chocolate Covered Cherries

50 maraschino cherries, well drained
3/4 cup brandy
3 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons light corn syrup
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cups sifted confectioners' sugar
1 1/2 pounds dipping chocolate, white or dark

Pour brandy over drained cherries; let set for two days.

Combine butter, corn syrup and salt; blend until smooth. Add confectioners' sugar and mix well. Knead until smooth and shiny; wrap in wax paper and chill for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, drain cherries well on paper towels; pat dry. Shape a marble-size piece of fondant around each cherry; place on wax paper-lined tray. Chill until firm, about 2 hours.

Melt chocolate over hot water, stirring constantly. Dip cherries and place on wax paper-lined tray. Place in refrigerator to set. Store in covered container in a cool, dark place for 10 to 14 days to fully ripen and to attain the liquid inside.

Brandy Bars

1/2 cup candied cherries
1/2 cup candied pineapple
1/2 cup mixed candied peels
1/2 cup currants
1/2 cup brandy
3 eggs
1 cup granulated sugar
7/8 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup broken walnuts
Confectioners' sugar

Cut fruit into fairly small pieces. Cover with brandy. Put into an airtight jar and let set at least 24 hours.

Beat eggs until light. Add sugar.

Sift dry ingredients together and sift into egg mixture. Add nuts and then fruit and brandy mixture. Mix well. Pour onto a well-buttered 10 x 15 inch jellyroll sheet. Spread in pan. Bake for 25 minutes at 325 degrees F.

Cut into bars when cool. Roll in confectioners' sugar. Store in airtight containers.

Brandy Logs

4 cups graham crumbs
1 1/2 cups chopped walnuts
1 cup coconut
1 can sweetened condensed milk
1/2 cup brandy
Confectioners' sugar

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients, except confectioners' sugar. Blend well and refrigerate until firm. Roll out into 1-inch logs and sprinkle with confectioners' sugar.

Makes 6 dozen.

Braunschweiger Mold (T&T)

1 (16-ounce) roll Oscar Meyer braunschweiger
1/2 cup chili sauce
1 tablespoon horseradish

NOTE: Use only Oscar Meyer braunschweiger.

Mix well and pack into a Christmas tree-shaped dish. Cream together a small amount of mayonnaise and 6 ounces of cream cheese and spread on top. Decorate with dried parsley and pimentos.

Serve with an assortment of crackers.

Buche De Noel

Cake

1 cup sifted cake flour
1/4 cup cocoa
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 eggs
1 cup granulated sugar
1/3 cup cold brewed coffee
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Filling

1 1/2 cups heavy cream
2 teaspoons instant coffee
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar

Frosting

1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1/4 cup strong coffee
1 cup butter
3/4 cup light corn syrup
4 egg yolks

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Line a jellyroll pan with wax paper, then grease the pan.

Cake: Sift flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt together in a small bowl; set aside.

In a separate bowl beat eggs until thick and creamy. Gradually add sugar, beating constantly until mixture is very thick. Stir in coffee and vanilla extract. Fold in flour mixture. Spread batter evenly in pan. Bake for 12 minutes.

Sprinkle kitchen towel with confectioners' sugar, invert cake onto towel, remove wax paper and roll cake and towel jellyroll fashion. Cool.

When cake has cooled unroll, spread with filling, re-roll.

Filling: Beat cream until stiff. Add instant coffee and confectioners' sugar.

Frosting: Melt chocolate chips with coffee over hot, not boiling water. Cool.

Beat butter in small bowl until light and fluffy. Beat corn syrup and egg yolks into butter. Stir in cooled chocolate mixture.

Candied Cranberries

1 cup firm red cranberries
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup water

After washing and drying cranberries, prick each berry in several places with a needle. Boil sugar and water to 230 degrees F. Add cranberries and cook gently until syrup will jell when dropped from the tip of a spoon. Remove berries. Place on wax paper to cool and dry.

Roll cranberries in granulated sugar.

Candied Grapefruit Peel

Peels from 3 grapefruits, cut into large pieces
2 cups granulated sugar
1 cup water
1/4 cup light corn syrup

Place grapefruit peels in a saucepan and cover them water. Bring to a boil over medium–high heat, then reduce the heat to simmer. Cook for about 25 minutes, or until the peels are soft. Drain the peels; remove bitter white pith with a paring knife, leaving just the skin. Slice the peel into thin strips.

In a heavy saucepan, mix sugar, the 1 cup water and corn syrup; bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to a simmer, and add the strips of peel. Cook the strips until they become translucent, about 45 to 50 minutes, depending on their thickness.

Remove the strips with a slotted spoon, and drain them. Sprinkle a thick layer of sugar onto a large plate. Spoon the peel strips onto the sugar, and toss them with a fork to coat them evenly. Transfer the strips to a large sheet of wax paper, and let them dry for about 1 to 2 hours.

Store the peel, covered, at room temperature. It will keep at least 2 weeks. Pretty glass jars packed with candied peel make wonderful Christmas gifts.

Candied Lime Peel

2 limes

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1 1/2 cups water

Squeeze juice from limes and save in refrigerator for later use. Slice lime peels thinly. In a heavy saucepan on high heat, boil sugar and water for 3 minutes.

Add lime peels. Reduce heat to medium and simmer for 1 hour, or until skin is softened.

Cool on a wire rack set over a cookie sheet. Dry on the rack for 12 hours.

Refrigerate in a covered container.

Candy Cane Bark

**1 pound Guittard's white chocolate (or other
good quality white chocolate)**

1 cup toasted almonds

1 cup crushed candy canes or starlight mints

Microwave the chocolate on HIGH for 1 minute. Stir. Microwave another 20 to 30 seconds to finish melting.

Stir in the almonds and the candy. Spread out onto a piece of wax paper to desired thickness. Cool and break into pieces.

Candy Cheesecake

1 1/3 cups chocolate cookie crumbs
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1/4 cup butter
1 1/2 cups sour cream
1/2 cup granulated sugar
3 eggs
1 tablespoon flour
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon peppermint extract
24 ounces cream cheese
2 tablespoons butter
2/3 cup crushed peppermint candy

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Combine first 3 ingredients and press into a 9-inch springform pan.

Blend sour cream, sugar, eggs, flour and both extracts until smooth. Add cream cheese and the 2 tablespoons butter. Stir in crushed candy. Pour into crust and bake on lowest rack of oven for 50 to 60 minutes or until firm. Allow to cool (top may crack) and refrigerate overnight.

Remove from pan and serve. Top with sweetened whipped cream and garnish with candy cane if desired.

Candy Cane Coffee Cake

Dough

2 cups dairy sour cream
2 packages active dry yeast
1/2 cup warm water (105 – 115 degrees F)
1/3 cup plus 1/2 teaspoon granulated sugar, divided
1 teaspoon salt
2 eggs, room temperature
1/3 cup butter or margarine (can use oil if prefer)
5 to 6 cups all-purpose flour

Filling

1 1/2 to 2 cups finely chopped dried apricots
1 1/2 to 2 cups finely chopped, drained maraschino cherries
Soft butter or margarine

Icing

2 cups confectioners' sugar
2 to 3 tablespoons warm milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Heat the sour cream in the microwave or over low heat just until lukewarm. Dissolve yeast in warm water with 1/2 teaspoon sugar and let stand for 5 minutes.

Combine 3 cups flour, 1/3 cup sugar and salt. At low speed, gradually beat in sour cream, softened butter, eggs and yeast mixture. Beat until well blended. Beat in additional flour, about 1 cup or so at a time, until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl. On a floured surface, knead dough until smooth and elastic, 8–10 minutes.

Place in a greased bowl, turning dough so greased side is on top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until double (about 1 hour).

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

Punch down dough; divide into 3 equal parts. Roll each part into a 15 x 6-inch rectangle. Place on greased baking sheet. With scissors, make 2-inch cuts at 1/2-inch intervals on long sides of rectangles.

Combine apricots and cherries. Spread 1/3 of the mixture down the center of the rectangle. Bring the cut strips crisscrossed over the filling. Stretch the log to about 22 inches, and curve to form a cane. Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown.

While warm, brush with butter and drizzle canes with Thin Icing. Cut red and green maraschino cherries and put clusters of 3 red cherry halves and a couple of green cherry quarters in 3 or 4 clusters along the candy cane to look like holly berries and leaves.

Makes 3.

Candy Cane Cookies

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup butter, softened
1 cup confectioners' sugar
1 egg
1 teaspoon peppermint extract
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Red food coloring

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Blend flour and salt in a small bowl. In a large bowl, beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and extracts well, then stir in flour and salt. Divide dough in half and color one half with 8 drops red food coloring; refrigerate, wrapped in plastic, for 2 hours.

Working with 1 teaspoon of dough at a time, form 5-inch long, pencil-thin cylinders of each color. Twist one cylinder of each color together to look like a candy cane. Sprinkle with crushed peppermint candy, if desired. Bake 12 to 15 minutes. Cool on racks and store in covered tins.

Makes about 4 dozen candy canes.

Candy Cane Cookies

Makes about 6 dozen

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup butter, softened
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3/4 cup decorator sugar

Heat oven to 375 degrees F.

Mix all ingredients together in large bowl. Divide dough into fourths. Divide each fourth into fourths, for a total of 16 pieces. Shape each piece into thin 15-inch rope. Cut each into 5 (3-inch) lengths. Place 1 inch apart onto ungreased cookie sheets. Shape into candy cane shape. Bake for 9 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned on edges. Cool 1 minute; remove from cookie sheets. While cookies are still warm, dip into decorator sugar.

Buttery Pretzel Cookies

Cut rolled out dough ropes into 5-inch lengths. Shape into pretzel shape. Bake as directed. While warm, dip in mixture of 3/4 cup sugar and 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon.

Candy Cane Puffs

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup unsalted butter (at room temperature)
1 cup confectioners' sugar
1 egg
1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
8 (1 ounce) squares white chocolate, melted
1/2 cup finely crushed candy canes

Stir together flour and salt in a medium-size bowl. Beat butter and confectioners' sugar in a large bowl until smooth and creamy. Beat in egg. Mix in peppermint extract and vanilla extract. Beat in flour mixture. Cover dough with plastic wrap; refrigerate 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

Shape dough into 1-inch balls; place on lightly greased baking sheets. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until bottoms are lightly browned. Remove cookies to wire racks to cool completely.

To coat, brush each cookie with melted white chocolate; dip lightly in crushed candy canes. Place on wax paper to harden.

Candy Canes

6 cups granulated sugar
3 cups cold water
2 tablespoons light corn syrup
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cream of tartar
Peppermint flavoring oil
Food coloring

Combine sugar, water, corn syrup and salt in a large heavy pan. Heat and stir until sugar crystals are dissolved, then stop stirring. Bring to a rolling boil and wash down the crystals, then add the cream of tartar. Boil rapidly to the hard crack stage on a candy thermometer.

Pour two-thirds of the syrup out quickly onto a slab or greased flat pan. Pour the rest into a buttered glass pie pan, and do not move until partly set. Turn the edges in on each portion and add flavoring to each – about 6 drops of oil to the large portion and 3 to the small. Add food coloring to the small dish. As soon as possible, start to pull the portion in the large container until pearly-colored. (It will be very hot – butter your hands and set it down when it gets too hot!) Form it into a ball.

Meanwhile gather up the colored portion and form it into a rope and wrap it around the ball. With one person on each end, start to stretch and twist the ball in opposite directions to form a long rope with the traditional stripe. Cut into lengths as necessary. When the desired diameter is achieved, cut and form into canes (roll it on the board to get it smooth). If it gets too cold to work with, put on a wooden breadboard in a warm oven to soften.

Cathedral Window Candies

12 ounces chocolate chips

1/4 pound butter

1 cup walnuts

10 1/2 ounces colored mini marshmallows

1 cup flaked coconut

Melt chocolate chips in butter. Cool for 5 minutes. Add nuts and marshmallows. Mix. Sprinkle coconut on wax paper. Spoon mixture over coconut. Roll up tightly to form two large 3-inch diameter logs. Refrigerate until firm. Cut into slices.

Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire

1 pound fresh chestnuts

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Select fresh chestnuts that are heavy, glossy and firm, with smooth shells. Using a paring knife, cut a small cross on one side of each shell to allow steam to escape and to make nuts easier to peel. Place nuts in a single layer in a heavy oven-proof skillet or roasting pan. Roast 15 to 20 minutes.

Wrap hot chestnuts in a towel and squeeze to crush the shells. Keep nuts wrapped for 5 minutes before removing. Shell the chestnuts by removing both the hard outer shell and the thin brown skin inside. Be careful not to burn your fingers.

One pound fresh chestnuts equals about 2 cups roasted and shelled.

Chocolate–Almond Yule Log

8 to 10 servings

1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup water
6 eggs, separated
3/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
2/3 cup granulated sugar, divided
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup ground almonds
1/4 cup all–purpose flour
Confectioner's sugar
1 tablespoon almond– or cherry–flavored liqueur (optional)
Chocolate frosting (about 2 cups)
Sliced blanched almonds, optional
Cinnamon candies, optional
Sliced green glace cherries, optional

Lightly grease 15 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 1–inch jellyroll pan. Line bottom with wax paper. Grease again. Set aside.

In small saucepan, bring 1/2 cup sugar and water to boiling. Reduce heat. Simmer 1 minute. Set aside to cool.

In large mixing bowl, beat egg whites with cream of tartar at high speed until foamy. Add 1/3 cup of the sugar, 2 tablespoons at a time, beating constantly until sugar is dissolved (rub just a bit of meringue between thumb and forefinger to feel if sugar has dissolved) and whites are glossy and stand in soft peaks.

In small mixing bowl, beat egg yolks at high speed until thick and lemon–colored, about 3 to 5 minutes. Gradually beat in remaining 1/3 cup of the sugar until blended. Beat in vanilla extract, almond extract and salt.

In small bowl, stir together ground almonds and flour. Sprinkle over whites. Add beaten yolk mixture. Gently, but thoroughly, fold yolk mixture and almond mixture into whites. Pour into prepared pan. Gently spread evenly. Bake in preheated 400 degree F oven until top springs back when lightly touched with finger, about 10 to 12 minutes.

Dust clean tea towel with confectioners' sugar. With spatula, loosen cake from sides of pan and invert onto prepared towel. Carefully pull wax paper off bottom of cake. Trim all edges with serrated knife. Stir liqueur, if desired, into cooled, reserved sugar syrup. Spoon evenly over inside surface of hot cake. Starting from short edge, roll up cake, rolling towel with cake. Place wrapped roll seam–side down on wire rack until cool, about 30 minutes.

Carefully unroll cake. Spread with about 1 cup chocolate frosting. Re–roll. Place seam–side down on serving platter. Spread with about 1 cup additional frosting, using small spatula to create tree–bark effect. Garnish with sliced almonds, candies and cherries, if desired.

Chocolate Amaretto Truffles

4 ounces semisweet chocolate
1 tablespoon amaretto liqueur
1/4 cup butter
1/2 cup finely chopped nuts

Melt chocolate and remove from heat. Stir in amaretto. Add butter and beat until smooth and creamy. Chill for 5 to 10 minutes until mixture firms up.

Drop by teaspoon and roll in nuts. Keep truffles refrigerated until ready to serve.

Chocolate Candy Cane Stirrers

Yields 50 coated canes

NOTES: To avoid a white "bloom" on cooling chocolate, be careful not to overheat it. If you need to re-melt chocolate, add a little fresh chopped chocolate. About 1/2 the chocolate or candy coating will be left after dipping canes, but you need the volume to get a smooth finish. Use leftovers to make another simple confection: Dunk dried apricots into the extra and lay fruit on wax paper. Chill until firm. Package airtight; keep cool.

About 1 cup finely chopped semisweet chocolate
50 (2 1/2 inch long) peppermint candy canes or sticks
Cellophane or clear plastic wrap

In a 1-cup glass measure or small, deep microwave-safe bowl, heat 3/4 cup chocolate in a microwave oven at 50 percent power until chocolate is soft, about 1 1/2 minutes. Stir chocolate until smooth. If needed, return to microwave and heat for 20-second intervals, stirring often. Add 1/4 cup chocolate and stir until smooth. Set container in a small bowl of hot water (water should come halfway up sides of cup) to keep chocolate soft; don't get water in chocolate or it will harden.

Cover a 12 x 15-inch baking sheet with nonstick cooking paper, baking parchment or waxed paper. Dip straight ends of candy canes into chocolate, coating 1/2 to 3/4 of the canes; use a spoon to pour chocolate over canes if needed. Lift out canes and lay slightly apart on the baking sheet.

If desired, drizzle a ribbon of chocolate from spoon over coated sections of the candy canes. Chill 3 to 4 minutes, then return canes to room temperature until chocolate is firm, about 15 minutes. Wrap each cane in cellophane or clear plastic wrap.

Chocolate Candy Cane Trifle

1 (18.25 ounce) box chocolate cake mix
2 small boxes regular vanilla pudding
6 peppermint candy canes, crushed
1 pint heavy cream, whipped

Bake cake as directed on the package in a 13 x 9-inch pan. Cool and pierce all over with a fork.

Cook and cool vanilla pudding.

Whip heavy cream, sweetening to taste with confectioners' sugar.

In a large glass bowl, put in a layer of chocolate cake that has been cut into small squares. Pour some vanilla pudding over cake layer. Spread with a layer of whipped cream. Sprinkle with crushed candy canes. Continue to add layers until the bowl is filled, ending with the whipped cream layer. Garnish with crushed candy canes.

Chocolate–Dipped Apricots

26 whole small dried apricots
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
3 1/2 ounces almond paste

Open the seam halfway around each of the apricots with a sharp knife. Fill each slit with 1/2 teaspoon of the almond paste, and press the sides of the apricot together gently (the paste will not be enclosed completely).

In the top of a double boiler set over barely simmering water melt the chocolate chips, stirring until the chocolate is smooth.

Dip the unfilled side of each apricot in the chocolate and chill the apricots in one layer on a wax paper–lined tray for 1 hour. Store the apricots in an airtight container lined with wax paper, separating each layer with wax paper, in a cool, dry place. Chocolate–Dipped Apricots keep for 2 weeks.

Chocolate–Dipped Glazes Fruits

- 1 pound assorted glazed fruits, such as pineapple, peaches, pears, apricots and/or maraschino cherries with stems**
- 1 (12 ounce) package semisweet chocolate chips**
- 2 tablespoons solid vegetable shortening**

Line cookie sheet with sheet of greased wax paper or foil; set aside.

Cut glazed fruit, if large, into chunks; leave smaller pieces, like maraschino cherries, whole. In top of double boiler over simmering water, melt chocolate and shortening, stirring frequently until blended and smooth. Remove double boiler from heat, but keep top portion of pan over hot water.

To dip fruits: Hold maraschino cherries by stems; spear other fruits, one at a time, on fork. Dip fruits into chocolate to cover only bottom halves. Place fruits as they are dipped on prepared cookie sheet; let stand 15 to 20 minutes until chocolate is set. Store in tightly covered containers, with wax paper between layers, in refrigerator up to 5 days.

Makes about 1 pound.

Candied Fruit Fancies

Prepare Chocolate–Dipped Glazed Fruits, as directed, substituting 1 pound candied orange halves and/or glazed pears for assorted glazed fruits, and 12 ounces white chocolate, coarsely chopped, about 2 cups, for semisweet chocolate chips. Store as directed.

Makes about 1 pound.

Chocolate Eggnog Layer Cake

2 cups cake flour
3/4 cup cocoa plus about 3 tablespoons
extra set aside for the pans
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup vegetable oil
2 large eggs plus 2 large egg yolks
4 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate,
melted and slightly cooled
1 cup strong brewed coffee, cooled
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1 cup dairy eggnog

Sift together the flour, cocoa, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F and set oven rack at upper middle level. Lightly grease two 9-inch springform pans. Dust pans with the extra cocoa and shake out excess.

Beat together sugar and oil. Add eggs and yolks, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in melted chocolate and coffee.

Add vanilla extract to eggnog. Beat flour mixture and eggnog mixture into chocolate mixture a little bit at a time, alternating between the two until both are completely incorporated. Scrape down sides of bowl and beat again, briefly.

Divide batter evenly between prepared pans and bake in the middle of the oven for 30 to 35 minutes, or until cake springs back when lightly pressed in the center. Cake will look almost black and very glossy.

Remove pans from oven and allow to cool on wire racks for 15 to 20 minutes. Remove cake from pans and allow to cool completely before frosting.

Chocolate Eggnog Icing

2 cups unsweetened cocoa
1 3/4 cups confectioners' sugar
3/4 stick (6 tablespoons) unsalted butter, room temperature
8 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
2 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate,
melted and slightly cooled
3/4 cup dairy eggnog
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

Sift together the cocoa and confectioners' sugar. **DO NOT SKIP THIS STEP** or you will end up with lumps in the icing. Set aside.

Cream together all other ingredients. Add cocoa mixture a little at a time. Beat on highest mixer setting for several minutes, pausing to scrape down sides of bowl occasionally. Ice the cake and serve. Frosting

Holiday Magic

is enough to generously frost two 9-inch or 10-inch cake layers.

Cake serves 12 to 16.

Chocolate–Hazelnut Panforte (Italian Fruitcake)

1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted, divided*
1 1/2 cups whole hazelnuts
1 cup whole unblanched almonds
1 1/2 cups lightly packed chopped dried Calimyrna figs
1 1/2 cups lightly packed chopped dried apricots
1 cup diced candied citron
2 tablespoons grated orange peel (orange part only)
1 tablespoon grated lemon peel (yellow part only)
3/4 cup unbleached all–purpose flour
3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder (preferably Dutch–process), plus more for sprinkling tops
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 scant teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 scant teaspoon ground coriander
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons honey
6 ounces bittersweet (not unsweetened) or semisweet chocolate, melted

Position rack in center of oven and preheat to 400 degrees F. Brush two 8–inch round cake pans with melted butter. Line bottoms with parchment paper. Brush parchment generously with butter. Reserve remaining butter.

Place hazelnuts on small cookie sheet; place almonds on another small cookie sheet. Toast in oven until nuts are brown and fragrant, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes for almonds and 14 minutes for hazelnuts. Cool.

Reduce oven temperature to 300 degrees F.

Gather hazelnuts in dish towel. Rub in rough towel to remove husks. Transfer hazelnuts and almonds to large bowl. Add figs, apricots, citron, orange peel and lemon peel.

Combine flour, 3/4 cup cocoa powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, coriander, pepper and cloves in small bowl. Add to nuts and mix well.

Combine sugar, honey and remaining melted butter in a heavy medium saucepan. Stir over medium heat until mixture is smooth and sugar is mostly dissolved, about 5 minutes. Bring to boil. Continue cooking until candy thermometer registers 248 degrees F (firm–ball stage). Immediately pour over nut mixture. Stir to combine.

Divide batter between prepared pans, using back of a buttered spoon to spread evenly. Bake until top and edges just begin to brown and tops feel dry, about 1 1/4 hours.

Cool slightly on wire rack. Run a small sharp knife around edges of pans to loosen cakes. Turn cakes out onto work surface; peel off parchment. Cool cakes completely.

Holiday Magic

Arrange cakes top sides up on 8–inch cardboard rounds. Spread half the melted chocolate over each. Refrigerate until chocolate is set, about 1 hour.

Sprinkle tops of cakes with cocoa powder. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap.

The cakes can be prepared up to 1 month ahead. Store at cool room temperature. Makes two 8–inch cakes, 64 servings.

*** Use real butter or stick margarine. Do not substitute reduced–fat spreads; their higher water content often yields less–satisfactory results.**

Chocolate Liqueur Shells

Chocolate Cases

3 ounces semisweet or bittersweet chocolate
3 ounces milk chocolate
3 ounces white chocolate

Melt each chocolate in a different bowl.

With a spoon, smear melted chocolate evenly over inside of 12 paper cups. Turn cups upside down on a plate. Refrigerate until set. Gently peel off the paper. (The chocolate cases can be made ahead of time and stored in a cool, dry place.)

Mousse

3 ounces white chocolate, chopped
2 eggs, separated
1 tablespoon Tia Maria
1 tablespoon creme de menthe
1 tablespoon Cointreau
Food coloring, if desired

Slowly melt white chocolate. Remove from heat; quickly beat in egg yolks. Set aside.

In a separate bowl, beat egg whites until stiff. Divide egg yolk mixture into three separate bowls and add 1 teaspoon of a different liqueur to each bowl. Add a drop or two of green food coloring to bowl containing creme de menthe, if desired. A drop or two of yellow coloring can be added to Cointreau mixture. Gently fold a third of the egg whites into each of the bowls. Spoon into chocolate shells. Refrigerate for 2 hours.

Chocolate Mint Christmas Trees

1 cup confectioners' sugar
1 cup butter, softened
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Topping

1 (10 ounce) package white vanilla chips
2 tablespoons solid shortening (not butter or margarine)
1/2 cup chopped peppermint candies

In large mixer bowl, combine confectioners' sugar and butter; beat until light and fluffy. Add flour, cocoa and vanilla extract; mix well.

On lightly floured surface, roll dough to 3/8-inch thickness. Cut with sharp knife into 1 1/4-inch strips. Cut each strip into 1 1/4-inch squares; cut each square diagonally into triangles. Place 1/2 inch apart on parchment-lined baking sheets. Bake at 350 degrees F for 10 to 13 minutes or until firm to the touch. Immediately place on wire racks to cool.

Cool baking sheets; line with parchment paper or wax paper.

In 2-cup glass measure, combine vanilla chips and shortening. Microwave on HIGH for 1 minute; stir. Continue to microwave in 30-second increments, stirring after each time, until mixture is melted and smooth.

To make each tree: Dip long edge of 1 cookie triangle into melted chip mixture; place on prepared baking sheet. Dip long edge of second triangle into chip mixture; place uncoated corner over coated edge of first triangle. Dip long edge of third triangle into chip mixture; place uncoated corner over coated edge of second triangle to form tree. Repeat with remaining cookie triangles. Drizzle remaining coating over completed trees; sprinkle chopped candy over tops. Let stand until firm.

Chocolate Raspberry Linzer Cookies

2 1/3 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup granulated sugar
3/4 cup butter, softened
2 eggs
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
2 cups chocolate chips
3/4 cup raspberry jam
Confectioners' sugar

In medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt. Set aside.

In large bowl, combine sugar and butter; beat until creamy. Beat in eggs and almond extract. Gradually beat in flour mixture. Divide dough in half. Wrap each half in plastic wrap and chill until firm. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

On lightly floured board roll half of dough to 1/8-inch thickness. Cut with 2 1/2-inch round cookie cutter. Repeat with remaining dough. Place on ungreased cookie sheet and bake for 8 to 10 minutes. Cool completely.

Melt chocolate chips over hot water, stir until smooth. Spread 1 teaspoon chocolate on flat side of cookie, top with 1 teaspoon of raspberry jam. Put cookies together to form a sandwich and sprinkle with confectioners' sugar.

Yield: 3 dozen

Chocolate Raspberry Truffles

1 1/3 cups semisweet chocolate chips
2 tablespoons heavy or whipping cream
1 tablespoon butter
2 tablespoons seedless raspberry jam

In small heavy-gauge saucepan, combine semisweet chocolate chips, heavy cream and butter. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until smooth. Stir in raspberry jam. Cover with plastic wrap; freeze 20 minutes or until very thick.

Drop by level measuring teaspoonsful onto wax paper-lined cookie sheets. Freeze 15 minutes. Roll into balls. Freeze 15 minutes or until very firm. Roll in cocoa or confectioners' sugar until well coated. Store truffles in airtight containers in refrigerator.

Makes about 48.

Chocolate Teddy Bears

2/3 cup butter or margarine*
1 cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2 eggs
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa or Dutch-process cocoa
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

In large mixer bowl beat butter, sugar and vanilla until light and fluffy. Add eggs; blend well.

Combine flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt; gradually add to butter mixture, blending thoroughly. Chill until dough is firm enough to handle.

To shape teddy bears, form: a 1- to 1 1/2-inch ball of dough for the body; a 3/4 - to 1-inch ball for the head; four 1/2-inch balls for arms and legs; two smaller balls for ears; one tiny ball for nose and four tiny balls for paws (optional).

On ungreased cookie sheet, flatten large ball slightly for body. Attach medium-size ball for head by overlapping slightly onto body. Place balls for arms, legs and ears, and a tiny ball on head for nose. Arrange other tiny balls atop ends of legs and arms for paws, if desired.

With wooden pick, draw eyes and mouth; pierce small hole at top of cookie for use as hanging ornament, if desired. Bake 6 to 8 minutes or until set. Cool 1 minute on cookie sheet; remove to wire rack. Cool completely.

Store in covered container. If cookies will be used as ornaments, allow to dry on wire rack at least 6 hours before hanging. Pull ribbon through hole for hanging. Makes 14 cookies.

*** Use real butter or stick margarine. Do not substitute reduced-fat spreads; their higher water content often yields less-satisfactory results.**

Chop Suey Loaf

2 tablespoons shortening
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 egg
1 cup granulated sugar
2 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
Juice of 1 orange plus water to make 3/4 cup liquid
1/2 cup chopped raisins
1/2 cup chopped candied cherries
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a loaf pan.

Cream the shortening until fluffy. Add sugar and cream. Add beaten egg and vanilla extract.

Sift together dry ingredients. Add alternately with liquid to egg mixture, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Stir, do not beat.

Toss fruits and nuts in a little flour so that they do not sink during baking. Add fruit and nuts. Spoon into a prepared pan and bake for 1 1/4 hours.

When the loaf has cooled, drizzle your favorite glaze over the top.

Christmas Almond Shortbread

1 cup butter, softened
2 teaspoons almond extract
1/2 cup granulated sugar
6 drops green food color
2 1/2 cups sifted flour

In large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed, beat butter, sugar, almond extract and food color until light and fluffy. Stir in flour until smooth. Divide into 2 parts. Refrigerate, covered, for 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F.

On a lightly sugared cloth, roll out dough one part at a time, 1/2-inch thick. Using 1 1/2-inch round cookie cutter, cut out cookies. Place 1-inch apart on ungreased sheet. With end of round spoon, make an indentation in center of each. Bake 25 to 30 minutes.

Christmas Biscotti

1 cup butter
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
2 eggs
1 egg yolk
1 egg white, beaten
1 tablespoon orange peel, shredded
1 teaspoon water
3 cups flour
3/4 cup green candied cherries, chopped
3/4 cup red candied cherries, chopped
1/2 cup almonds, toasted and chopped

Place butter in large bowl, mix at medium speed, adding 1 cup sugar and baking powder. Beat in eggs, egg yolk, and orange peel into mixture. Using a wooden spoon mix in cherries, and flour. Divide dough in to half. Using a 14-inch loaf pan, shape into loaves.

Place each loaf on a greased cookie sheet. Gently flatten to with hand. Mix egg white and water. Brush onto loaves. Sprinkle with remaining sugar. Bake at 375 degrees F for 20 to 25 minutes.

Let cool on cookie sheet until completely cool. Cut into 1/2-inch slices. Places slices, onto cookie sheets Bake at 325 degrees F for 10 minutes Turn pieces over, and bake for another 10 minutes. Remove to a wire rack, let cool.

Christmas Caramel Crunch

Makes 10 cups

4 cups popped popcorn
4 cups mini pretzels
2 cups pecan halves
3/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1/2 cup butter
2 tablespoons water
2 tablespoons light corn syrup
1/4 teaspoon baking soda

Preheat oven to 275 degrees F. Spray a large roasting pan with cooking spray. Distribute popcorn, pretzels, and pecans in roasting pan. Place in oven to warm while preparing the caramel syrup.

In a large saucepan, combine brown sugar, butter, water and corn syrup. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Boil 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in baking soda. Pour over warmed popcorn mixture. Stir to coat. Bake 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes.

Place roasting pan on cooling rack. Stir several times while cooling so that mixture doesn't clump together. Store airtight.

Christmas Cheese Cake

2 packages lady fingers
24 ounces cream cheese
1 cup granulated sugar
4 eggs
1 1/2 pints sour cream
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon almond extract
1 (20 ounce) can cherry pie filling

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Line the sides of one 10-inch springform pan with lady fingers then line the bottom with lady fingers, cutting lady fingers, if necessary.

Cream the cream cheese and sugar together. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating after each addition. Stir in the extracts and fold in the sour cream. Pour batter into the prepared pan. Cover tops of lady fingers with foil.

Bake at 375 degrees F for 50 to 60 minutes, until almost set in the middle. Remove cake from oven and let stand for 1/2 hour, then remove sides of pan. Place in the refrigerator for at least 24 hours.

Before serving top with canned pie filling.

Christmas Casserole Cookies

2 eggs
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup chopped walnuts
1 cup snipped dates
1 cup flaked coconut
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon almond extract

Beat eggs well. Gradually add sugar and beat until fluffy. Stir in the remaining ingredients in the order given. Turn into an ungreased 2–quart casserole. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and, while hot, stir well with a wooden spoon. Cool.

Form into small balls and roll in additional sugar.

Makes about 3 dozen balls.

Christmas Cheesecake Cookies

Makes 25 servings

1/3 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar, divided
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1/3 cup butter
8 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
1 egg
1 tablespoon lemon juice
3 tablespoons milk, divided
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/2 tablespoons green candied cherries, divided
1 1/2 tablespoons red candied cherries, divided
2/3 cup sifted confectioners' sugar

Coat an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

Mix brown sugar with 1/4 cup granulated sugar, flour and walnuts. Stir in butter, using a fork or pastry blender, until crumbly. Remove and set aside 1 cup of the mixture. Place the remainder in the baking pan and press down evenly. Bake in preheated 350 degrees F oven for 12 to 15 minutes, until just starting to brown. Remove from oven and allow to cool slightly.

Meanwhile, using an electric mixer, beat cream cheese and 1/4 cup sugar. Add egg, lemon juice, 2 tablespoons milk and vanilla. Combine well. Add half the red and green cherries and stir until well distributed.

Pour mixture into baked crust. Top with reserved crumbs. Bake for 25 minutes until set and beginning to brown. Remove from oven and allow to cool completely.

Meanwhile, stir together the confectioners' sugar and 1 tablespoon milk. Spread over the top of the cooled cheesecake, and then sprinkle with remaining red and green cherries. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes and cut into pieces.

Christmas Cherry Fudge

1 small box cherry gelatin
3 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1 1/2 cups milk
1/4 cup butter
1/2 cup chopped, candied cherries
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Cook gelatin, sugar, baking soda and milk slowly until sugar is dissolved. Clip a candy thermometer to the side of the saucepan. Cook, without stirring, until the mixture reaches 236 degrees F.

Remove from heat. Add butter. Pour onto a large platter. Cool, without stirring, until lukewarm.

Beat until it loses its gloss. Stir in cherries and walnuts. Pour into a buttered 8-inch square pan.

Christmas Chocolate Mousse

3 cups miniature marshmallows
1/2 cup milk
1 (4 ounce) Hershey chocolate bar, broken
1 cup whipping cream
6 small candy canes

Put marshmallows, milk and Hershey bar in the top of a double boiler. Stir over hot water until melted and cool.

Whip whipping cream and fold into cooled chocolate mixture. Pour into 6 small dessert dishes and chill.

When ready to serve, garnish with a daub of whipped cream and a small candy cane or a piece of fresh holly.

Serves 6.

Christmas Coffee

10-cup pot of coffee
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1/3 cup water

Over medium heat boil sugar, cocoa, cinnamon and water for 1 minute, stirring frequently. Add to coffee, stir and serve immediately.

Stir again if served later. Serve with whipped topping, milk and sugar.

Christmas–Comes–But–Once–A–Year Chocolate Cake

Rum Buttercream Frosting

1/2 cup rum
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons corn syrup
6 egg yolks
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/2 cups butter

Cake

3/4 cup flour
1/4 cup cocoa powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
6 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
1 cup superfine sugar
6 tablespoons clarified butter
1/2 cup toasted almonds, chopped
4 vanilla wafers
30 chocolate–covered almonds

Almond Chocolate Mousse

1/2 cup heavy cream
7 teaspoons granulated sugar
8 ounces semisweet chocolate
1 1/4 cups heavy cream
3/4 teaspoon almond extract

Rum Buttercream Frosting: Heat rum, sugar, and corn syrup in saucepan over low heat, stirring gently, until sugar dissolves. Wash down sides of pan with pastry brush dipped in ice water. Clip candy thermometer to side of pan, raise heat to medium, and boil without stirring until syrup registers 240 degrees F (soft ball stage). Remove syrup from heat and let cool slightly.

In large bowl, beat egg yolks and vanilla extract until mixture is pale and thick and falls in ribbon when you lift beaters. Add hot syrup to yolks by pouring down side of bowl a little at a time, beating in after each addition. Let yolk mixture cool. Add softened butter 1 tablespoon at a time, beating well after each addition. Frosting should be thick and perfectly smooth. Use buttercream as soon as possible, or refrigerate up to three days. When ready to use, bring to room temperature and beat until smooth.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare 2 (9–inch) cake pans by greasing them, lining bottoms with wax paper circle, greasing wax paper, and dusting bottoms and sides with flour.

Mix together flour, cocoa, and salt; set aside. Bring eggs to room temperature. Eggs achieve greater volume if they are warm when you beat them, so combine eggs, vanilla extract and almond extract in large deep bowl placed in shallow bowl of hot tap water. Beat with electric mixer until light and thick

and quadrupled in volume. Add sugar 1 tablespoon at a time, beating continuously. Keep beating until mixture is thick and airy, like soft whipped cream, and thick rope of batter falls and sits on top of mixture for a few seconds when you lift beaters. Gently fold in 1/4 flour mixture; repeat with remainder, 1/4 at a time.

Remove 1 cup batter to separate bowl and whisk in clarified butter. Stir in chopped almonds. Return mixture to remaining batter, 1/4 cup at a time, folding in gently but thoroughly. Divide batter equally between prepared pans. Bake 25 to 30 minutes; when cake is done, center will spring back if lightly pressed, and cake will be pulling away from pan sides. Let layers cool in pan on wire racks for 10 minutes, then run knife around each layer. Turn out, peel off wax paper, and turn right side up on racks to finish cooling. When cool, wrap individually in plastic and freeze 1 hour.

Almond Chocolate Mousse: Finely chop chocolate. Scald cream with sugar, stirring to dissolve. Pour hot cream over chopped chocolate and stir until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Set aside to cool completely.

When cool, whip cream with almond extract just until stiff; do not over beat. Fold whipped cream into chocolate mixture. Use as soon as possible.

Split each cake layer in half horizontally to make a total of four thin layers. Put one layer cut side up on cake plate and tuck strips of wax paper under cake to keep plate neat while you assemble and decorate cake. Spread first layer with 3/4 cup frosting and then with 3/4 cup mousse. Repeat with remaining layers, cut sides down, making a stack that ends with frosting. Use remaining mousse to cover top and sides of cake.

Process vanilla wafers to fine crumbs; sprinkle some over top of cake, then blow some from your palm onto sides of cake. Use generous amount, since first layer of crumbs will darken as crumbs absorb moisture from cake. Press chocolate almonds around top edge to complete decorations. Serve immediately, or put cake in freezer uncovered for 1 hour, until very firm, then cover with plastic wrap and return to freezer until one hour before serving.

Yield: 24 servings.

Christmas Cordial

2 quarts fruit (strawberries, raspberries, peaches)

3 cups granulated sugar

1 liter vodka or brandy

Layer berries and sugar in large mouth glass jar. Cover with 1 liter of liquor. Cover lightly with screw type lid. Allow to sit for 6 to 8 weeks, shaking intermittently to mix ingredients.

Cordial is ready at the end of 8 weeks but is excellent if saved until Christmas for a Christmas cordial.

Christmas Cornish with Walnut–Apple Stuffing

6 Tyson Cornish Game Hens
Paprika
Salt
Pepper
Oil
3 cups cooked wild rice (6 ounce package)
1/4 cup finely chopped celery
1/4 cup finely chopped onion
3 ounces walnut pieces
2 apples, cored and chopped
1/3 cup port wine
1/2 teaspoon salt
Pepper
1 tablespoon parsley flakes

Wash hens and pat dry. Season with salt, paprika and pepper. Rub lightly with oil. Add remaining ingredients for stuffing and toss lightly. Divide stuffing among hens and truss. Place in roasting pan and roast 1 hour or until tender in preheated 350 degree F oven.

Serves 6.

Christmas Crock Cheese

10 ounces Muenster cheese
1/2 pound aged Cheddar cheese
3 tablespoons brandy
1/8 teaspoon basil, crushed
Pinch of dried dill
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon paprika
2 tablespoons soft butter

Grate cheese. Put all ingredients into mixing bowl and beat until well blended. Put into small sealable crocks for Christmas giving or for your own use. Keep refrigerated.

Remove from refrigerator one hour before serving.

Christmas Crunch

1 3/4 cups granulated sugar
1/3 cup light corn syrup
1 cup margarine or butter
8 ounces slivered blanched almonds, lightly toasted and finely chopped
2 (1 ounce) squares unsweetened chocolate, coarsely chopped
2 (1 ounce) squares semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
1 teaspoon shortening

In heavy 2–quart saucepan over medium heat, heat sugar, corn syrup, and 1/4 cup water to boiling, stirring occasionally. Stir in margarine or butter. Set candy thermometer in place and continue cooking, stirring frequently, until temperature reaches 300 degrees F or hard–crack stage, about 20 minutes.

Remove saucepan from heat. Reserve 1/3 cup chopped almonds. Stir remaining almonds into hot syrup. Immediately pour mixture into a lightly greased 15 1/2 x 10 1/2–inch jellyroll pan; spread evenly. Cool in pan on rack.

Chocolate Glaze

In heavy, small saucepan over low heat, heat chocolate and shortening until melted, stirring occasionally. Remove saucepan from heat; cool slightly.

Remove candy in one piece from pan to cutting board. Spread chocolate over candy; sprinkle with reserved almonds, pressing them gently into chocolate. Set candy aside to allow glaze to set, about 1 hour.

Break candy into pieces. Store in layers, separated by wax paper, in tightly covered container to use up within 2 weeks.

Makes about 1 3/4 pounds candy.

Christmas Dump Cake

- 1 (16 ounce) can whole cranberry sauce
- 1 (21 ounce) can apple pie filling
- 1 (18.25 ounce) box yellow cake mix
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
- 1/2 cup chopped almonds, walnuts or granola

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Dump cranberries into an ungreased 9 x 13-inch pan. Dump apple pie filling into pan. Spread mixture evenly and "sift" dry cake mix on top. Cut up butter and dot top of cake. Sprinkle nuts or granola on top of cake. Bake 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Cool 10 minutes, then cut into squares.

Serve with Cool Whip or ice cream.

Christmas Eggnog Cherry Nut Loaf

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 egg, beaten
1 1/4 cups eggnog
1/3 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup chopped walnuts or pecans
**1/2 cup chopped red or green
maraschino cherries**

Stir together flour, baking powder and salt.

Mix egg, eggnog and oil. Stir in dry ingredients, mixing well. Fold in nuts and cherries after they have been coated with flour. Pour into greased and floured 8 x 4-inch loaf pans. Bake at 350 degrees F for 40 to 50 minutes or until tests done.

Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pans.

Christmas Eggnog Ice Cream

4 cups milk
8 eggs, beaten
2 1/4 cups granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
4 cups whipping cream
10 tablespoons brandy
2 tablespoons vanilla extract
3/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Warm milk; add eggs, sugar and salt. Cook, stirring constantly, until temperature reaches 155°F or until mixture coats the back of a spoon. Do not overcook. Remove from heat and add cream. Stir occasionally while mixture cools.

In separate bowl combine brandy, vanilla extract, nutmeg and cinnamon. Beat flavorings into cooled custard mixture. Freeze in ice cream freezer. Pack to let ice cream set up.

Makes 1 gallon.

Christmas English Gingerbread

4 cups sifted flour
1 cup (2 sticks) butter (no substitution)
1 cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon ginger (must be fresh)
1 teaspoon salt
About 1 cup molasses

Mix the flour, sugar, ginger and salt together.

Cut cold butter into the mixture with a pastry blender or work in with your fingertips.

Add just enough molasses to hold the ingredients together without being sticky.

Wrap the dough airtight and chill overnight in the refrigerator.

Roll very thin on a well-floured board and cut as desired or shape into "logs" and slice into rounds.

Bake on foil-lined, ungreased cookie sheets for about 8 minutes. Makes about 5 dozen 2-inch cookies.

Servings: 60

Christmas Eve Coffee

1 cup brown sugar

1 cup peanut butter

6 cups hot coffee

1 cup whipping cream, whipped

Cream together brown sugar and peanut butter. Add a little hot coffee at a time, beating until smooth. Put equal amounts of whipped cream into each of 6 mugs. Pour coffee mixture over cream, then serve.

Christmas Eve Rainbow

1 (8 ounce) container Cool Whip

1 cup chopped almonds

18 vanilla wafers, crumbled

1 gallon rainbow sherbet, slightly softened so spreadable

Optional – cherries, coconut, etc.

Mix Cool Whip, nuts and wafers. Spread 1/2 of mixture in a 9 x 13–inch pan. Spread sherbet on top of mixture. Spread remaining mixture on top of sherbet. Cover. Place in freezer at least 8 hours. Decorate with cherries or coconut, etc. Keep frozen and covered.

Christmas Fruit Balls

1 1/2 cups prunes, cooked and pitted
1 1/2 cups pitted dates
3/4 cup dried apricots
1/2 cup raisins
1 cup walnuts
1/4 cup granulated sugar or an equal amount
of artificial sweetener
1/4 cup concentrated orange juice, thawed
Flaked coconut

Put prunes, dates, apricots, raisins, and walnuts through food chopper using coarse blade. Add sugar or artificial sweetener and form into 1-inch balls. Roll in coconut and freeze.

Christmas Fruit Cake Cookies

1 cup butter or margarine, softened
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
3 eggs, separated
3 cups flour, divided
1/2 pound candied cherries, finely chopped
1/2 pound candied pineapple, finely chopped
1/2 pound white raisins
1 quart shelled pecans, finely chopped
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon baking soda, dissolved in a little water

Cream butter; add sugar, then beaten egg yolks. Sprinkle some of the flour over the fruit and pecans. Add spices and salt to remaining flour.

Combine butter, fruit and flour mixtures. Add vanilla extract and baking soda.

Beat egg whites until stiff and fold in. Drop scant teaspoonsful on greased cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees F for 10 to 15 minutes. Batter may be prepared several weeks ahead. Freezes well before and after baking.

Yields 125 to 150 cookies.

Christmas Fruit Rolls

1 pound dates
1 large bag marshmallows
1 cup nuts, chopped
1 pound graham crackers, crushed
1 small bottle red maraschino cherries
1 small bottle green maraschino cherries
1 cup whipping cream or 1 package Dream Whip
3 ounces cream cheese

Reserve 1/3 pound graham crackers. Cut up marshmallows and cherries into fine pieces. Mix cream cheese with whipping cream or Dream Whip. Mix all ingredients and form into rolls. Roll in reserved graham crackers. Chill and slice before serving.

Christmas Gelatin Salad

1 (20 ounce) can pineapple slices
2 3/4 cups water
1 large box lemon gelatin
10 maraschino cherries
2 1/4 cups pineapple juice
1 large box strawberry gelatin
1 (16 ounce) can whole cranberry sauce

Drain pineapple, reserving 3/4 cup juice. Heat reserved 3/4 cup juice with 2 3/4 cups water to boil. Stir in lemon gelatin until dissolved. Chill until slightly thickened.

Spoon 1 cup of the mixture into a shallow 2–quart mold. Arrange pineapple slices on top. Insert a maraschino cherry in center of each pineapple slice. Pour remaining lemon gelatin over. Chill until almost set.

Meanwhile, heat 2 1/4 cups pineapple juice to boil. Stir in strawberry gelatin until dissolved. Chill until slightly thickened. Stir in cranberry sauce. Spoon over top.

Christmas Goodies

1 pound white chocolate

1 cup small pretzels, broken into small pieces

1 cup pecans, chopped

Melt the chocolate. Stir pretzels and pecans into chocolate and drop by teaspoon onto wax paper.

Christmas Jam

1 pound apricots

1 large can sliced pineapple

1 medium jar maraschino cherries, quartered (juice reserved)

Sugar

Soak apricots in juice from large can of pineapple and juice of medium jar of maraschino cherries. Add enough water to cover. Cook until tender.

Chop the apricots and pineapple slices (a blender or food processor works well). Add 1 cup of sugar for each cup of fruit and liquid (this will be 4 or 5 cups). Cook until thick and clear. Remove from heat and add maraschino cherries that have been quartered.

Christmas Marshmallow Balls

1/2 pound marshmallows, melted

1/2 pound candied cherries (half green, half red)

1/4 pound blanched almonds

1/2 pound coconut

Water, if needed

Melt marshmallows in a double boiler. Remove from heat. Put cherries and almonds through food grinder. Add to the melted marshmallow. If too dry, add a little water. Form into small balls and roll in coconut.

Christmas Marshmallow Squares

1 can sweetened condensed milk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Few grains of salt

1/3 cup maraschino cherries (half red, half green)

30 large marshmallows cut into quarters

2 cups graham cracker crumbs (or vanilla wafer crumbs)

2 1/2 cups coconut

Blend together milk, vanilla extract and salt. Add cherries, marshmallows and wafer crumbs. Line an 8- or 9-inch pan with half the coconut. Add marshmallow mixture, spreading evenly over the pan. Top with remaining coconut. Press firmly. Place in refrigerator for 24 hours to ripen. Unmold and cut into squares.

Christmas Mice

1 jar maraschino cherries with stems
1 package double stuffed Oreos
1 package Hershey's kisses
1 tube red decorating gel
1 tube green decorating gel
Slivered almonds
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
2 teaspoons shortening

Drain cherries well and count them. Unwrap an equal amount of chocolate kisses and carefully remove one side of the chocolate cookie from the Oreo, leaving the cream filling on the other side. (Save plain side for another use.)

Melt the chocolate chips and shortening in the microwave and stir till smooth. Dip the cherries in the chocolate, shake to remove excess. Set the cherry on the flat side of chocolate kiss, then position them on the cream filling of the Oreo, slightly off center with the stem hanging over the edge. Position 2 slivered almonds for ears. Use red gel for eyes. Use the green gel to draw 2 holly leaves slightly apart, put a red berry in the center with the red gel.

Now a few things I learned! I kept the chocolate warm by setting it in a bowl of warm water, it made it easier to dip the cherries. If you can find the larger size cherries, use those. The ones I got were kind of small and didn't fit quite right. I took a toothpick, and used some of the slightly set chocolate from the side of the bowl to fill in any holes in the cherries and to make the head and body look more connected.

If you let them set a few minutes before adding the ears, the almonds will stay in place better. I tried putting them on right away and they kept falling over. Try not to get chocolate all over the almond sliver like I did.

In fact, I tried several methods of putting these together, I followed the directions to a T and discovered it wasn't quite as easy as they made it out to be. Then again, I was keeping an eye on the news, DH was in and out and so was the dog, so maybe I was slightly distracted! LOL

I also dipped the cherries and set them on a plate then dipped the ends of the almond slivers in chocolate and glued them to the kiss, then stuck them together. That worked ok too.

Line a cookie sheet with wax paper to set the mice on as you put them together. When you get them all done, let them set for a few minutes before decorating. Don't forget to knead the gel tubes first or the first drop will run. You can use blue gel or any other color for the eyes if you want. The holly leaves are a little tough to get right. I ended up making a "v" on each side of the red berry. Next time, I may just sprinkle colored sugar on the cream filling. (In fact, if you want to make these for Halloween, I'd use yellow, red and orange sugar.)

I figured out what to do with the other half of the Oreos. I'm going to put a little chocolate frosting on them, then make more mice, only this time, I'm going to dip them in white chocolate and maybe sprinkle a little coconut around them.

Christmas Ornament Cookies

1 3/4 cups flour
1/4 cup cornstarch
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 cup butter, softened
1 cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Mix in a bowl the flour, cornstarch and baking powder. Cream in a separate bowl the butter, sugar, egg and vanilla extract. Stir flour mixture into the remaining creamed ingredients gradually, until blended. Cover and chill 15 minutes or longer.

Roll dough on floured surface to 1/8-inch thickness and cut with Christmas-shape cookie cutters. Place on greased cookie sheets and decorate with sprinkles (or icing could be used, after baking). Pierce a small hole through each cookie, toward the top center portion (use a barbecue skewer). Bake at 350 degrees F for 8 minutes. Cookies are still pale-colored when finished, not browned. Cool on a cookie sheet.

Store in an airtight tin for 2 to 3 weeks. Use yarn or wire ornament hangers to hang cookies on your Christmas tree. They are best if eaten and replenished daily.

Christmas Peppermint Candy Cheesecake

1 cup graham cracker crumbs
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup melted butter plus 2 tablespoons melted butter
1 1/2 cups sour cream
2 eggs
1 tablespoon flour
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
16 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup coarsely crushed candy canes
Whipped cream, chocolate leaves, coarsely chopped
candy canes

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Blend graham cracker crumbs, 1/4 cup sugar and 1/4 cup melted butter in bottom of ungreased 8-inch springform pan; press mixture evenly over bottom.

In blender or food processor, blend sour cream, remaining 1/2 cup sugar, eggs, flour and vanilla extract until smooth. Add cream cheese and blend; then blend in 2 tablespoons remaining melted butter until completely smooth. Stir in crushed candy canes, then pour mixture over crust in pan. Bake in lower third of oven for 45 minutes.

Remove; allow to cool, then refrigerate for at least 4 hours, preferably overnight.

The chocolate leaves will form the petals of a poinsettia flower, with the crushed candy canes in the very center.

Christmas Peppermint Pie

3 egg whites
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
3/4 cup granulated sugar
3 tablespoons cocoa
9-inch baked pie shell
1 quart pink peppermint ice cream
1 bottle fudge topping
Crushed peppermint candy

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Beat egg whites until frothy. Sprinkle with cream of tartar. Beat until soft peaks form. Gradually add sugar, beating until stiff but not dry.

Sift cocoa evenly over meringue. Carefully fold in cocoa with flexible spatula. Spread evenly in pie shell, spreading up to the fluted edge. Bake 25 minutes. Meringue will be soft. Cool thoroughly.

Just before serving, fill with ice cream, top with fudge topping and peppermint candy if desired.

Christmas Pickles

1 (No. 2 1/2) can pineapple, diced
1 pint maraschino cherries (whole red and green)
1 pound figs, quartered
2 cups vinegar
1 cup water
1 pound gherkin whole pickles
1 stick cinnamon
1 cup seedless raisins
2 cups granulated sugar
20 whole cloves

Boil vinegar, sugar, water, cloves and cinnamon for 10 minutes. Then combine with fruit. Let stand for several days before serving. Keep refrigerated.

Christmas Pineapple Cake

1 cup butter or margarine
2 cups granulated sugar
3 eggs
1 (6 ounce) bottle maraschino cherries
1 (20 ounce) can pineapple chunks, packed in juice
4 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons cocoa powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup raisins
1 cup chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F.

With electric mixer, blend butter and sugar. Add eggs. Add liquid from cherries and pineapple, and reserve fruit.

In a separate bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, cocoa and salt. Stir in raisins and nuts. Cut cherries and pineapple chunks in half and add to flour mixture. Add flour mixture to butter mixture and stir until well combined.

Pour batter into a greased Bundt or tube pan. (A 13 x 9-inch baking pan, 2 regular loaf pans or several smaller loaf pans can be used instead.) Bake for 1 1/2 hours, or until a wooden pick inserted in cake comes out clean.

Serve with whipped cream, if desired.

Makes 16 servings.

Christmas Plum Pudding

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, at room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
6 eggs, at room temperature
1/2 cup chopped citron
1 1/2 cups pitted prunes, chopped
1/2 cup dark raisins
1 cup pecans, coarsely chopped
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups fine bread crumbs
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
Whipped cream for garnish

Cream the butter and sugar together in an electric mixer. Beat the eggs in, one at a time.

Combine the citron, prunes, raisins, and pecans in another bowl. Add the flour to the fruit and nut mixture and toss together so that everything is coated with flour.

Add to the butter and egg mixture along with the remaining ingredients. Blend for 1 minute so that all is incorporated.

Grease and flour a soufflé dish, about 7 x 4 inches. Add the heavy batter and bake in a preheated 350 degree F oven for 50 to 55 minutes, or until nicely browned.

Serve warm by spooning out or cool and cut into pieces.

Garnish with the whipped cream.

Serves 8.

Christmas Plum Pudding with Brandied Cider Sauce

1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon grated orange rind
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
3/4 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
1/4 cup butter or margarine (at room temperature)
4 large egg whites
1/2 cup apple cider or apple juice
3/4 cup raisins
1/2 cup shredded carrot
1/3 cup candied cherries, halved, or currants or raisins
1/3 cup chopped candied pineapple, currants, or raisins
1/3 cup pecan halves
Brandied Cider Sauce (see recipe below)

Step 1: Lightly grease a 1 1/2-quart steamed pudding mold or casserole. In a medium-size bowl, stir together the flour, orange rind, cinnamon, baking powder, ginger, and cloves.

Step 2: In a large bowl, with an electric mixer on medium, cream the brown sugar and butter until light and fluffy, scraping side of bowl often. Add the egg whites and beat well. Using a wooden spoon, stir in one-third of the flour mixture, then half of the apple cider. Repeat, then stir in the remaining flour mixture. Stir in the raisins, carrot, cherries, pineapple, and pecans.

Step 3: Spoon the batter evenly into the prepared mold. Cover mold with foil; tie foil in place with string.

Step 4: Place mold on rack in a Dutch oven. Pour boiling water into the Dutch oven until the water is halfway up the side of the mold. Cook, covered, over low heat for 2 to 2 1/2 hours or until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Step 5: Place mold upright on a wire rack and let stand for 10 minutes. Using a narrow metal spatula, loosen side of plum pudding from the mold, then invert the pudding onto a serving plate. Serve warm with Brandied Cider Sauce; top with vanilla ice cream if you like. (Or, cover and refrigerate the pudding—it will keep for 1 week. To reheat the pudding, steam as directed in step 4 for 1 hour or until heated through.)

Brandied Cider Sauce

In a small saucepan, whisk together 3/4 cup apple cider or apple juice, 1/4 cup firmly packed light brown sugar, and 1 tablespoon cornstarch. Bring to a boil over moderate heat, whisking constantly. Cook for 2 minutes or until the mixture is thickened, whisking constantly. Stir in 2 tablespoons brandy or apple juice and 1 teaspoon butter or margarine.

Makes about 3/4 cup.

Christmas Porridge (Julgrot)

1 cup rice
2 quarts boiling water
2 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
5 cups milk
1 blached whole almond
Cinnamon or grated almonds
Granulated sugar
Cold milk

Add washed and drained rice to boiling water. Again bring to a boil and cook, uncovered, 1 minute. Drain rice thoroughly; add butter. Add rice, salt and sugar to milk in top of double boiler. Cover and cook over gently boiling water until rice is tender and milk is absorbed, about 2 hours.

Pour into serving dish and stir in almond. Sprinkle top generously with cinnamon and sugar or grated almonds and sugar.

Serve with cold milk.

Yield: 8 servings.

Christmas Pound Cake

1 pound butter or margarine
1 pound granulated sugar
1 pound flour (4 cups all-purpose or 4 1/2 cups cake flour)
2 cups white raisins
1 pound pecans, coarsely chopped
1/2 to 1 cup candied cherries
1/2 to 1 cup candied pineapple
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons lemon extract (2 ounce bottle)
6 eggs

Cream butter, sugar and lemon extract. Sift flour once, then measure. Sift twice more, adding baking powder and salt to last sift. Add eggs, one at a time, to creamed mixture, alternating with flour, beating well after each addition. This makes a very stiff batter so will probably have to be beaten by hand. Then add nuts, raisins and candied fruits which have been coated with a little of the flour. Bake in a large round tube pan which has been lined with brown paper and greased. Bake at 300 degrees F for 2 hours, or until done when tested.

Christmas Pudding

1 cup all-purpose flour
Pinch of salt
1 teaspoon ground allspice
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon finely grated nutmeg
1 cup vegetable shortening, such as Crisco, frozen and finely grated
1 apple, grated
2 cups fresh white bread crumbs
2 cups brown sugar
2 ounces slivered almonds
1 1/2 cups seedless raisins
1 1/2 cups currants
1 1/2 cups golden raisins
4 ounces dried apricots
1/4 cup chopped mixed candied citrus peel
Finely grated rind and juice of 1 lemon
2 tablespoons molasses
3 large eggs
1 1/4 cups milk
2 tablespoons dark rum
Fresh holly sprigs, to garnish

Sift together the flour, salt and spices into a large bowl. Stir in the grated vegetable shortening and apple, and other dry ingredients, including the grated lemon rind.

Heat the molasses until runny and pour into the dry ingredients.

In a separate bowl, combine the eggs, milk, rum and lemon juice and stir into the dry mixture.

Spoon the mixture into two medium size earthenware bowls or pudding molds. If using bowls, cover the puddings with wax paper, pleating the paper to allow for expansion, and tie with string. If using molds, fill about two thirds full and cover tightly with the lid.

Steam each pudding on a trivet in a large pot of boiling water for 10 hours. Replenish the water frequently (use boiling water) to keep the pots from boiling dry.

When ready to serve the pudding, steam for 3 hours. Cool slightly and turn out onto a serving platter.

Garnish with holly.

Makes 6 servings.

Christmas Ribbon Salad

First Layer

2 small boxes lime gelatin

2 1/2 cups hot water

Mix well and pour into a 13 x 9-inch enamel or glass pan and let stand in refrigerator until firm.

Second Layer

1/2 cup pineapple juice

20 large marshmallows, cut up

1 small box lemon gelatin

1/2 cup hot water

8 ounces cream cheese, softened

Heat the pineapple juice and marshmallows in a pot until the marshmallows melt. Dissolve gelatin in hot water. Combine all ingredients and mix well. When cool, pour over the first layer and let stand in refrigerator until firm.

Third Layer

1 small box cherry gelatin

1 small box raspberry gelatin

2 1/2 cups hot water

Mix well and, when cool, pour over the second layer and let stand in refrigerator until firm. Cut into squares to serve.

Christmas Veggie Tree

2 bunches curly endive
Florist picks
1 (9-inch) plastic foam cone, about 18 inches tall
1 carton cherry tomatoes
1 zucchini, sliced
1/2 head cauliflower, separated into florets
4 carrots, cut into 2-inch sticks
Radish roses
Wooden picks

Wash and separate endive and remove the tough ends of each leaf. Begin to form the tree by attaching leaves to the bottom of the cone with florist picks and move upward, completely covering cone with endive. Attach vegetable to endive-covered cone with wooden picks, arranging in desired pattern to resemble a decorated Christmas tree. Place tree on a tray or cake stand; arrange extra vegetables around the base, if desired.

Serve with onion dip.

Christmas Whiskey Pecans

1 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup evaporated milk
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons bourbon
3 cups pecan halves

In a large, heavy saucepan, combine the sugar and evaporated milk and bring to a low boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Cook until the syrup registers 240 degrees F on a candy thermometer or forms a soft ball when a little is dropped into a 1/2 cup cold water. Yields 3 cups.

Remove pan from heat. Add the salt, bourbon and pecans and stir until the nuts are thoroughly coated with the syrup. Pour the pecans onto wax paper and cool completely before storing in an airtight container.

Christollen Bread

4 3/4 to 5 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 packages active dry yeast
1 teaspoon ground cardamom
1 1/4 cups milk
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup margarine or butter
3/4 teaspoon salt
1 egg
1 cup diced mixed candied fruits and peels
1 cup raisins
3/4 cup chopped walnuts
1 tablespoon finely shredded lemon peel
Milk

In a large mixing bowl stir together 2 cups of the flour, the yeast and cardamom.

In a medium saucepan heat and stir the milk, sugar, margarine or butter, and salt until warm (120 to 130 degrees F) and margarine or butter is almost melted. Add to flour mixture along with the egg. Beat with an electric mixer on low speed for 30 seconds, scraping bowl constantly. Beat on high speed for 3 minutes. Using a spoon, stir in candied fruits and peels, raisins, walnuts and lemon peel; then stir in as much of the remaining flour as you can.

Turn out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead in enough remaining flour to make a moderately soft dough that is smooth and elastic (3 to 5 minutes) Shape into a ball. Place in a greased bowl; turn once. Cover and let rise in a warm place until double (about 1 to 1 1/2 hours).

Punch dough down. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface. Divide dough in half; divide each half into thirds. Cover and let rest for 10 minutes.

With hands, roll each piece into a 1-inch-thick rope about 15 inches long. Line up 3 of the ropes, 1 inch apart, on a greased baking sheet. Starting in the middle, braid the dough bringing the left rope underneath lay down. Repeat to end of loaf. On the other end, braid by bringing outside ropes alternately over center rope to center. (Braid the ropes loosely so the bread has room to expand). Repeat braiding with the remaining 3 ropes on another greased baking sheet. Cover and let rise until nearly double (about 1 hour)

Brush loaves with milk. Bake in a 350 degrees F oven for 20 to 25 minutes or until golden and loaves sound hollow when tapped. If necessary, cover with foil the last few minutes to prevent over browning. Remove from baking sheets. Cool on a wire rack.

Makes 2 loaves (32 servings).

Cinnamon Balls

1 cup butter, softened
1/5 cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 teaspoon cinnamon
2 cups cake flour
2 cups corn flakes, finely crushed (measure first, then crush)
1 cup chopped nuts
Confectioners' sugar or cinnamon sugar*

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Beat butter and sugar. Add vanilla extract and cinnamon. Mix in flour and corn flakes, blending thoroughly. Stir in nuts.

Roll into 1-inch balls and place on lightly greased cookie sheets. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until firm and golden.

Roll in confectioners' sugar while still hot.

*** For different tastes, try rolling half the cookies in confectioners' sugar and the other half in granulated sugar to which you've added some cinnamon.**

Cinnamon Rock Candy

1 cup water
3 3/4 cups granulated sugar
1 1/4 cups light corn syrup
1 teaspoon red liquid food coloring
1 teaspoon cinnamon oil
1/3 cup confectioners' sugar

Line a 15 x 10–inch baking pan with foil and butter the foil; set aside.

In a large heavy saucepan, combine water, sugar, corn syrup and food coloring. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cover and cook for 3 minutes to dissolve sugar crystals. Uncover; cook on medium–high heat, without stirring, until a candy thermometer reads 300 degrees F (hard crack stage), about 25 minutes.

Remove from heat; stir in cinnamon oil. Immediately pour into prepared pan. Cool completely, about 45 minutes. Break into pieces using the edge of a metal mallet. Sprinkle both sides of candy with confectioners' sugar. Store in airtight containers.

Yields about 2 pounds.

Coconut Holiday Eggnog

6 eggs
1 1/2 cups Coco Casa® Cream of Coconut
1 quart milk
2 cups (1 pint) heavy cream
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 cup dark rum
Ground nutmeg or coconut flakes

In a large bowl, beat eggs until fluffy. Beat in cream of coconut. Gradually beat in milk and cream. Stir in vanilla extract and rum. Chill for several hours.

Serve in punch cups. Sprinkle each serving with nutmeg or coconut flakes.

For a thicker eggnog, beat heavy cream until stiff and fold into egg mixture.

Serves 10 to 12.

Colored Snowballs

1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened (NO substitutions)
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons almond extract
2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup chopped pecans (optional)
Colored sugar (red, green, blue, yellow, pink, etc.)

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Mix butter, confectioners' sugar and almond extract in bowl. Mix until light. Add flour and salt. Mix well. Chill the dough until you are ready to bake or bake immediately.

When ready to bake, roll dough into small balls, then roll in colored sugar. Place on ungreased cookie sheet and bake for about 10 to 12 minutes.

Yields about 4 dozen.

Cranberry Daiquiris

1 small can frozen limeade concentrate

1 can tequila or vodka

1/2 can jellied cranberry sauce

Ice to fill blender canister

Mix in blender until smooth. Serve.

Cranberry Rum Brie

2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
1 teaspoon rum extract
1/2 cup whole-berry cranberry sauce
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 (8 ounce) round Brie cheese
2 tablespoons chopped pecans
Assorted crackers or ginger snaps

In small bowl, combine brown sugar, rum extract, cranberry sauce and nutmeg. Stir to blend.

Scrape or cut off the top rind of the cheese, leaving 1/4-inch edge by scoring or making a circle on the top 1/4-inch from the edge with a small knife. Using a teaspoon, simply scrape off the top of the rind, exposing the cheese. Top Brie with cranberry mixture and sprinkle with pecans.

Bake at 500 degrees F for 5 minutes, or until cheese is softened.

Using a large spatula, place Brie round on serving plate and surround with assorted crackers.

Serves 8.

Cream Cheese Christmas Tarts

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
3 ounces cream cheese
1 cup all-purpose flour

Let cheese and butter soften at room temperature. Mix in flour to get a consistency of pie dough. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

Press into muffin tins, making small tarts. Prick with a fork. Bake at 350 degrees F until done. Fill with any flavor pie filling. Top with a dollop of whipped cream for serving, if desired.

Crème De Menthe Balls

1 cup vanilla wafer crumbs
3/4 cup finely chopped pecans
1 cup confectioners' sugar
2 tablespoons white corn syrup
1/3 cup white creme de menthe

Mix all ingredients together thoroughly. Form into 1-inch balls; roll in additional confectioners' sugar. Cover with wax paper and chill overnight.

Date Balls

3 3/4 cups flour
3/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup confectioners' sugar
1 1/2 cups margarine
3 tablespoons milk
3 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 1/2 cups chopped nuts
1 1/3 cups chopped dates

Combine flour and salt; sift twice.

Cream the margarine and gradually add sugar. Add milk and vanilla extract. Stir in sifted flour. Blend in dates and nuts. Roll in 1-inch balls. Place on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 300 degrees F for about 20 minutes or until light brown.

While still warm, roll in confectioners' sugar.

Date Pinwheels

This is an excellent Christmas cookie.

Filling

2 1/4 cups chopped dates
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup hot water
1 cup chopped nuts

Combine dates, sugar and water. Cook over low heat until thick, about 10 minutes. Add nuts. Cool.

Cookie Dough

1 cup shortening
2 cups brown sugar
3 eggs
4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking powder

Cream shortening. Add brown sugar; cream thoroughly. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Sift dry ingredients and add. Mix well. Chill dough thoroughly. Divide dough and roll into rectangles no more than 1/4-inch thick. Spread with filling and roll. Wrap each roll in wax paper. Chill. Slice 1/4-inch thick. Bake at 400 degrees F for 10 to 12 minutes. Unbaked cookies may be kept in refrigerator for a month. May also be frozen. Bake as needed.

Yields 5 dozen.

Gift of the Magi Bread (T&T)

2 loaves

1/2 cup softened sweet butter (do not substitute)
1 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup mashed ripe bananas (2 medium or 3 small)
1 (11 ounce) can mandarin oranges, drained
1 cup coconut
1 cup semisweet mini-chocolate chips
2/3 cup sliced almonds, divided
1/2 cup chopped maraschino cherries
(I love cherries and always add more)
1/2 cup chopped dates

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease 2 loaf pans and set aside.

In a mixer bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs and vanilla (I sometimes use coconut or pineapple extract for extra flavor).

Combine flour, baking soda and salt and add to the creamed butter mixture alternately with the bananas. Stir in mandarin oranges, coconut, mini-chocolate chips, 1/2 cup almonds, cherries and dates; mix well to combine.

Pour into prepared loaf pans. Sprinkle with remaining almonds (I like more almonds on my bread). Bake 50 to 55 minutes (45 minutes is what I bake it at; it will depend on your oven) or until cake tester inserted in center comes out clean.

Remove from oven and cool 10 to 15 minutes on a wire rack before removing from pans. Cool completely.

Gingerbread Birdhouse Ornaments

1 recipe Basic Gingerbread Cutout Cookies

Egg wash (1 egg yolk mixed with 1 teaspoon water)

Square cookie cutter

Heart cookie cutter

Tiny round cutter or pastry tip for the "door"

Sprinkles

Cinnamon sticks, cut thin and into 1/2-inch lengths

Ribbon or gold cord

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Spritz 2 cookie trays with nonstick baking spray. Make Basic Gingerbread Cutout Cookie dough according to recipe directions.

Cut 4 squares from the dough and space them well apart on a cookie sheet. Brush the top half of the square with egg wash.

Cut 4 hearts from the dough. Brush the round parts with egg wash, turn the dough over and place hearts upside down on the top part of the base to form a peaked roof.

Poke a 1/2-inch hole in the house, just below the roof, with a tiny round cutter or the end of a pastry tip to make a "door."

Using a metal skewer or toothpick, poke a hole at the top of the roof for the string and poke a second hole under the "door" for a perch. The perch will be inserted after the cookies are baked.

Bake the cookies for 9 to 10 minutes until they are firm and no indentation remains when touched.

While the cookies are still on the tray and the dough is warm and soft, re-poke the hole in the roof and re-poke the hole for the perch.

Immediately insert a short length of a cinnamon stick into the perch hole.

Now the cookies may be transferred to a tray to cool.

Frost the roof with Royal Frosting and decorate with sprinkles.

When ready to hang, string a ribbon or gold cord through the top. Makes about 24 birdhouses.

Ornamental Frosting

2/3 cup confectioners' sugar

1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar

2 egg whites

3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

Beat all ingredients together. Cover bowl with a damp cloth until ready to use. If you don't have a pastry bag and decorative tips, place the frosting in a zip-lock plastic bag and take a tiny snip off a corner. Use to pipe outlines and decorations as you would a pastry bag.

Basic Gingerbread Cutout Cookies

Gingerbread boys and girls are fun to hang on the Christmas tree. But so are pigs, birds, horsies, bones, boats and any shape a cutter can make. This is a good traditional recipe to keep on file.

**3 cups flour, plus flour for dusting
3 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon cloves
1 egg
2/3 cup molasses, light or dark
1/3 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, melted and cooled
Ornamental frosting to decorate**

In a medium bowl, mix the dry ingredients. In a large bowl, mix the egg with molasses, brown sugar and melted butter. Blend the flour mixture into the egg mixture until all patches of white disappear.

To make rolling a snap, you have to part with the tradition of rolling out dough on a floured board.

Do this instead. Clear a flat space in the refrigerator. Get out a roll of wax paper. Take a handful of dough and place it between two sheets of wax paper. Roll out to a thickness of about 1/8 inch. Not too thick. Repeat until all dough is rolled between sheets. Stack the sheets in the refrigerator.

When ready to bake, remove one sheet of dough at a time. Peel off the top sheet of waxed paper. Using the palm of your hand, lightly pat the surface of the dough with flour. Replace the waxed paper loosely. Now flip over the sheet onto the work surface, peel off the second sheet of wax paper and discard it. Dust the dough with flour and proceed to cut shapes with floured cookie cutters.

Place on cookie sheet, and bake at 350 degrees F about 10 to 12 minutes. Combine the scraps and re-roll between wax paper.

Makes about 4 dozen, depending on size.

Gingerbread Cheesecake

1 pound cream cheese (at room temperature)
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 eggs
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup molasses
4 tablespoons butter, softened
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon fresh nutmeg, grated
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup light brown sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
1 cup flour

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Butter a 9-inch springform pan.

In a mixer bowl, beat the cream cheese on high speed until light and smooth, about 3 minutes. With the mixer on, beat in the vanilla extract. Add two of the eggs, 1 at a time, beating until thoroughly blended. Gradually add the granulated sugar and beat until the mixture is light and fluffy, about 3 minutes; set aside.

In a medium saucepan, heat the molasses over low heat until bubbles begin to form around the sides. Remove from the heat and stir in the butter, 1 tablespoon at a time, until completely blended. Scrape the molasses into a medium bowl and stir in the ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and salt. Add the brown sugar and beat with a wooden spoon until smooth. Let cool to room temperature.

Beat the remaining 2 eggs into the gingerbread batter, 1 at a time, until well blended. Stir in the baking soda, then beat in the flour in 3 batches until completely incorporated. Using a tablespoon, drop half the gingerbread batter in spoonfuls into the prepared pan. Use one-fourth of the reserved cream cheese mixture to fill in the empty spaces. Dollop the remaining gingerbread batter on top of the cream cheese mounds. Fill in with another one-fourth of the cream cheese mixture. Swirl with the flat edge of a knife to marbleize the batters (be careful not to overmix). Smooth the remaining cream cheese mixture over the top. Bake in the middle of the oven for 50 minutes, or until the top of the cake begins to crack. Let cool to room temperature. Remove the sides of the springform pan, cover and refrigerate. Serve chilled.

Gingerbread Men

1/2 cup plus 1 tablespoon shortening
1/2 cup brown sugar
2 eggs
1 small box butterscotch instant pudding mix
1 1/2 cups flour
1 1/2 teaspoons ginger
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon baking soda

Cream the shortening and sugar, add eggs and mix well. Add dry pudding mix and flour and spices. Mix well. Roll the dough to about 1/4 inch thick and cut with a gingerbread man cookie cutter. Bake on greased cookie sheet for 10 to 12 minutes at 350 degrees F.

Gingerbread Tunnel Cake

Serving size: 16

Filling

8 ounces cream cheese
1 egg
1/4 cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger

Cake

3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon ground ginger
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
3/4 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
3/4 cup mild molasses
3 eggs
1 cup lukewarm milk (100 to 105 degrees F)

Glaze

2 cups confectioners' sugar
2 to 3 tablespoons milk
Crystallized ginger or sliced almonds, for garnish (optional)

Filling: In medium-size bowl, beat cream cheese on medium speed until smooth. Beat in egg, sugar, flour, vanilla extract and ginger until blended.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly coat a 12-cup Bundt pan with nonstick cooking spray.

Cake: In medium-size bowl, whisk together flour, ginger, baking soda, cinnamon, salt and cloves.

In large bowl, beat together sugars until smooth and creamy, about 2 minutes. Beat in the molasses, scraping down side of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. On low speed, beat in flour mixture alternately with milk in 3 additions, beginning and ending with flour. Pour half the batter into prepared Bundt pan.

Transfer filling to small plastic bag; snip off small piece from corner. Pipe filling in ring into center of pan, trying to keep filling from touching side of pan. Top with remaining batter, covering filling completely.

Bake for 50 to 55 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out fairly clean. Let cool in pan on wire rack for 5 minutes. Invert pan onto rack; gently tap sides to release cake. Remove pan; let cool.

Holiday Magic

Glaze: Sift confectioners' sugar into medium-size bowl. Stir in enough milk until smooth and good glazing consistency. Pour over cake. Garnish with ginger or almonds, if desired. Refrigerate, covered, up to 2 days.

Gingered Almonds

1 cup blanched almonds
2 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ginger

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Place almonds and butter in shallow baking pan. Bake 20 minutes or until golden brown, stirring occasionally. Drain on paper towels. Sprinkle salt and ginger over nuts; toss. Serve warm.

Glacéd Cherries and Nuts

1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1 cup light corn syrup
1/3 cup water
1 (12 ounce) jar salted mixed nuts
1 container candied cherries
2 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Dissolve sugar, corn syrup and water over medium heat. Cook, without stirring, to 300 degrees F. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Arrange nuts and cherries in a 9–inch square baking pan. Heat in the oven for 10 minutes. Keep warm.

Butter a 17 x 14–inch cookie sheet. Remove syrup from heat at 300 degrees F. Quickly add warm nuts, cherries, butter and vanilla extract. Stir rapidly until butter melts. Pour onto cookie sheet and spread to edge with the back of a wooden spoon. Cool on wire rack for 1 1/2 hours. Loosen and break into pieces.

Store in an airtight container on layers of wax paper.

Glazed Pecans

1 cup shelled pecans

1/4 cup granulated sugar

Dash of salt

Put pecans, sugar and salt into a large heavy skillet. Stir the mixture constantly over medium heat. Cook sugar–nut mixture until sugar melts and turns a rich, golden color. Transfer nut mixture to wax paper and let cool slightly. Separate nuts.

Grandma Cracker's Holiday Cake

Yield: 12 Servings

1 cup oil
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1 cup buttermilk
2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon allspice
3 eggs, unbeaten
1 1/4 cups pecans, chopped
1 1/4 cups stewed prunes, chopped
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Icing

1 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup buttermilk
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
4 tablespoons butter

Cake: Mix oil, sugar and buttermilk well. Sift flour, soda, salt and spices together. add sifted ingredients to the first mixture. Add eggs, pecans, prunes and vanilla extract. Mix well, and pour into prepared pans (either a tube pan or 2 loaf pans).

Bake at 350 degrees F for about 50 minutes. Reduce cooking time if using a tube pan.

Icing: Cook to softball stage in a large pan. Pour over cake about 5 minutes BEFORE removing from oven.

Gumdrop Tree Centerpiece

18-inch Styrofoam cone

1 bag large green gumdrops

1 bag small gumdrops, assorted colors

Toothpicks

Secure large gumdrops to the Styrofoam form with the toothpicks. Arrange the small gumdrops in between the large ones to hide the Styrofoam form. The trees are pretty on mantels or arranged near gingerbread houses.

Hawaiian Holiday Bread

Hawaiian Holiday Bread Dough

1/2 cup mashed potato
3/4 cup water
1 teaspoon lemon extract
1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon butter
1 teaspoon salt
2 eggs, beaten
3 1/2 cups flour
1 package yeast

Put all ingredients in order listed in a bread maker. Choose the dough setting. When dough is done, put it on a board and let it rest 10 minutes.

Glaze

1/2 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
3/4 cup whipping cream
1 teaspoon rum extract
1 tablespoon macadamia nut liquor
1 cup chopped pecans
1/2 cup raisins
1/2 cup chopped dried apricots

Mix glaze ingredients together. Grease a tube pan. Pour 1/3 on the bottom. Divide dough into 30 to 40 equal pieces. Arrange in layers in pan. Pour glaze in between layers. Let the dough rise until doubled.

Heat oven to 350 degrees F and bake for 30 to 40 minutes. Let stand for five minutes and turn pan upside down. Serve warm.

Heirloom Holiday Fruit Drops

1 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 cup shortening
1/4 cup buttermilk or 1/4 cup water
1 egg
1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup candied cherries, cut in half
1 cup chopped dates
3/4 cup chopped nuts
Pecan halves, if desired

Beat brown sugar, shortening, buttermilk and egg in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until blended, or mix with spoon. Gradually stir in flour, baking soda and salt. Stir in cherries, dates and chopped nuts. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Grease cookie sheet.

Drop dough by rounded teaspoonsful about 2 inches apart onto cookie sheet. Place a pecan half on each cookie if desired.

Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until almost no indentation remains when touched lightly with finger. Immediately remove from cookie sheet to wire rack; cool completely.

Yield: 48 servings

Holiday Banana Bread

1/3 cup shortening
2/3 cup granulated sugar
2 slightly beaten eggs
1 cup mashed bananas
1/2 cup chopped nuts
1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 3/4 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup mixed candied fruit
1/4 cup raisins

Sift dry ingredients and add nuts.

Place shortening in bowl. Gradually beat in sugar. Add eggs, flour and bananas. Fold in fruit and raisins. Bake 350 degrees F for 60 to 70 minutes.

Let cool one-half hour.

Makes two small loaves.

Holidau Banana Pudding

4 cups banana pudding

2 cups Cool Whip

6 bananas

1 box vanilla wafers – holiday colored

Mix together, spoon into a pretty clear glass dish and refrigerate.

Holiday Billy Goats

1 cup butter or margarine
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
3 egg yolks
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 1/2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
2 tablespoons buttermilk
4 cups nuts, chopped
1 pound dates, chopped

Cream together the butter or margarine and sugar until fluffy. Add the egg yolks and vanilla extract and heat well for about 2 minutes.

Sift together the flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and cloves and add to the mixture. Add the milk and stir well. Now fold in the nuts and dates.

Drop by the teaspoonful onto a cookie sheet.

Bake at 325 degrees F for about 20 minutes.

Yield: Makes about 7 dozen.

Holiday Bourbon and Eggnog Cake

1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1 cup butter
2 eggs
3/4 cup prepared eggnog
1/4 cup bourbon
2 1/4 cups flour
1 teaspoon each baking powder and soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon allspice
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
3/4 cup chopped glazed cherries
3/4 cup chopped toasted almonds

Cream together sugar and butter until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs until blended. Beat in eggnog and bourbon until blended. In a bowl, mix together the remaining ingredients and beat into egg mixture until nicely blended. Do not over-beat.

Spread batter evenly into a greased 10-inch tube pan and bake in a 350 degree F oven for 55 minutes.

Allow to cool in pan.

When cool, remove from pan and drizzle with glaze. Decorate top with whole glazed cherries and toasted slivered almonds.

Eggnog Cream Glaze

1 tablespoon each heavy cream, and eggnog
1 cup sifted confectioners' sugar

Stir together all the ingredients until blended. Drizzle over cooled cake.

Holiday Can Cakes

3 beaten eggs
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup milk
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 cups shredded carrot
1 1/3 cups flaked coconut
1/2 cup snipped maraschino cherries
1/2 cup raisins
1/2 cup chopped nuts

Combine eggs, oil and milk.

Mix flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon and salt; add egg mixture. Mix until just moistened. Stir in remaining ingredients. Spoon into 4 well greased and floured 1 pound cans. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45 to 50 minutes. Let set about 10 minutes before removing from cans.

For gift giving, wrap in iridescent cellophane and tie with a ribbon at both ends.

Yields 4 cakes

Holiday Cheddar Date Cake

Serving size: 20

3/4 cup butter, at room temperature
1 1/2 cups light brown sugar, firmly packed
4 large eggs
1 cup sharp Cheddar, shredded
3 1/2 cups unbleached flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
16 ounces dates, pitted, finely chopped
2 cups pecans, chopped
4 ounces candied cherries, halved
2 cups golden raisins
1 cup milk

Decorations

4 candied pineapple slices
12 whole almonds, blanched

You can make a decorative design on the top of the cake by quartering the candied Pineapple Slices and using the whole almonds, if desired.

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F and grease and flour a 10–inch tube pan; set aside.

In a large bowl, beat the butter and brown sugar with an electric mixer on medium, until well blended. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in the cheddar cheese.

Sift the flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and cloves into a medium bowl.

In another medium bowl, combine the dates, pecans, cherries and raisins. Add 2 tablespoons of the flour mixture, tossing lightly to coat the fruit and nuts.

Alternately beat the remaining flour mixture and milk into the butter mixture until well blended. Stir in the floured fruit mixture by hand until distributed throughout the batter. Turn into the prepared pan.

Bake for 2 to 2 1/2 hours in the preheated oven until the cakes shrinks from the side of the pan and the top springs back when lightly pressed.

Cool for 15 minutes in the pan on a wire rack then remove from the pan.

Cool completely on the wire rack. When cool, store in a container with a tight lid for up to 6 weeks.

To serve, cut into thin slices.

Holiday Chocolate Log with Chocolate Truffle Cream Frosting

6 eggs
3/4 cup granulated sugar, divided
1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
Dash of salt
Confectioners' sugar
Filling (see recipe)
Chocolate Truffle Cream Frosting
Candied cherries for garnish

Separate eggs.

Grease bottom of 15 1/2 x 10 1/2-inch jellyroll pan. Line with wax paper. Grease wax paper lightly. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

In large bowl, beat egg whites with electric mixer at high speed, just until soft peaks form when beater is slowly raised. Add 1/4 cup sugar, 2 tablespoons at a time, beating until stiff peaks form when beater is slowly raised.

With same beaters, beat yolks at high speed, adding remaining 1/2 cup sugar, 2 tablespoons at a time. Beat until mixture is very thick, about 4 minutes.

At low speed, beat cocoa, vanilla extract and salt into yolk mixture, just until smooth. With wire whisk or rubber scraper, using an under-and-over motion, gently fold cocoa mixture into egg whites, just until blended. No egg white should show.

Spread evenly in prepared pan. Bake 15 minutes or until surface springs back when gently pressed with fingertip.

Sift confectioners' sugar in 15 x 10-inch rectangle on clean linen towel. Turn cake out onto sugar-covered towel. Lift off pan and peel paper off cake.

Roll up jellyroll style, starting with short end, towel and all. Cool completely on rack, seam side down, at least 30 minutes.

Prepare filling and frosting.

Unroll cake and set towel aside. Spread cake with filling to 1-inch from edge; re-roll. Place, seam side down on plate. Cover loosely with foil. Refrigerate 1 hour before serving. To serve, top with chocolate truffle cream frosting and decorate with candied cherries. Cake can also be topped with confectioners' sugar, and decorated with angelica (see note) and cherries. Makes 10 servings.

NOTE: The chocolate log can be made a week in advance, then frozen, wrapped in foil. Let stand at room temperature to thaw for about 1 hour before serving.

Angelica is available at specialty food stores and some supermarkets.

Filling

1 1/2 cups whipping cream, chilled
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 teaspoons instant coffee powder
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

To make filling: Combine ingredients except cherries for garnish in medium bowl and beat with electric mixer until thickened, then refrigerate.

Chocolate Truffle Cream Frosting

4 large egg yolks
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon instant coffee or espresso powder (optional)
1/3 cup boiling water
6 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, finely chopped
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut in small pieces

Whisk together in medium size heat-proof (preferably stainless steel) bowl the egg yolks, sugar and coffee powder if using. Whisk in boiling water. Set bowl in large skillet of barely simmering water and heat, stirring constantly until the mixture reaches 160 degrees F on an instant-read thermometer.

Remove from heat and stir in chocolate and butter. Stir until chocolate and butter are melted and mixture is smooth. Let cool until spreadable. This frosting keeps, refrigerated, up to 6 days. Soften and stir until smooth before using.

Makes about 3/4 cup.

Holiday Coffee

3/4 cup ground coffee

4 cups water

1/2 cup sweetened condensed milk

Whipped cream

4 (3-inch) sticks cinnamon

4 maraschino cherries with stems

Prepare coffee according to manufacturer's directions using 3/4 cup ground coffee and 4 cups water. Stir sweetened condensed milk into coffee, and serve immediately with a dollop of whipped cream, a stick of cinnamon and a maraschino cherry.

Makes 4 1/2 cups.

Holiday Cranberry Wine

- 3 cups chopped cranberries (use food processor)**
- 2 1/2 to 3 cups granulated sugar**
- 1 (3 liter) bottle semi-dry white wine or any other white wine you prefer**

Mix all ingredients together in large bowl. Transfer to 1 gallon glass jar or 2 1/2 gallon jars. Keep in refrigerator 30 days at least. Strain with cheesecloth.

Reserve cranberries for a special holiday dessert, served over vanilla ice cream. Keeps indefinitely in refrigerator.

Holiday Crescents

1 cup (2 sticks) butter or margarine
5 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
1 1/2 cups chopped pecans
2 cups flour
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Cream sugar and butter. Add flour, vanilla and pecans. Work mixture and form into balls. Shape into crescents. Bake on ungreased cookie sheets at 325 degrees F for 25 to 30 minutes or until light golden color. Cool slightly and roll in confectioners' sugar.

Holiday Date Brownies

8 ounces dates, pitted and chopped
1 cup boiling water
1 cup shortening
1 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 cup cocoa
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup chopped walnuts or pecans
1 (16 ounce) package semisweet chocolate chips

Combine the dates and boiling water in a small bowl. Cool to room temperature.

With an electric mixer, cream shortening; gradually add sugar and beat well. Add the eggs, vanilla extract and date mixture; mix well.

Combine the flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt in another mixing bowl. Add the dry ingredients to the creamed mixture, with the beater at low speed; mix until combined.

Spread the mixture in a 15 x 10-inch jellyroll pan coated with vegetable spray. Sprinkle the top with the nuts and chocolate chips.

Bake at 375 degrees F for 25 to 30 minutes. Cool completely in the pan. Cut into 2-inch squares.

Yield: 3 dozen

Holiday Dressing

1 large package cornbread stuffing mix
2 small packages herb bread stuffing mix
1 cup chopped onion
1 cup chopped celery

Mix and let set for several hours or overnight.

Add the following:

1 can cream of mushroom soup
1/4 to 1/2 cup vegetable oil
2 eggs
Turkey broth (to moisten)
Some of the turkey meat, shredded or chopped

Mix well and bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes to 1 hour or until brown on top.

Holiday Eggnog

12 large eggs
1 1/4 cups granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 quarts milk
1 cup dark rum
2 tablespoons vanilla extract
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 cup heavy or whipping cream

In a heavy 4-quart saucepan with wire whisk, beat eggs, sugar, and salt until blended. Gradually stir in 1 quart milk and cook over low heat, stirring constantly or until custard thickens and coats the back of a spoon well — about 25 minutes. Mixture should be about 160 degrees F, but do not boil or it will curdle.

Pour custard into a large bowl; stir in rum, vanilla extract, ground nutmeg, and remaining milk. Cover and refrigerate until well chilled, at least 3 hours.

To serve, in small bowl, with mixer at medium speed, beat heavy or whipping cream until soft peaks form. With wire whisk, gently fold whipped cream into custard mixture. Pour eggnog into chilled 5-quart punch bowl; sprinkle with nutmeg for garnish.

Makes about 16 cups.

Holiday Eggnog Bread

Serving size: 12

2 eggs
1 cup eggnog
1/2 cup margarine, melted
2 teaspoons rum extract
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 1/4 cups flour
1 cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg, ground
1/2 cup pecans, chopped
1/2 cup red and green candied cherries, chopped

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a 9 x 5-inch loaf pan.

In a large bowl, beat eggs, add sugar, eggnog, margarine, rum extract, and vanilla extract. Blend well. Stir in flour, baking powder, salt, nutmeg, pecans and red and green candied cherries. Mix just until blended.

Pour into prepared loaf pan. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes.

Holiday Eggnog Pie

Crumb Crust

1 1/2 cups graham cracker crust
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup chopped almonds
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup butter, melted

Combine crust ingredients in a small bowl. Press the mixture on bottom and sides of a buttered 10-inch pie pan.

Filling

1 envelope unflavored gelatine
1/4 cup cold water
1/3 cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/8 teaspoon salt
2 cups canned eggnog
1 1/2 (1 ounce) squares unsweetened
chocolate, melted
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons rum
1 cup whipping cream, whipped

Sprinkle gelatine over water to soften. Mix sugar, cornstarch and salt in top of a double boiler. Gradually stir in eggnog. Cook over hot, not boiling, water, stirring constantly until thickened. Remove from heat and stir in softened gelatine until dissolved. Divide filling in half. Add melted chocolate and vanilla extract to one half. Set aside. Allow remaining half to cool; then fold in rum and whipped cream. Pour the rum-flavored mixture into the pie shell. Let set in refrigerator. Pour chocolate mixture on top. Chill at least 6 hours or overnight. Several hours before serving, make topping.

Topping

1/4 cup confectioners' sugar
1 to 4 tablespoons rum
1 cup whipping cream, whipped
Chocolate curls (optional)

Fold sugar and rum into whipped cream. Pipe onto top of pie with a pastry tube or swirl on top. Sprinkle with chocolate curls, if desired. Chill before serving.

Holiday Fruit Bars with Vanilla Filling

1/2 cup butter, softened
3/4 cup packed brown sugar
1 egg
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup mixed candied fruit
3/4 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
1/2 cup coarsely chopped nuts

Vanilla Filling

2 tablespoons granulated sugar
2 tablespoons milk
1 tablespoon melted butter
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 egg
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt

Cream butter, brown sugar, egg and vanilla in bowl until light and fluffy. Add mixture of flour, soda, and salt; mix well. Spread in greased 9 x 13-inch pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 12 minutes or until light brown. Cool.

Spread with Vanilla Filling. Sprinkle fruit, chocolate chips and nuts over filling. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Cool completely. Cut into bars.

Filling: Combine sugar, milk, butter, vanilla extract and egg in small mixer bowl. Beat until smooth. Add flour, baking soda and salt. Beat until blended.

Holiday Fruitcake with Louisiana Pecans

**1 pound dark raisins
1 pound light raisins
2 pounds currants
1 pound citron
2 pounds Louisiana pecans
4 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons nutmeg
1 teaspoon mace
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 pound butter
1 pound brown sugar
12 eggs
6 ounces orange marmalade
1/2 cup honey
1/2 cup sherry**

Garnish

**Candied cherry halves
Pecan halves**

Combine raisins and currents with citron and nuts. Sift flour with spices and resift; mix 2 cups of sifted flour mixture with the fruit and nuts. Cream butter until soft and smooth, blend in sugar thoroughly, and add eggs one at a time, beating well after each egg is added. Add marmalade, beat. Add remaining flour mixture alternately with honey and sherry mixing well after each addition. Stir in floured fruits and nuts, and mix well until distributed through the batter.

Pack into loaf tins lined with 2 thicknesses of wax paper, top with candied cherries and whole pecans halves and bake at 250 degrees F for 2 1/2 to 3 hours, depending on size of pan.

Cakes are done when they pull away from sides of pan and are firm to the touch in the center.

Holiday Peppermint Bars

Crust

3/4 cup granulated sugar
3/4 cup butter, softened
1 tablespoon milk
1 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup finely chopped pecans
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1 cup milk chocolate chips

Frosting

4 cups confectioners' sugar
1/4 cup butter, softened
3 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon peppermint flavoring
3 or 4 tablespoons milk
Crushed peppermint candy, optional

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

For the crust, combine sugar, butter and milk in a medium bowl and beat until creamy and well combined. Stir in flour, pecans and baking powder until well-combined. Press into the bottom of a 13 x 9-inch baking pan and bake 15 to 20 minutes or until light brown.

Sprinkle with chips and let stand 2 minutes. Spread melted chocolate over crust and set aside to cool completely.

To make frosting: Combine confectioners' sugar, butter, cream cheese, salt and peppermint flavoring in a large bowl. Beat at medium speed, scraping the bowl often, until partly blended. Add a tablespoon of milk and beat longer. Beat in enough remaining milk to reach desired spreading consistency. Spread on top of cooled chocolate and sprinkle with crushed peppermint candy, if desired.

Chill 1 hour or set aside several hours for frosting to set up before cutting into desired shapes.

Makes about 4 dozen.

Holiday Peppernuts

3/4 cup granulated sugar
2/3 cup dark corn syrup
1/4 cup milk
1/4 cup lard
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon anise extract
1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon salt
5 cups all-purpose flour

Combine sugar, corn syrup, milk and lard in a saucepan. Heat to boiling. Cool.

Stir in remaining ingredients except flour. Mix in enough flour to make a stiff dough, kneading in the last addition. Chill. Shape dough into 3/4-inch thick rolls on a board lightly dusted with sifted confectioners' sugar. Cut each roll in pieces about 3/8-inch long. Bake on cookie sheet at 375 degrees F until browned, 8 to 10 minutes. Let cool on cookie sheet 1 or 2 minutes before removing.

Holiday Rice Bread

1 1/2 cups orange juice
2 cups granulated sugar
2 eggs
2 teaspoons grated orange peel
1/2 cup butter or margarine, melted
3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup cooked and cooled rice

Glaze

3/4 cup chopped pecans
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
1/2 teaspoon orange zest
3 tablespoons orange juice

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease and four two 9 x 5 x 3-inch loaf pans.

Combine orange juice, sugar, eggs, orange peel and butter or margarine.

In a separate bowl, mix flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add orange juice mixture to dry ingredients and mix well. Fold in rice and pecans. Pour batter into prepared pans. Bake for 1 hour or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pans 5 minutes, then turn out to cool.

Combine sugar, juice and zest. Drizzle over loaves when cool.

Holiday Rum Balls

3 cups finely crushed vanilla or chocolate wafers

1 cup finely chopped walnuts

1 1/3 cups (1 can) sweetened condensed milk

1/3 cup rum

Candy-making chocolate

Combine first four ingredients and blend well. Chill for 1 hour.

Shape into balls. Melt chocolate according to package directions. Dip balls into melted chocolate and set on wax paper until chocolate is set. Store in a covered container in a cool place.

Holiday Slush Mix

1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
7 cups water
1 large can frozen limeade or orange juice
1 large can frozen lemonade
2 cups strong tea
1 cup bourbon (optional)

Boil sugar and water. In large half gallon pail or container, mix all ingredients thoroughly. Place in freezer and stir occasionally for 2 days before serving. Mixture will freeze into a "slush" that can be scraped with ice cream spoon into glasses.

Add 7-Up or Squirt for a tasty holiday beverage.

Holiday Spumoni Meringues

3 egg whites
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
Dash of salt
1 cup granulated sugar
1 pint spumoni or your favorite holiday ice cream
(eggnog ice cream is great for this also)
Graham cracker crumbs

Have egg whites at room temperature. Add vanilla extract, cream of tartar and salt. Beat until frothy. Gradually add sugar, a little at a time, beating until very stiff peaks form and sugar is dissolved.

Cover cookie sheet with wax paper. Using large pastry bag with star tube, form 5 meringue bowls using 1/2 cup mixture for each. Bake at 275 degrees F for one hour.

Let dry in oven for one additional hour.

Fill cooled meringues with ice cream and sprinkle with graham cracker crumbs. Makes 5 servings.

Holiday Wassail

6 cups apple cider
2 1/2 cups apricot nectar
2 cups unsweetened pineapple juice
1 cup orange juice
1 teaspoon whole cloves
4 whole allspice
3 (3-inch) sticks cinnamon

Combine all ingredients in a Dutch oven; bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 15 minutes. Strain and discard spices. Serve hot.

Makes 3 quarts.

Holiday Wreath

1 1/2 tablespoons margarine
5 ounces marshmallows (approximately 20)
or 2 cups miniature marshmallows
3 cups crisp rice cereal
1 container ready-to-spread vanilla frosting
A few drops of green food coloring
2 pounds M&M's Plain Chocolate Candies for the Holidays
1 red satin bow

Melt margarine in a saucepan over low heat. Add marshmallows and stir until completely melted. Remove from heat and tint with food coloring. Mix in crisp rice cereal.

Coat your hands with margarine and form mixture into a ring on wax paper. (Ring should be about 7 inches in diameter.) Stir in a few drops of food coloring in the frosting until blended thoroughly. Reserve 1/4 cup and set aside.

Using a butter knife or spatula, spread thin layer of frosting over the entire ring. Place green M&M's Plain Chocolate Candies for the Holidays all over the ring. For any open spots, dab some of the vanilla frosting on the back of the green M&M's Plain Chocolate Candies for the Holidays and place where needed.

Dab frosting on the red M&M's Plain Chocolate Candies for the Holidays and place 3 candies in a cluster to create berries. Dab frosting on the back of the bow, and place on wreath.

Slice to serve.

Holly Cookies

30 large marshmallows
1/2 cup margarine
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 to 4 cups cornflakes
3 1/2 cups "red hots" candies
1 teaspoon green food coloring

Mix marshmallows, margarine, vanilla extract and food coloring in a large pot. Melt over medium heat, stirring constantly until the marshmallows are melted. Remove from heat and add cornflakes. Drop teaspoon size cookies on wax paper and add the "red hots" (4 look nice on the cookies). Do not double the recipe.

Homemade Christmas Candy Canes

**3 cups granulated sugar
1 teaspoon peppermint extract
1/2 cup water
3/4 cup light corn syrup
3/4 teaspoon red food coloring
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar**

Combine the sugar, water, syrup and cream of tartar in a sauce pan and heat till the sugar has dissolved.

Divide mixture into 2 saucepans, bring to a boil (do not stir the mixtures in both pots) until the candy thermometer reads 280 degrees F.

Add 1/2 teaspoon peppermint into each pot and add the red food coloring into one pot, leaving the other pot plain.

Oil an enamel or marble surface or slab. Place mixture from one pot and stretch it like taffy, pulling and forming the mixture into a rope. Set aside and continue with other pot doing the same thing.

Take both red and white ropes and twist them around each other again and again. Cut into desired sizes and form into candy cane shapes.

Oil the surface lightly again and place candy canes and allow them to harden.

Have fun making these!

Houska (Bohemian Christmas Cake)

3 packages active dried yeast
1/4 cup lukewarm water
1 teaspoon sugar sprinkled over yeast
1 cup milk, scalded and cooled
1/2 cup stick margarine
1 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon salt
3 eggs, beaten
Grated rind of 1 lemon
Juice of 1 lemon
1/2 cup dark raisins
1/2 cup light raisins
20 to 25 maraschino cherries, rinsed, drained and cut up
1/2 cup slivered almonds
6 to 8 cups sifted flour

Using a little more liquid plus 8 cups flour, you can make 2 loaves.

An egg yolk mixed with 1 tablespoon milk and brushed on loaves makes a shiny loaf (before baking).

Mix all the ingredients. Knead until well mixed. Let rise in warm protected area until double in size.

Knead down flat about 1-inch thick. (Use rolling pin or pat down.) Make long strips about 1-inch wide, intertwine 4 strips to make bottom. Then braid 3 strips for top. Place on top of 4 strips, secure with toothpicks. Let rise 1/2 hour or so.

Bake 45 to 55 minutes at 325 degrees F.

While still warm mix confectioners' sugar and water; drizzle over top of cake.

Irish Coffee Crunch

8 cups popped corn
3/4 cup light corn syrup
2 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon instant coffee
1 tablespoon non-dairy creamer
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon rum or brandy extract

Place popcorn in large greased bowl.

Combine remaining ingredients in 1-quart saucepan. Bring to a boil stirring constantly. Continue without stirring to hard ball stage. Pour over popcorn. Stir to coat evenly. Cool and serve.

Microwave method: Combine corn syrup, butter, coffee, creamer and extracts in 2-quart glass casserole. Microwave on HIGH for 2 to 3 minutes until mixture reaches hard ball stage. Stir every minute. Continue as above.

Jingle Bell Ginger Snaps

3/4 cup butter
1 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup molasses
1 egg
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon cloves
1/2 teaspoon ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt

Melt butter, let cool. Add sugar, molasses and egg. Beat well. Mix dry ingredients and add to first mix. Beat well. Chill.

Form 1-inch balls and bake on greased cookie sheet 2 inches apart at 375 degrees F for 8 to 10 minutes.

Johnny Appleseed Apples

1/2 cup butter, softened
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1/8 teaspoon almond extract
1 1/4 cups flour
Red food coloring
Green food coloring
Red sugar decorating crystals
Green sugar decorating crystals
Whole cloves

Cream butter, sugar and flavoring in a large mixing bowl. Reserve 1 tablespoon of the mixture in a small bowl. Add red food coloring to large portion; and green food coloring to small portion. Stir flour into the larger bowl of red dough. Add just enough flour to small bowl of green batter to make it pliable and easy to work dough. Roll about 2 teaspoons of the red dough into a ball and roll in red sugar crystals. Place on ungreased cookie sheet. Pinch a dab of the green dough between your fingers and pat to form leaf, dip into green sugar. Place two leaves on each ball. Insert whole clove between them to form "stem." Chill for 30 minutes.

Bake about 30 minutes in 300 degree F oven.

Kahlúa Christmas Cake

1 box pudding recipe devil's food cake mix
3/4 cup water
1/3 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 large eggs
3/4 cup strong black coffee
2 teaspoons baking soda
1/4 cup bourbon
1/2 cup Kahlúa

Mix cake ingredients and beat 3 minutes. Pour into a greased Bundt pan and bake at 350 degrees F for 50 minutes. Let cool, then ice.

Icing

1/3 cup evaporated milk
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter
1 cup granulated sugar
1 1/2 cups chocolate chips

In saucepan, beat evaporated milk, butter and sugar. Boil 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and add chocolate chips. Ice cake immediately. Decorate top with candied cherries and pecans.

Kahlúa Filled Cookie Cups

1/3 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup butter, softened
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon almond extract
1 egg yolk
1 cup all-purpose flour
Dash of salt

Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease 24 miniature muffin cups.

Beat sugar and butter until fluffy. Add vanilla extract, almond extract and egg yolk. Blend well. Stir in flour and salt. Mix well. Chill one hour.

Place 2 teaspoons dough into each muffin cup and press up sides to form shell. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes.

Filling

2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa
1/2 cup butter, softened
1 cup confectioners' sugar
2 tablespoons Kahlua (coffee liqueur)
Grated chocolate

Carefully remove cookie cups from muffin tin; let cool.

In small bowl, beat cocoa and butter until fluffy. Add confectioners' sugar and liqueur. Blend well. Spoon filling into pastry bag or a zip-type bag with the corner snipped off) and squeeze into cookie cups. Sprinkle with grated chocolate.

Khrustyky (Ukrainian)

2 eggs
3 egg yolks
1 tablespoon whipping cream
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
Oil for deep-fat frying
Confectioners' sugar

In a mixing bowl, beat the eggs, egg yolks, cream and vanilla. Beat in sugar.

Combine flour and salt; stir into the egg mixture just until smooth (dough will be soft). Divided into four portions.

On a well-floured surface, roll out one portion to 1/8-inch thickness. Cut into 1 1/2-inch strips; cut strips diagonally into three pieces. Cut a 1 1/2-inch slit lengthwise into the center of each piece; pull one end of strip through slit to make a loop. Cover shaped pieces while rolling out and cutting the remaining dough.

In an electric skillet or deep-fat fryer, heat 2–3 inches of oil to 375 degrees F. Fry pastries, a few at a time, until golden brown, turning once. Drain on paper towels. Dust with confectioners' sugar while warm.

Yield: 1 1/2 dozen pastries

Kris Kringles

1/2 cup butter or margarine

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1/8 teaspoon salt

20 to 25 maraschino cherries

20 to 25 chocolate chips

Cream sugar and butter well. Add vanilla extract, flour and salt. Mix well. Stuff cherries with chocolate chips. Wrap each cherry in 1 teaspoon dough. Bake on ungreased cookie sheet for 12 to 25 minutes at 350 degrees F. Cool.

Dip tops of cookies in melted chocolate.

Liqueur Cakes

Cakes

8 eggs

2 2/3 cups granulated sugar

3 1/2 cups flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 cup heavy cream

1 vanilla bean or 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

3/4 cup melted butter (at room temperature)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease and flour four 8 x 3 3/4-inch loaf pans. Split open vanilla bean and scrape seeds into cream. Drop pod into cream and heat until scalding. Let cool.

Whisk together the eggs, sugar and salt until well blended. Sift the flour and baking powder together. Whisk the sifted dry ingredients into the egg/sugar mixture just until blended. Remove (and discard) the vanilla bean pod from the cream, and whisk cream into the batter. Gently mix in the melted butter, pour batter into the prepared loaf pans and bake for 50 to 60 minutes or until golden brown and a cake tester comes out clean. While cake is baking, prepare Syrup.

Syrup

3 cups granulated sugar

3/4 cup light corn syrup

1 1/8 cups water

1 3/4 cups liqueur of choice*

Combine sugar, water and corn syrup in a heavy saucepan. Stir mixture over medium-high heat until it comes to a simmer. Continue to heat **WITHOUT FURTHER STIRRING** until mixture comes to a full boil. Cover and continue to boil for about 1 minute or until all sugar is dissolved and liquid is clear. Remove from heat and let cool for about 5 minutes. Stir in liqueur.

When you remove cakes from the oven, allow them to cool for about 5 minute. Run a knife around the edges of the pan and turn cakes out of pan. Immediately return cakes to the pan. Use a thin wooden skewer to poke numerous holes into the cakes, about 1 inch apart. The holes should go all the way from the top to the bottom of the cake. Pour 1/4 syrup mixture over each cake and, if desired, sprinkle with toppings*. Let cool until the cakes have absorbed the syrup. Remove from pans.

* Liqueurs and Optional Toppings

Amaretto and 1/3 cup toasted almonds

Grand Marnier and 2 tablespoons grated orange zest

Frangelico and 1/3 cup chopped toasted hazelnuts

Rum and brandy (while not really liqueurs) work well in these cakes, also.

Liqueur Pound Cakes

Pound Cake

1 1/2 cups butter (at room temperature)

DO NOT USE MARGARINE

1 pound confectioners' sugar, sifted

6 large eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 3/4 cups Soft As Silk cake flour

In a large bowl, use an electric mixer to beat butter until creamy. Gradually add sifted confectioners' sugar to butter, beating until mixture is light and fluffy. Beat in eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla extract. Gradually mix cake flour into creamed mixture.

Prepare 4 loaf pans, each about 3 1/2 by 7 inches. Butter each loaf pan, then dust lightly with flour. Scrape batter mixture evenly into pans. Smooth the top surfaces. Bake at 300 degrees F for 50 minutes, until wooden pick comes out clean. Cool on a rack for 5 minutes.

Turn cake out and immediately return cake to pan. With a slender wooden skewer, wooden pick or fork, poke 1 inch deep holes, about 1/2 inch apart, all over the top of cakes. Immediately pour an equal amount of syrup over each cake. It will soak in. Let cool on rack for 30 minutes. Remove from pan and serve, or wrap securely and store in a cool area. Can store for up to 1 month in the refrigerator or 6 months in the freezer. Bring to room temperature before serving.

Liqueur Syrup

2 cups granulated sugar

1/2 cup light corn syrup

3/4 cup water

1 1/4 cups Amaretto (rum, almond, hazelnut
or orange-flavored liqueur)

In a 2- or 3-quart saucepan, combine sugar, light corn syrup and water. Over medium heat stir slowly until mixture simmers. Continue heating without stirring until mixture boils. Cover and boil for 1 minute until sugar dissolves and liquid is clear. If you don't cover the pan and if you stir while the syrup boils, crunchy sugar crystals will form in the finished cake. Remove from heat and uncover. Let stand to cool slightly, about 5 minutes.

Stir in the liqueur. Ready to pour into pound cakes or can store (can even be frozen!)

Makes 3 1/2 cups syrup.

Liqueur Truffles

8 ounces bittersweet chocolate
1 ounce unsweetened chocolate
1/2 cup whipping cream
1/4 cup unsalted butter
3 tablespoons rum or any flavor liqueur desired
Cocoa powder

In a heavy saucepan on low heat, melt chocolates, cream, and butter, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat, and stir in rum or liqueur. Pour into a small bowl; cool. Refrigerate 2 hours, until mixture hardens.

Using a melon baller, quickly form chocolate mixture into 3/4-inch balls. Refrigerate until cold. Roll balls in cocoa powder. Store in an airtight container. The truffles will keep up to 2 weeks in the refrigerator.

Yields about 32 truffles.

M&M Holiday Bark

1 package white chocolate bark

1 package baking M&M's

Melt bark in microwave, stirring to get smooth consistency, then stir M&M's into bark. Pour thin layer on wax paper to cool.

When completely cool and hard, break up into pieces.

Macaroon Squares

2 (7 ounce) bags sweetened flake coconut
1 cup unblanched almonds, ground
1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon almond extract
2 eggs
1 ounce each red and green chocolate coating disks
Sweetened flake coconut and
chopped almonds (for garnish)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line a 13 x 9–inch glass baking dish with aluminum foil. Coat foil generously with nonstick vegetable oil cooking spray.

Combine coconut and almonds in bowl. Stir in condensed milk until all dry ingredients are well coated. Stir in vanilla and almond extracts and eggs until well combined.

Scrape batter into prepared baking dish, spreading evenly with spatula.

Bake for about 35 minutes or until center is firm and edges start to brown slightly. Cool in pan on wire rack about 20 minutes. Invert onto cutting board. Carefully peel off foil. Let cool completely.

Cut macaroon into 24 equal squares. Turn squares over. Melt chocolate disks separately. Spoon red chocolate into plastic bag; snip off small corner. Pipe over squares in looping lines. Repeat with green chocolate. Garnish with extra shredded coconut and chopped nuts, if desired. Let set until firm.

Magic Rum Balls

Makes 48.

3 cups finely crushed vanilla wafers

1 cup finely chopped walnuts

1 (15 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk

1/3 cup rum

Confectioners' sugar or colored or chocolate sprinkles

Combine wafer crumbs and nuts. Add sweetened condensed milk and rum; blend well. Chill for one hour.

Dip palms of hands in confectioners' sugar. Shape, by teaspoonsful, into small balls. Roll in confectioners' sugar or sprinkles. Store in covered container in refrigerator with wax paper between layers. Rum balls can be kept moist and fresh for weeks.

Marshmallow Crème Marzipan

1 pound almond paste
2 pounds fondant and icing sugar
7 ounces Marshmallow Crème
1/4 cup white corn syrup
Colors to match fruits (if shaping into fruits)

Crumble almond paste into a large mixing bowl. Add sugar and mix until all paste is reduced to fine, evenly-coated particles. Add Marshmallow Crème and syrup and mix to form a thick dough-like mass. Knead the dough on a surface dusted lightly with fondant and icing sugar. If the dough sticks to your hands, knead in a little more Fondant and Icing Sugar. Break off a small amount, forming into 1-inch balls and shape as desired.

Marzipan

8 ounces almond paste
3/4 cup confectioners' sugar
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
Food colors

Beat all ingredients except food colors on low speed until smooth paste forms. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour.

Divide dough into equal parts, depending upon how many different colors you will use. Add food colors and shape dough. Store in refrigerator or at room temperature.

Maui Cheese Logs

1 (7 ounce) jar macadamia nuts
16 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/2 pound sharp Cheddar cheese, finely grated
3 teaspoons grated orange rind
6 tablespoons Grand Marnier liqueur

Chop macadamia nuts in a food processor. Reserve 3 tablespoons and set aside.

Place remaining chopped nuts in a medium-size bowl and add the cheeses. Blend. Add the orange rind and Grand Marnier. Blend well. Divide mixture in half and spoon each into a rectangle of plastic wrap. Fold wrap around mixture and form into logs. Refrigerate until firm.

When ready to serve, remove plastic and sprinkle with remaining nuts. This can be frozen and gets tastier by the day. Makes two cheese logs, about a pound each.

Merry Cherry Cheesecake Bars

Crumb Mixture

1/3 cup LAND O LAKES® Butter, softened

1/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar

1 cup all-purpose flour

Filling

8 ounces cream cheese, softened

1/4 cup granulated sugar

1 egg

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1/4 cup chopped green candied cherries

1/4 cup chopped red candied cherries

Heat oven to 350 degrees F.

Combine all crumb mixture ingredients in small mixer bowl. Beat at low speed, scraping bowl often, until well mixed (1 minute). Reserve 1/2 cup crumb mixture. Press remaining crumb mixture onto bottom of ungreased 8-inch square baking pan. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until lightly browned.

Combine all filling ingredients except cherries in same bowl. Beat at medium speed until smooth (1 to 2 minutes). Stir in cherries by hand. Spread filling over crust. Sprinkle with reserved crumb mixture. Continue baking for 18 to 20 minutes or until filling is set. Cut into bars while warm. Cover; store refrigerated.

Makes 25 bars.

Mexican Mice

1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar, plus more for dusting
2 cups flour
1 cup finely ground pecans
1/4 teaspoon salt
Chow mein noodles, mini chocolate chips, sliced almonds

Heat oven to 350 degrees F.

Beat butter and vanilla extract in bowl of electric mixture until light and fluffy. Add sugar; beat until combined. Mix in flour, pecans and salt. Shape dough into 1-inch ovals, tapering one end. Bake 15 minutes.

Remove from oven; insert noodle at tail end and 2 almonds about 1/3 of the way from pointed end for ears. Return to oven; bake until slightly browned, about 12 minutes.

Remove from oven; immediately place two chocolate chips in front of ears for eyes. (Chocolate will melt slightly and stick to cookie.) Dust mice with confectioners' sugar. Cool on wire rack.

Yield about 3 dozen.

Mexican Orange Candy

1 cup granulated sugar
1 1/2 cups milk
2 cups granulated sugar
Grated rind of two oranges
Pinch of salt
1/2 cup butter
1 cup nuts

Melt the first cup of sugar in a large vessel over medium heat while the milk is scalding in another saucepan. When the sugar is melted (stir continually and watch to keep from scorching), add the hot milk, all at once, stirring. Add the other two cups of sugar to this mixture. This will cause a hard ball in the mixture, but keep stirring until dissolved. Cook until it forms a hard ball in water or use a candy thermometer. Just before it is done, add grated orange rind, salt, butter and nuts. Remove from heat and beat until creamy. Pour into a buttered 9-inch square pan to cool. Cut into squares when cooled.

Mint Meringue Trees

2 egg whites
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon mint extract
1/4 teaspoon green food coloring
Decorating candies

Beat egg whites with cream of tartar and salt until foamy and double. Beat in sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time, beating until sugar dissolves and meringue forms firm peaks. Stir in mint and food coloring.

Fit a star tip on pastry bag. Press onto cookie sheet in tiny tree shapes. Bake at 225 degrees F for 1 hour 15 minutes or until firm. Cool 10 minutes.

Missouri Colonels

4 cups sifted confectioners' sugar, divided
1 cup finely chopped pecans
1/2 cup butter, softened
1/4 cup green crème de menthe
1 (6 ounce) package semisweet chocolate pieces (1 cup)
1 teaspoon shortening

In large mixing bowl, beat together 2 cups of the confectioners' sugar, the pecans, butter and crème de menthe. Beat or stir in remaining confectioners' sugar. Cover and chill mixture for 1 hour or until firm.

Shape into 1-inch balls. Place balls on a foil- or wax paper-lined baking sheet. Chill for 15 minutes.

In a small, heavy saucepan, heat chocolate pieces and shortening over very low heat, stirring constantly, until chocolate melts. Dip one side of each of the chilled balls into melted chocolate. Return to baking sheet. Chill until set.

Makes about 60 candies.

Make-Ahead Tip: Prepare candies as above. Cover and store in refrigerator for up to 1 week. Or freeze candies in a freezer container for up to 3 months.

Moravian Christmas Cookies

3 1/2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup softened butter
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 tablespoon brandy

Sift together flour, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Cream butter and sugar together. Add eggs and brandy; beat thoroughly. Gradually add sifted dry ingredients to creamed mixture, mixing well. Cover and chill several hours or overnight.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Roll out a small portion of the dough at a time on a floured board to a thickness of 1/4 inch (keep remaining dough in refrigerator). Cut with a cookie cutter into desired shapes (I usually use stars). Place 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet and bake for 12 to 14 minutes.

Makes about 4 to 5 dozen.

Napa Valley Chocolates Chocolate Candy Cane Stirrers

At Napa Valley Chocolates in St. Helena, California, Candy Dreyer delights in creating special holiday sweets, often with a touch of humor that brings out the smiles. Favorites with her customers are these chocolate-dipped peppermint canes.

NOTES: To avoid a white "bloom" on cooling chocolate, be careful not to overheat it. If you need to re-melt chocolate, add a little fresh chopped chocolate. About 1/2 the chocolate or candy coating will be left after dipping canes, but you need the volume to get a smooth finish. Use leftovers to make another simple confection: Dunk dried apricots into the extra and lay fruit on wax paper. Chill until firm. Package airtight; keep cool.

Makes 50 coated canes

About 1 cup finely chopped semisweet chocolate
50 (2 1/2 inch long) peppermint candy canes or sticks
Cellophane or clear plastic wrap

In a 1-cup glass measure or small, deep microwave-safe bowl, heat 3/4 cup chocolate in a microwave oven at 50% power until chocolate is soft, about 1 1/2 minutes. Stir chocolate until smooth. If needed, return to microwave and heat for 20-second intervals, stirring often. Add 1/4 cup chocolate and stir until smooth. Set container in a small bowl of hot water (water should come halfway up sides of cup) to keep chocolate soft; don't get water in chocolate or it will harden.

Cover a 12 x 15-inch baking sheet with nonstick cooking paper, baking parchment, or wax paper. Dip straight ends of candy canes into chocolate, coating 1/2 to 3/4 of the canes; use a spoon to pour chocolate over canes if needed. Lift out canes and lay slightly apart on the baking sheet.

If desired, drizzle a ribbon of chocolate from spoon over coated sections of the candy canes. Chill 3 to 4 minutes, then return canes to room temperature until chocolate is firm, about 15 minutes. Wrap each cane in cellophane or clear plastic wrap.

Napa Valley Chocolates Marshmallow Snowmen

At Napa Valley Chocolates in St. Helena, California, Candy Dreyer delights in creating special holiday sweets, often with a touch of humor that brings out the smiles. Favorites with her customers are these marshmallow snowmen.

NOTES: Buy candy designed to melt for coating or dipping; it's usually found beside cooking chocolates at the supermarket. For easy dipping, melt more than needed to coat the marshmallows; save the extra for other uses. Candies suited for decorations (whole or cut in pieces) include orange, green, or red gumdrops, black licorice sticks or thin black licorice whips (or strings), small colored candies, miniature chocolate chips, and colored sugars.

To make a drying rack for snowmen, cut top flaps from a corrugated cardboard box, leaving a neat edge. Make holes in the corrugated edge by pushing a craft or lollipop stick into the edge at 4-inch intervals. Place a couple of food cans (3 to 4 pounds total) in the box so it will sit steady. Push snowman-filled sticks into prepared holes to hold confections vertically while candy firms.

Makes 6 marshmallow snowmen

Candies for decorating or dried currants

1 cup (6 ounces) chopped red, green, or brown
candy chips or chunks made for melted coatings

18 large marshmallows

6 (3 1/2-inch) wood craft sticks or (8-inch) cardboard lollipop sticks

2 cups (12 ounces) chopped white candy chips or
chunks made for melted coatings

1 to 2 teaspoons solid shortening (optional)

6 (4 x 8-inch) cellophane bags

Red or green ribbons (1/4-inch wide)

Assemble candies for decorating by colors. If desired, cut orange gumdrops into slender wedges for carrot-shaped noses, green gumdrops into leaves, red gumdrops into berries, licorice sticks into twig-like arms.

To make hats, heat chopped red (or green or brown) candy chips in a 1-cup glass measure or small, deep microwave-safe bowl in a microwave oven at 50% power until chips are soft, 2 to 2 1/2 minutes. Stir candy until smooth; if lumpy, heat in a microwave oven for 20-second intervals, stirring frequently.

Line a 12- x 15-inch baking sheet with nonstick cooking paper, cooking parchment or wax paper. Set 6 marshmallows, flat side down, at least 2 inches apart on paper. Spoon about 1 tablespoon melted red (or color of choice) candy onto the center of 1 marshmallow top and quickly, using a small metal spatula or dinner knife, spread candy over top and around side of marshmallow; spread excess that flows onto paper into a 1/2-inch-wide rim for the hat. Add more melted candy, as needed, to make brim even. If desired, while candy is still soft, decorate hat with gumdrops cut to resemble leaves and berries (see notes). Repeat to make remaining hats. Chill hats, uncovered, until firm to touch, about 10 minutes.

To make snowmen, line another 12- x 15-inch baking sheet with nonstick cooking paper, baking parchment or wax paper. Dip 1 craft stick about 3 inches into water. Slide through the center of a flat

end of 1 marshmallow, then into, but not through, a second marshmallow, pushing them together. Repeat to make remaining snowmen; lay on the baking sheet.

In a 2-cup glass measure or small, deep microwave-safe bowl, heat chopped white candy chips in a microwave oven at 50% power until chips are soft, about 2 minutes. Stir candy until smooth; if lumpy, return to the microwave oven and heat for 20-second intervals, stirring frequently. If mixture is too thick for dipping (it varies with brands), stir in solid shortening; heat at 20-second intervals and stir often.

One stick at a time, quickly dip marshmallows into white candy to coat, using a spoon to pour candy over uncovered spots. Lift stick, letting excess candy drip back into cup. Lay marshmallow men at least 3 inches apart on paper-lined pan.

While candy coating is still soft, but not runny, make a face on the side of the top marshmallow of each stick. Use gumdrop wedge (see notes) for the nose, and chocolate chips, currants, or other small candies for eyes. On bottom marshmallow, press tiny candies down center for buttons; use thin licorice strips for twiggly arms or scarves. Pick up a stick and set hat on the snowman's head. If marshmallow coating firms before decorating is complete, glue with more melted candy (reheat in microwave, as needed). Stand snowman upright (see notes for rack). Repeat to make other snowmen.

When coating is firm to touch, 5 to 10 minutes, slip a cellophane bag over each snowman. Tie ribbons around bottom to close bag.

Neapolitan Christmas Cake

1 cup cake flour (not self-rising)
1/2 cup ground almonds
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
8 eggs whites (about 1 cup)
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon almond extract
Green and red food coloring
1 3/4 cups heavy cream
1 teaspoon unflavored gelatine
3 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
1/4 cup strawberry jam
3/4 cup sweetened flake coconut

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. With cooking spray, coat three 9 x 5 x 2-inch loaf pans. Line with wax paper.

Mix flour, almonds, baking powder and salt in a bowl.

Beat egg whites and cream of tartar in large bowl until foamy. Gradually add granulated sugar, beating until stiff peaks form. Sprinkle half the flour mixture over whites; fold in gently. Repeat with remaining flour. Fold in almond extract.

Measure 1 1/4 cups batter into each of 2 separate bowls. Tint 1 light green, the other pink. Transfer pink batter into one pan, green batter into second, and remaining white batter into the third pan.

Bake for 12 minutes, until tops spring back when pressed. Invert onto racks; peel off wax paper. Cool.

Heat 1/4 cup of the cream and the gelatine in a saucepan; stir to dissolve. Cool.

Beat remaining cream and confectioners' sugar in bowl until slightly thickened and frothy. Add gelatine mixture. Beat to stiff peaks.

Place green layer on platter. Spread with half the jam. Top with 1/2 cup cream mixture. Sprinkle with 1/4 cup coconut.

Continue layering with white cake, remaining jam, 1/2 cup cream mixture and 1/4 cup coconut. Top with pink layer.

Frost top and sides of cake with cream mixture. Place remaining flake coconut in plastic bag with 1 drop of green food coloring; knead to blend color. Sprinkle cake with tinted coconut. Refrigerate cake for 45 minutes or until whipped cream is firm.

Nesselrode Pie

3 egg whites
1/4 cup granulated sugar
3/4 cup coarsely chopped blanched almonds, toasted
1/3 cup maraschino cherries, cut into fourths
2 tablespoons maraschino cherry syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/3 cup sifted confectioners' sugar
1 1/2 cups heavy cream, whipped
1 recipe Vanilla Wafer Crust

Beat the egg whites until foamy, add the granulated sugar gradually and beat until stiff. Fold in the almonds cherries, cherry syrup and vanilla extract. Fold confectioners' sugar into whipped cream; fold into the first mixture. Pour into Vanilla Wafer Crust and freeze firm. Garnish top with cherry poinsettias and gumdrop holly leaves.

Vanilla Wafer Crust

1 1/4 cups fine vanilla wafer crumbs
1/3 cup melted butter

Combine crumbs and butter. Press into buttered 9-inch pie plate; chill until firm, about 45 minutes.

Cherry poinsettias: The stem mark of maraschino cherry will be the center of flower. Holding cherry at stem end, use sharp scissors to snip it in sixths from opposite end not quite through. Spread "petals" out around stem mark.

Gumdrop holly leaves: With rolling pin, roll green gumdrops to 1/8 inch on a little sugar between sheets of wax paper. Snip out holly-leaf shapes.

Serves 6.

No-Bake Fruit Balls

1 (6 ounce) package mixed dried fruit bits
3/4 cup finely chopped nuts
1/2 cup brandy
1/4 cup butter, softened
1/4 cup corn syrup
2 1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs
Confectioners' sugar

In a small bowl stir together fruit, nuts and brandy; let stand for 1 hour.

In a medium bowl beat butter and corn syrup until well blended. Gradually beat in crumbs until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add fruit mixture; mix well. Shape into 3/4-inch balls, wetting hands if mixture becomes dry. Roll balls in confectioners' sugar. Store in an airtight container up to 1 month or until ready to serve.

Makes 60.

Norwegian Candied Nuts

1/2 cup butter
4 cups shelled nuts, toasted
1 cup granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 stiffly beaten egg whites
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Melt butter in the oven in a 13 x 9–inch pan.

Beat egg whites until stiff. Add salt and gradually add sugar. Beat again until stiff again. Add vanilla extract and nuts. Blend until well mixed. Pour nuts and meringue mixture into pan with butter. Bake for 30 minutes, stirring every 8 minutes. Nuts should be golden brown, with no butter remaining in pan.

Nut Loaf

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 (15 to 18 ounce) bottle maraschino cherries, drained
2 pounds dates
2 pounds walnuts
1 pound Brazil nuts
5 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Sift dry ingredients together. Add fruit and nuts. Mix well until well coated with flour. Beat eggs and stir in vanilla extract. Mix into flour and nut mixture. Spoon into 3 greased loaf pans and bake at 325 degrees F for one hour.

Old Amish Christmas Cookies

1/2 cup butter
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup light molasses
1 egg, beaten
4 cup flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

Cream butter and sugar. Blend in molasses and eggs.

Sift dry ingredients together and stir into molasses–egg mixture. Roll dough out on a lightly floured board and cut into shapes with cookie cutters. Bake on greased cookie sheets in 350 degrees F oven for 10 to 12 minutes.

Old-Fashioned Hard Candy

2 cups granulated sugar
1 cup water
2/3 cup light corn syrup
1 teaspoon oil flavoring*
Food coloring as desired
Confectioners' sugar

* Oil flavoring can be purchased at drugstore or baking supply shop.

Mix sugar, water and syrup until sugar is dissolved. Boil on medium heat to 300 degrees F or hard ball stage.

Remove from heat. Add flavoring and food coloring and mix well. Odor will be extremely strong at this time, so prepare in well-ventilated kitchen. Pour in streams onto cookie sheet which has been very generously covered with confectioners' sugar. Make little ditches of confectioners' sugar so the candy does not spread too much. Sift more confectioners' sugar on top of candy streams. Cut with scissors into bite-size pieces as it begins to cool and outer edge will hold its shape. Do not wait until it is completely cooled, because it becomes hard and impossible to cut.

Yields 1 pound.

Orange Blossom Spritz

3/4 cup butter
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 egg
2 teaspoons finely shredded orange peel
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
Colored sugar, decorative candies, or nuts (optional)
Orange Frosting (optional); recipe below

Beat butter in a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed for 30 seconds. Add sugar and baking powder and beat well. Add egg, orange peel and vanilla extract. Beat until well combined. Beat in as much flour as you can. Stir in any remaining flour with a wooden spoon. Do not chill dough.

Pack dough into a cookie press. Force dough through press onto ungreased cookie sheets. If you like decorate with colored sugar, decorative candies, or nuts. Or, drizzle with Orange Frosting if you like.

Bake in a 375 degree F oven for 8 to 10 minutes or till edges of cookies are firm but not brown. Remove cookies and cool on wire racks.

Makes 60.

Orange Frosting

Stir together 1 cup sifted powdered sugar, 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract and 3 tablespoons orange juice. Add enough additional orange juice to make of drizzling consistency.

Orange Frosted Nuts

1 cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons orange juice
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup water
2 cups nuts
1 teaspoon grated orange rind

Combine sugar, water, juice and salt. Boil until a small amount dropped in cold water forms a soft ball. Remove from heat; stir in rind, add nuts. Stir gently until creamy. Turn onto wax paper, and separate nuts.

Makes about 1 pound.

Peach Eggnog

1 quart eggnog

3 cups half-and-half

12 ounces apricot nectar

1 cup rum

1 cup peach flavored brandy

In a 3-quart container, combine all ingredients; stir until well blended. Store in an airtight container in refrigerator. Serve chilled.

Yield: 14 servings

Peach–Nut Holiday Bread

Bake in convenience foil loaf pans for gift–giving.

**2 cups all–purpose flour
2/3 cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 (16 ounce) can peach slices (syrup pack)
2 eggs
1/3 cup butter or margarine, melted
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
2 tablespoons peach preserves (optional)**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease four 5 1/2 x 3 x 2–inch loaf pans or one 9 x 5 x 3–inch loaf pan, set aside.

In a large bowl stir together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt, set aside. Drain peaches, reserving 1/4 cup syrup.

In blender container or food processor bowl combine reserved peach syrup, eggs, butter or margarine and lemon juice. Cover; blend or process until smooth. Add peaches. Cover; blend or process just until peaches are chopped. Pour peach mixture over flour mixture; stir just until moistened. Fold in 1/2 cup nuts. Turn into prepared pan(s). Sprinkle with nuts. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes for small loaves or 55 to 60 minutes for large loaf or until a wooden pick inserted near center comes out clean.

Cool in pan 10 minutes; remove from pan. Cool on wire rack. Spread preserves over loaves not topped with nuts.

Makes 4 small loaves, 4 servings each or 1 large loaf, 16 servings.

Pennsylvania Dutch Brownies

4 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 (1 ounce) square unsweetened chocolate
1/4 cup light molasses
2 large eggs
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup plus 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
1 1/8 teaspoons ground cinnamon

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Grease 13 x 9-inch metal baking pan; set aside.

In a 4-quart saucepan, melt butter with chocolate over low heat. Remove saucepan from heat. With wire whisk or fork, stir in molasses, then eggs.

With spoon, stir in flour, ginger, cloves, baking soda, salt, 1 cup sugar and 1 teaspoon cinnamon just until blended. Spread batter evenly in pan. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, until toothpick inserted 2 inches from edge comes out clean.

Meanwhile, in cup, combine remaining 2 teaspoons sugar and 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon; set aside.

Remove pan from oven; immediately sprinkle brownies with cinnamon-sugar mixture. Cool brownies in pan on wire rack at least 2 hours. When cool, cut brownies lengthwise into 3 strips, then cut each strip crosswise into 5 pieces. Cut each piece diagonally in half.

Peppermint Cake Roll

1 box white angel food cake mix
Confectioners' sugar
1/2 package (2.8 ounce size) whipped topping mix (1 envelope)
1/3 cup crushed peppermint hard candies
1/3 cup miniature semisweet chocolate chips
1 or 2 drops red food color

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Prepare cake mix as directed on package, except spread half the batter in a 15 x 10–inch jellyroll pan. Spread remaining batter in a 9 x 5 x 3–inch loaf pan. Bake until top springs back when touched, 20 to 25 minutes for the jellyroll pan.

Loosen edges from pan. Invert on towel sprinkled with confectioners' sugar. While hot, roll cake and towel from narrow end. Cool on wire rack. Invert loaf pan to cool. Remove from pan; freeze for future use.

Prepare topping mix as directed on package. Fold in candies, chocolate chips and food color. Reserve 1/3 cup of the topping. Unroll cake; remove towel. Spread remaining topping over cake. Roll up; top with reserved topping.

Peppermint Candy Cheesecake

1 cup graham cracker crumbs
3/4 cup granulated sugar, divided
1/4 cup melted butter plus 2 tablespoons melted butter
1 1/2 cups sour cream
2 eggs
1 tablespoon flour
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
16 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup coarsely crushed candy canes
Whipped cream
Chocolate leaves
Additional coarsely chopped candy canes

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Blend graham cracker crumbs, 1/4 cup sugar, and 1/4 cup melted butter in bottom of ungreased 8–springform pan; press mixture evenly over bottom.

In blender or food processor, blend sour cream, remaining 1/2 cup sugar, eggs, flour and vanilla extract until smooth.

Add cream cheese and blend; then blend in 2 tablespoons remaining melted butter until completely smooth.

Stir in crushed candy canes, then pour mixture over crust in pan.

Bake in lower third of oven for 45 minutes.

Remove; allow to cool, then refrigerate for at least 4 hours, preferably overnight.

The chocolate leaves will form the petals of a poinsettia flower, with the crushed candy canes in the very center.

Peppermint Christmas Punch

1 quart eggnog

1/2 large bottle club soda

1/2 gallon vanilla ice cream

Peppermint candy, crushed

Stir together. Sprinkle with crushed peppermint candy. Decorate punch bowl with candy canes.

Peppermint Frosting

1/4 cup crushed peppermint stick candy

1/2 cup milk

About 1 pound confectioners' sugar, sifted

Heat candy and milk over hot water in a double boiler until candy is melted. Add enough confectioners' sugar to make frosting thick enough to spread on cake.

Peppermint Marshmallow Sauce

2/3 cup light corn syrup
3 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 (7 ounce) jar Marshmallow Crème
1/2 cup half-and-half
1/2 cup crushed hard peppermint candy

In medium saucepan, cook corn syrup and butter over medium heat until mixture comes to a boil, stirring constantly. Cook 5 minutes, stirring constantly.

Cool for 5 minutes. Stir in Marshmallow Crème, blending well. Gradually add half-and-half, stirring until mixture is smooth. Fold in crushed candy. Serve warm or cool over ice cream. Store any remaining topping in refrigerator.

Yields 2 cups.

Peppermint Meringues

2 egg whites
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 peppermint candy canes, crushed

In a mixing bowl, beat egg whites until foamy. Sprinkle with salt and cream of tartar; beat until soft peaks form. Gradually add sugar, beating until stiff peaks form, about 7 minutes. Drop by teaspoonsful onto ungreased foil or paper-lined baking sheets; sprinkle with the crushed candy. Bake at 225 degrees F for 1 1/2 hours.

Turn off heat; leave cookies in the oven with the door ajar for at least 1 hour or until cool. Store in an airtight container.

Yields 3 dozen.

Peppermint Panache Cheesecake

2 1/4 cups cream-filled chocolate sandwich cookie crumbs
2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
32 ounces cream cheese, softened
1 1/4 cups granulated sugar
1/2 cup whipping cream
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 large eggs
1 cup coarsely chopped cream-filled chocolate sandwich cookies
1/3 cup coarsely crushed hard peppermint candies
10 ounces premium white chocolate, finely chopped
1/3 cup whipping cream
Small candy bars for garnish

Combine 2 1/4 cups cookie crumbs and butter, stir well. Firmly press onto bottom and 2 inches up sides of a (9-inch) springform pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 8 minutes. Remove to a wire rack; let cool.

Reduce oven temperature to 325 degrees F.

Beat cream cheese at medium speed of an electric mixer until creamy; gradually add sugar, beating well. Add 1/2 cup whipping cream, flour and vanilla extract; beat well. Add eggs, one at a time, beating after each addition. Stir in 1 cup chopped cookies and 1/3 cup crushed peppermint candies. Pour batter into prepared crust.

Bake at 325 degrees F for 1 hour or until almost set. Remove to a wire rack; let cool completely. Cover and chill at least 8 hours.

Remove sides of springform pan.

Bring water to a boil in bottom of a double boiler; remove from heat. Combine white chocolate and 1/3 cup whipping cream in top of double boiler; place over hot water. Heat until chocolate is melted and smooth, stirring constantly with a rubber spatula. Let mixture cool slightly (3 to 5 minutes).

Spread white chocolate mixture over top and sides of cheesecake. Garnish with candy canes.

Makes 1 (9-inch) cheesecake.

Peppermint Patties

1 cup butter, softened
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1 egg
1 1/4 teaspoons peppermint extract
2 1/2 cups flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
Red food coloring

Cream butter; add sugar, beating until light and fluffy. Add egg and peppermint extract; beat well.

In small bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt; add to butter mixture. Divide dough in half. Add a few drops red food coloring to one half; refrigerate both halves until firm.

Divide each portion into 2 equal portions. On floured wax paper, roll one white portion and one red portion into an 8-inch square. Invert white dough onto red dough; remove wax paper. Tightly roll dough jellyroll fashion, peeling wax paper from red dough as you roll. Repeat with remaining dough. Cover with wax paper; chill.

Cut dough into 1/4-inch slices; place on ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 350 degrees F for 10 minutes. Remove to wire racks to cool.

Peppermint Pound Cake

3 cups granulated sugar
1 1/2 cups (3 sticks) butter or margarine (not low fat)
6 eggs
Pinch of salt
3 cups flour
1 cup milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Peppermint candy sticks

Blend sugar and butter together well. Add the eggs one at a time, stirring well after each one, then add salt. Add flour and milk alternately, ending with flour. Add vanilla extract.

Spray tube pan with vegetable spray, then coat the pan with a little flour. Divide dough into three separate parts. To one of the thirds, add half of a large stick of peppermint candy, crushed. Place one of the plain thirds in the tube pan, add the third with the crushed peppermint and, finally, the last third of plain dough. Bake for 1 hour, 20 minutes at 350 degrees F. Let cool, then ice with white icing. Coat top and sides with the remainder of the crushed candy

Serves 16 to 20.

Peppermint Presents

1 package (about 20 ounce) brownie mix and/or
1 purchased 12 ounce loaf pound cake
Peppermint ice cream
1 (12 ounce) can vanilla or white frosting
1 (14 ounce) package pull-apart red licorice string
Fresh mint leaves

Prepare brownie mix as directed. Bake in a 15 x 10-inch jellyroll pan for 15 minutes or until done in center. Cool and cut into 24 (2 1/2-inch) squares and/or cut pound cake into 12 slices, 1/2-inch thick. Trim edges to make even rectangles or squares.

Remove the ice cream from the freezer and allow it to soften slightly. Make space in the freezer for a baking sheet to hold the ice cream presents.

Place a piece of brownie or cake on a work surface. spoon a 1/2-inch layer of ice cream evenly on top. Place a second piece of brownie or cake over ice cream. Immediately place on the tray in the freezer. Repeat with remaining brownies and/or cake slices.

Pull the licorice strips apart into strings and cut into 10-inch lengths. Tie into bows, one for each "present," and set aside.

Remove the frozen ice cream presents from the freezer one by one. Spread the tops with frosting. Crisscross two lengths of licorice over the top and sides of each frosted cake, pressing lightly into frosting. Place a licorice bow in the center. Place cake in freezer until frosting is firm. Individually wrap in plastic wrap or place in an airtight container and freeze for up to 3 days. Top with mint leaves just before servings.

Peppermint Snowballs

1 1/4 cups crushed peppermint candies (about 45 round candies)
1 1/3 cups granulated sugar, divided
1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened
1/4 cup vegetable shortening
2 eggs
1 teaspoon peppermint extract
3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

In a food processor finely grind peppermint candies and 1/3 cup sugar to a powdery consistency; transfer to a small bowl.

In a large bowl, cream butter, shortening, and remaining 1 cup sugar until fluffy. Add eggs and extracts; beat until smooth.

In a medium bowl, combine flour and salt.

Add dry ingredients to creamed mixture; stir until a soft dough forms. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Roll balls in candy mixture. For best results, place 6 cookies at a time on an ungreased baking sheet.

Bake 8 minutes; immediately roll hot cookies in candy mixture. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Repeat with remaining dough. Store in an airtight container.

Yield: About 5 1/2 dozen cookies.

Peppermint Stick

3 cups ice
4 red and white peppermint sticks, broken into small pieces
2 tablespoons maraschino cherry syrup
1 liter cream soda
2 teaspoons imitation rum extract
1 (7 ounce) jar maraschino cherries
1 (14 ounce) aerosol can whipped cream
4 red and white peppermint sticks, for garnish

In a blender, combine ice, peppermint pieces, cherry syrup, cream soda, rum extract and drained maraschino cherries.

Ladle equal portions into four (8 ounce) mugs. Top with a whipped cream cloud and garnish with a peppermint stick.

Makes 4 servings.

Pine Cone Cheese Ball

- 1 (8 ounce) container garden vegetable cream cheese**
- 1 (8 ounce) container roasted garlic cream cheese**
- 1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese**
- 3 green onions chopped**
- 2 cups toasted pecan halves**

Stir together first four ingredients. Shape into an oval. Chill for 2 hours.

Arrange pecan halves over cheese oval in overlapping rows beginning at bottom and working upward.

Serve with crackers.

Pink Peppermint Holiday Fudge

15 broken small candy canes
1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter
16 ounces white chocolate (chips or coarsely chopped bars)
1 teaspoon peppermint extract (I use only 1/2 teaspoon)
8 to 10 drops red food color

Line an 8–inch square pan with aluminum foil. (They didn't say to butter the foil but I did)

Put candy canes in a gallon–size resealable plastic bag, seal and coarsely crush with a mallet or the bottom of a heavy can – you should have a scant 1/2 cup.

In a medium saucepan, combine condensed milk and butter over low heat, stirring until butter melts and mixture is simmering. Remove from heat, add white chocolate and stir until melted and smooth. Add peppermint extract and food color, stir until blended. Stir in all but 1 tablespoon of the crushed mint candies.

Spread in the pan and sprinkle top with remaining crushed mint candies. Refrigerate 4 hours or until firm. Invert pan onto a cutting board and peel off foil. Turn over and cut fudge into 1–inch squares. Roll into balls.

NOTE: After making the balls, barely melt semi–sweet chocolate chips. Use wooden pick inserted into balls and dip into chocolate. Let cool to firm up. Store in refrigerator until ready to serve.

Planters Holiday Chocolate Nut Squares

3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) butter or margarine
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1 1/4 cups flour
2 tablespoons heavy cream
1 3/4 cups Planters® Pecans or Walnuts, chopped
1 cup flaked coconut
4 ounces semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped

Beat 1/2 cup butter or margarine and 1/4 cup of the sugar until creamy. Blend in flour. Press on bottom of an ungreased 9-inch square baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 18 minutes or until edges are lightly browned.

Heat 1/2 cup of the sugar, 1/4 cup butter or margarine and heavy cream in saucepan, stirring until spread melts and mixture is blended. Stir in pecans; set aside.

Sprinkle coconut and chocolate over crust. Top with pecan mixture. Bake for 20 minutes more or until golden. Cool; cut into squares.

POINSETTIA

1/2 ounce Cointreau

2 ounces cranberry juice

4 ounces champagne

Pour Cointreau and cranberry juice into a champagne flute and fill with champagne.

Poinsettia Cookies

1 cup (2 sticks) butter or margarine, softened
1 cup confectioners' sugar
1 egg, beaten
1 1/2 teaspoons almond extract
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
Red decorating sugar, for garnish

Cream butter in a large bowl with an electric mixer. Add confectioners' sugar; beat well. Beat in the egg and extracts. Blend in the flour and salt. Form the dough into two disks and wrap them in plastic. Chill the dough well.

Remove one disk from the refrigerator. Roll dough out on a lightly floured surface to 1/8-inch thickness. Cut into 1 1/2-inch squares, then cut from each corner of the square almost to the center. Turn over every other cut point to the center and press gently, forming a pinwheel (or poinsettia). Sprinkle the center of each with red sugar. Repeat with the second disk of dough.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Place the cookies on greased baking sheets and bake until very lightly golden, about 8 to 10 minutes.

Makes about 5 dozen cookies.

Polish Angel Wings

4 egg yolks
1 whole egg
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup confectioners' sugar
2 tablespoons rum or brandy
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/4 cups flour
3 cups vegetable shortening for frying
Confectioners' sugar for topping

In a large bowl of an electric mixer, combine egg yolks, egg and salt. Beat on highest speed until mixture is thick and drops softly from the beaters, 7 to 10 minutes,

Beat in sugar, a small amount at a time. Beat in rum and vanilla extract. Remove from mixer. Fold flour into mixture by hand until incorporated.

Turn dough onto generously floured surface. Knead dough until blisters form on the dough, about 10 minutes. Add small amounts of flour as needed to surface to keep dough from sticking. Divide dough in half. Cover one half with inverted bowl, towel or plastic wrap to prevent drying.

Roll out other half of dough as thin as possible, (about an 8 x 12-inch rectangle). If dough resists, let it rest for a few minutes and resume rolling. Cut dough into 2 x 4-inch rectangles. Make a 2-inch slit from center almost to end of each dough strip. Pull opposite end of strip through slit to twist the dough. Repeat with remaining dough.

In a large skillet, heat vegetable shortening until it reaches 350 degrees F on a deep-fat fry thermometer. (This is important, if the oil is too cool, dough will absorb too much oil; if it is too hot, the pastry will burn on the outside and not cook properly on the inside.) Add a few angel wings at a time and fry until golden on both sides, turning about halfway through cooking time, about 1 1/2 minutes total. Remove to drain on paper towels. Repeat with remaining angel wings until all are fried. Cool completely and dust liberally with confectioners' sugar. Store in airtight container.

Rainbow Cookies

7 ounces marzipan paste or almond paste
1 cup granulated sugar
1 1/2 cups (3 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
4 large eggs, separated
1 teaspoon almond extract
2 cups sifted all-purpose flour (sift before measuring)
1/4 teaspoon salt
5 drops green food coloring, or to desired color
5 drops red food coloring, or to desired color
1 (12 ounce) jar raspberry jam (preferably seedless) or apricot
6 ounces semisweet chocolate chips (or make a ganache)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F and grease 3 (13 x 9-inch) metal baking pans. Line bottom of each with wax paper, letting it extend at 2 opposite ends, and grease paper.

Break marzipan paste into small pieces and grind with sugar in food processor until no lumps remain. Transfer to a large bowl and add butter. Beat with an electric mixer until light and fluffy, then add yolks and almond extract and beat well. Beat in flour and salt on low speed.

Beat egg whites in another bowl with cleaned beaters until they just hold stiff peaks and stir one third into batter to lighten slightly (batter will still be stiff). Fold in remaining whites thoroughly.

Divide dough into thirds (about 1 1/2 cups each). Stir green food coloring into one third and red food coloring into another, leaving one third plain. Spread each dough separately into a pan. (Layers will be thin.) Bake layers in batches in middle of oven until just set and beginning to turn golden along edges, 7 to 10 minutes total. Run a knife along edges to loosen from pan, then while still hot, invert a large rack over pan and invert layer onto rack, pulling gently on wax paper overhangs to release if necessary. (Or lift up the wax paper.) Peel off wax paper and cool completely.

Line a large shallow baking pan with wax paper and slide green layer into it. Spread half of jam evenly over green layer and carefully top with plain layer. Spread remaining jam evenly over uncolored layer and carefully top with pink layer (trim edges if necessary). Cover with plastic wrap and weight with a large cutting board or baking pan. Chill at least 3 hours.

Melt chocolate in a double boiler or a metal bowl set over a pan of barely simmering water. Remove weight and plastic wrap and spread chocolate evenly over top, but not sides, of pink layer. Let stand at room temperature until set, about 1 hour, and cut into small diamonds (12 rows crosswise and 12 diagonal rows).

Makes 7 dozen diamonds.

NOTES:

Do not make this dough ahead.

Be very careful when taking out of pan as it breaks easily. Pick up by wax paper.

Can use half strawberry and half apricot jam.

They freeze well.

Rainbow Pretzels

1/2 pound white chocolate
2 tablespoons white corn syrup
2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon water
Food coloring
50 miniature pretzels

In a 1–quart casserole place chocolate, corn syrup, butter and water. Cover. Microwave at medium for 4 to 5 minutes, until melted. Stir well, until smooth. Prepare up to 2 colors rainbow pretzels per batch. Tint chocolate mixture with food coloring as desired. Dip pretzels into mixture, removing excess. Place on cooling rack over wax paper to dry. If mixture becomes firm, microwave at medium for 1/2 to 1 minute, stirring until smooth and adding a few drops of water if necessary.

Raspberry Cheesecake Cookie Pizza

3/4 cup butter or margarine
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1 egg yolk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
8 ounces cream cheese, softened
1 egg
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1/3 cup seedless raspberry preserves
1/4 cup sliced almonds, toasted

Beat the butter or margarine in a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add the 3/4 cup sugar and beat until combined. Beat in egg yolk and vanilla extract until combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour with a wooden spoon. Spread dough in a lightly greased 12- or 13-inch pizza pan. Bake in a 350 degree F oven about 25 minutes or until golden.

Meanwhile, beat together cream cheese, 1 egg and the 1 tablespoon sugar until smooth. Spread over hot crust to within 1/2 inch of the edge. Dollop reserve on top. With a knife, carefully swirl preserve to marble. Sprinkle with almond. Bake 5 to 10 minutes more or until filling is set.

Cool in pan on a wire rack. Cut in wedges. Store in refrigerator.

Yields 12 to 16 servings.

Raspberry Fudge Balls

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
6 ounces chocolate chips, melted
3/4 cup vanilla wafer crumbs
1/4 cup seedless raspberry preserves
1/3 cup sliced almonds, finely chopped

Combine cream cheese and chocolate and mix until well blended. Stir in crumbs and preserves and blend well. Shape into 1 inch balls and roll in chopped almonds. Chill several hours.

Yield: about 30

Reindeer Cookies

1 cup chopped red bell pepper
1/2 cup chopped jalapeno pepper
5 cups granulated sugar
1 1/2 cups apple cider vinegar
1 container (6 fluid ounces) liquid pectin

Remove stems, veins and most of the seeds of the bell and jalapeno peppers. Mince peppers in a food processor.

In a 5–quart pot over high heat, combine bell peppers, jalapenos, sugar and vinegar. Bring to a rolling boil; boil for 3 minutes. Remove from heat and cool for 5 minutes. Stirring constantly, add the pectin and let mixture continue to cool for 2 minutes more. Stir for 1 minute. Pour into hot, sterilized jars and top with sterilized lids. Secure lids with bands and allow jars to cool slowly, creating a vacuum seal.

Reindeer Toffee

1 cup sweetened condensed milk
1 cup brown sugar
5 tablespoons corn syrup
1/2 pound butter or margarine

Mix all ingredients together in a large bowl. Put in microwave on **HIGH** until it bubbles – about 5 minutes.

Stir, then boil for 12 minutes, stirring three times, every three minutes.

Grease a cookie sheet and pour in center. Cool and cut into pieces.

Roasted Mixed Nuts

1 pound mixed nuts
1/4 cup maple syrup
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1 envelope ranch salad dressing mix

In a bowl, combine the nuts and maple syrup; mix well. Sprinkle with brown sugar and salad dressing mix; stir gently to coat. Spread in a greased 15 x 10–inch baking pan. Bake at 300 degrees F for 20 to 25 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool. Store in an airtight container.

Roasted Salted Brandied Nuts

**1 pound pecan halves or English walnut halves
Brandy, bourbon, dry vermouth or
orange juice as desired
2 to 3 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
Salt or seasoned salt as desired**

Place pecan or English walnut halves in a deep bowl; pour enough brandy or other liquor or orange juice over nuts to cover thoroughly. Allow nuts to stand at room temperature for at least 2 to 8 hours to absorb flavor of brandy or other liquor or orange juice.

Drain nuts thoroughly, patting dry with absorbent paper. Arrange nuts in one layer in a 15 x 10 x 1-inch baking pan which has been lightly coated with non-caloric vegetable cooking spray. Brush nuts lightly with butter or margarine and then sprinkle as desired with salt or seasoned salt. Bake, uncovered, in a preheated slow oven (300 degrees F) for about 30 minutes or until nuts are crisp. May serve warm or at room temperature.

Store in an airtight container in a cool dry place.

Rocks

1 pound butter
2 1/4 cups granulated sugar
10 eggs
5 cups flour
1 teaspoon allspice
1 teaspoon cloves
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup whiskey
2 pounds candied pineapple
4 quarts pecans
1 pound candied green cherries
1 pound candied red cherries

Soak pineapple and cherries in whiskey for about 24 hours. DO NOT DRAIN.

Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Sift flour to measure. Sift flour, salt, allspice, cloves and cinnamon together. Add fruit with whiskey and fold in pecans. Drop by teaspoonsful onto a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 300 degrees F for 25 to 30 minutes.

Rum Balls

2 cups finely crushed chocolate wafers
1 cup sifted confectioners' sugar
1 cup finely chopped nuts
1/4 cup light corn syrup
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons dark rum
1 cup chocolate sprinkles

Combine chocolate wafer crumbs, sugar, nuts, corn syrup and rum with hands. Mix until ingredients are well combined. The mixture will be stiff and sticky. Shape into 1-inch balls and roll in chocolate sprinkles. Refrigerate, covered, overnight.

If desired, roll in sprinkles again just before wrapping each ball individually in plastic wrap or before serving.

Rum Cake

Cake

1 cup chopped nuts
1 (18.25 ounce) box yellow cake mix
1 small box vanilla instant pudding
4 eggs
1/2 cup cold water
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup rum

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Grease and flour a Bundt pan. Sprinkle nuts over the bottom of the pan. Pour batter over the nuts. Bake for 1 hour. Cool. Invert onto a platter. Prick the top. Spoon and brush glaze over top and sides. Allow to absorb.

Glaze

1/4 pound butter
1/4 cup water
1 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup rum

Melt butter. Stir in water and sugar. Boil for 5 minutes, stirring constantly.

Remove from heat and stir in rum.

Rum Raisin Bundt Cake

1 (20 ounce) can crushed pineapple
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1/2 cup butter
3 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon allspice
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup dark rum
1 cup raisins
1 cup walnuts
Rum Glaze

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease well a 10-inch Bundt pan.

Drain pineapple, pressing out 1 1/2 cups pineapple juice. Reserve 1/4 cup juice for cake and 3 tablespoons for glaze. Cream sugar and butter. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Combine flour, baking powder, soda, allspice and salt. Beat in flour mixture alternating with pineapple liquid and rum. Stir in pineapple, raisins and nuts. Spoon into prepared pan. Bake for 50 to 55 minutes. Cool cake and spoon on glaze.

Rum Glaze
3 tablespoons dark rum
3 tablespoons reserved pineapple liquid
2 tablespoons softened butter
3 cups confectioners' sugar

Blend well and spoon over cooled cake.

Rum Raisin Cheesecake

1 cup old fashioned or quick-cooking oats, uncooked
1/4 cup chopped nuts
3 tablespoons margarine, melted
3 tablespoons packed brown sugar
16 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup flour, divided
2 eggs
1/2 cup sour cream
3 tablespoons rum
2 tablespoons margarine
1/3 cup packed brown sugar
1/3 cup raisins
1/4 cup chopped nuts
2 tablespoons old fashioned or quick-cooking oats, uncooked

Combine oats, nuts, margarine and brown sugar; press onto bottom of 9-inch springform pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 15 minutes.

Combine cream cheese, granulated sugar and 2 tablespoons of the flour, mixing at medium speed of electric mixer until well blended. Add eggs, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Blend in sour cream and rum; mix well. Pour over crust.

Cut margarine into combined remaining flour and brown sugar until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in raisins, nuts and oats. Sprinkle over cream cheese mixture. Bake at 350 degrees F for 50 minutes. Loosen cake from rim of pan; cool before removing rim of pan.

Rum–Raisin Fudge

1/2 cup raisins
2 tablespoons rum
2 cups granulated sugar
1/3 cup milk
1/3 cup half–and–half
2 tablespoons light corn syrup
2 tablespoons rum
2 tablespoons margarine or butter

Butter a loaf pan. Mix raisins and 2 tablespoons rum; reserve. Cook remaining ingredients except margarine in a 3–quart saucepan over medium heat, stirring constantly, until sugar is dissolved. Clip a thermometer to the side of the saucepan. Cook, stirring occasionally, to 234 degrees F. Remove saucepan from heat. Stir in margarine.

Cool mixture without stirring to 120 degrees F. (Bottom of saucepan will be lukewarm.)

Beat vigorously and continuously with spoon or heavy electric mixer 5 to 10 minutes or until candy is thick and no longer glossy. Mixture will hold its shape when dropped from a spoon. Quickly stir in raisin–rum mixture. Spread in pan; cool. Cut into 1–inch squares.

Makes about 30 candies.

Santa's Blanket Salad

1 large box raspberry gelatin
1 package frozen raspberries
1/2 package miniature marshmallows
2 cups hot water
1 can applesauce
1 cup yogurt

Dissolve gelatin and add frozen raspberries in hot mixture. Combine with applesauce, pour into a glass serving dish and chill until firm. Spread stirred yogurt over the top of the gelatin mixture.

Santa Claus Milk

4 cups milk
1 (2-inch) stick cinnamon
3 to 4 whole cloves
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon cornstarch
2 tablespoons cold milk
Ground nutmeg

Combine first three ingredients in a saucepan; cook over medium heat 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Heat thoroughly, but do not boil. Remove and discard cinnamon and cloves.

Combine sugar and cornstarch; add the 2 tablespoons cold milk, stirring mixture until smooth. Add cold milk mixture to hot milk mixture, stirring constantly. Cook 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Ladle into mugs, and sprinkle with nutmeg.

Yields 4 cups.

Santa's Surprises

1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
1 cup creamy peanut butter
1 cup light brown sugar
1 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 bag SNICKERS® Miniatures
1 bag DOVE® Milk or Dark Chocolate Gifts

Combine the butter, peanut butter, and sugars using a mixer on a medium to low speed until light and fluffy.

Slowly add eggs and vanilla extract until thoroughly combined. Then mix in flour, salt and baking soda. Cover and chill dough for 2 to 3 hours.

Unwrap all SNICKERS® Miniatures. Remove dough from refrigerator. Divide into 1 tablespoon pieces and flatten. Place a SNICKERS® Miniatures in the center of each piece of dough. Form the dough into a ball around each SNICKERS® Miniatures. Place on a greased cookie sheet and bake at 300 degrees F for 10 to 12 minutes. Let cookies cool on baking rack or wax paper. (Holiday Hint: Spruce up Santa's surprise by drizzling melted DOVE® Milk or Dark Chocolate Chocolate Gifts over the top of each cookie!)

Makes 2 dozen cookies.

Santa's Trail Mix

1 package red and green peanut M&Ms
1 package chocolate covered raisins
2 packages white fudge-covered pretzels
6 cups cinnamon graham cereal

In a large bowl, combine peanuts, raisins, pretzels and cereal. Store in an airtight container in a cool place.

Yield: 16 cups

Trail mix bag: You will need a gift bag with handles, road map, red permanent medium point marker, glue and 7/8-inch wide satin ribbon.

For tag you will need white and red paper.

Measure front of bag. Cut a piece from the road map 2 inches smaller than the front of the bag. Center and glue map piece to front of bag. Tie ribbon into bow around handle. Use marker to draw "Santa's Trail" on map with circled X's to designate Santa's stops.

For tag, cut a 1 3/4 x 3-inch piece from the white paper. Use marker to write "Santa's Trail Mix" on tag. Glue tag to red paper. Leave a 1/4-inch border of red paper. Glue tag to bag.

Santa's Whiskers

1 cup butter or margarine
1 cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3/4 cup flaked coconut
2 1/2 cups sifted flour
3/4 cup chopped candied cherries
1/2 cup finely chopped pecans

Cream butter and sugar. Blend in milk and vanilla extract. Stir in flour, cherries, and nuts. Form into two rolls, each 2 inches in diameter and 8 inches long. Roll in coconut. Wrap and chill several hours or overnight.

Slice in 1/4-inch slices. Place on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees F for 12 minutes or until edges are golden.

Makes 5 dozen.

Scandinavian Christmas Fruit Bread

1 package active dry yeast
1/4 cup warm water (105 to 115 degrees F)
3/4 cup lukewarm milk (scalded, then cooled)
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
1 egg
1/4 cup shortening
1/2 cup raisins
1/3 cup cut-up citron or mixed candied fruit
3 1/4 to 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
Butter or margarine, softened
Glaze

Dissolve yeast in warm water in large mixer bowl. Add milk, sugar, salt, cardamom, egg, shortening, raisins, citron and 2 cups of the flour. Beat on low speed, scraping bowl constantly, 30 seconds.

Beat on medium speed, scraping bowl occasionally, 2 minutes.

Stir in enough remaining flour to make dough easy to handle.

Turn dough onto lightly floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes.

Place in greased bowl; turn greased side up. Cover; let rise in warm place until double, 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Dough is ready if indentation remains when touched.

Punch dough down; shape into round loaf. Place in greased 9-inch round layer pan. Brush top lightly with butter; let rise until double, about 45 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Bake until loaf is golden brown, 35 to 45 minutes. Brush with butter. Spread with Glaze. Cool on wire rack.

Glaze

1 cup confectioners' sugar
1 to 2 tablespoons water

Mix confectioners' sugar and water until smooth and of desired consistency.

Scented Ornaments

4 ounces cinnamon
1 tablespoon cloves
1 tablespoon nutmeg
3/4 cup applesauce
2 tablespoons white glue
Ribbon

In medium bowl, combine cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg. Add applesauce and glue; stir to combine. Work mixture with hands 2 to 3 minutes or until dough is smooth and ingredients are thoroughly mixed. Divide into 4 portions. On floured surface, roll each portion to 1/4-inch thickness. Cut dough with floured cookie cutters of desired shapes. Using straw or wooden pick, make a small hole in the top of the ornament. Place cutouts on wire racks and allow to dry at room temperature for several days or dry them in a dehydrator. Thread ribbon through hole in ornament. **DO NOT EAT!**

Makes about 32 (2-inch) ornaments.

Decorate these ornaments with royal icing, if desired.

Seven-Flavor Pound Cake

1 cup (2 sticks) margarine
1/2 cup Crisco®
3 cups granulated sugar
5 eggs
3 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1 cup milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon coconut extract
1 teaspoon rum extract
1 teaspoon butter extract
1 teaspoon brandy extract
1 teaspoon almond extract
1 teaspoon pineapple extract

Cream margarine, Crisco® and sugar. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Mix flour and baking powder and add one cup at a time, alternating with 1/3 cup milk at a time, beating well after each addition. Add extracts and beat well.

Pour into a Bundt or tube pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour, 20 minutes. This is better if served after 2 or 3 days.

Sherried Nuts

1 1/4 cups light brown sugar
2 tablespoons light Karo syrup
1/4 cup sherry
1 teaspoon salt
3 cups nuts

Cook all ingredients, except nuts, to threadlike stage – about 5 minutes after the syrup boils over medium heat.

Add nuts and stir until well coated. Roll nuts in granulated sugar. Put sugar in a jar and add a few nuts. Shake the jar to coat the nuts. DO NOT double this recipe.

Shrimp Christmas Tree

2 pounds medium shrimp, fresh or frozen
1 1/2 quarts water
1/3 cup salt
3 bunches curly endive
1 Styrofoam cone, 1 1/2 feet high
1 small box round toothpicks
Cocktail sauce

Thaw frozen shrimp. Place shrimp in boiling salted water. Cover and simmer about 5 minutes or until shrimp are pink and tender. Drain. Peel shrimp leaving the tail section of shell on. Remove veins and wash. Chill.

Separate and wash endive. Chill.

Starting at base of cone and working up, cover cone with overlapping leaves of endive and fasten with toothpick halves. Cover fully with leaves to resemble a Christmas tree. Attach shrimp to tree with wooden picks.

Cocktail Sauce
1 1/2 cups ketchup
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
2 tablespoons horseradish
1 1/2 teaspoons granulated sugar
Generous dash of liquid hot
Pepper sauce
Salt and pepper to taste

Combine ingredients and chill.

Speculaas Bars

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
2/3 cup butter or margarine
3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
1 tablespoon milk
1 teaspoon lemon zest
1 (7 ounce) package almond paste
1 egg, beaten
4 tablespoons finely sliced almonds

Sift flour with baking powder. Cut butter into flour mixture. Add sugar, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, milk and lemon zest; mix well. Roll out dough on a lightly floured surface into a rectangle 1/4-inch thick. Cut in half. Place half on a heavy sheet of aluminum foil, folding the edges of foil up around dough to make a shallow, fitted pan.

Roll out the almond paste to fit on top of dough. Brush top of dough in foil pan with beaten egg, then put almond paste on top. Cover with remaining half of the dough, pressing down lightly to eliminate air bubbles. Brush top with beaten egg. Scatter almond slices over the top, pressing them lightly into the dough. Bake at 350 degrees F for 40 minutes, or until done. Let cool, then cut into bars.

Spiced Christmas Coffee with Brandied Whipped Cream

3/4 cup chilled whipping cream
1 1/2 tablespoons powdered sugar
1 tablespoon brandy
1 cup freshly ground coffee
5 teaspoons ground cardamom
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
7 cups water

Using an electric mixer, beat whipping cream in large bowl to soft peaks. Add powdered sugar and brandy; beat to peaks. (Can be prepared 4 hours ahead. Cover and keep refrigerated.)

Place ground coffee, cardamom, sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg in coffee filter. Using spoon, mix gently. Add water to coffee maker and brew according to manufacturer's instructions.

Divide coffee among 8 cups. Garnish each with a dollop of whipped cream and serve immediately.

Makes 8 servings.

Spiced Eggnog Cheesecake

Crust (see recipe)

32 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature

3/4 cup granulated sugar

1/4 cup flour

1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Pinch of ground cloves

1 egg

1 3/4 cups prepared eggnog

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 (8 ounce) container sour cream

Optional garnishes: 6 ounces white baking chocolate,
pinch ground nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Prepare crust. Leave oven on.

Prepare filling by beating cream cheese in medium-size bowl until smooth.

In small bowl, mix sugar, flour, nutmeg, cinnamon and cloves. Add to cream cheese; beat until smooth. Beat in egg. Add eggnog in slow stream, beating continuously. Beat in vanilla extract. Pour filling onto crust in pan; tap pan lightly to release air bubbles.

Bake in preheated oven 1 hour. Remove from oven; spread sour cream over top of cake. Bake 5 minutes longer. Cool in pan on rack until cake is cool to touch. Refrigerate until serving.

To prepare garnish, line 8-by-4-inch loaf pan with aluminum foil, leaving an overhang on both ends. Melt chocolate in top of double boiler over barely simmering, not boiling, water, stirring until smooth. Stir in nutmeg. Pour chocolate into pan, spreading evenly. Refrigerate until firm.

Lift foil out of pan to remove chocolate bar. Using vegetable peeler, scrape chocolate to make loose curls. Arrange curls on top of cake. Makes 12 to 16 servings.

Crust

1 cup graham cracker crumbs (about 8 whole
graham crackers, crushed)

1 teaspoon granulated sugar

1/4 teaspoon ground ginger

1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter, melted

Combine crumbs, sugar, ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon and butter in a small bowl until well blended. Press over bottom of 9-inch springform pan. Bake 10 minutes. Transfer pan to wire rack to cool.

Stained Glass Holiday Bars

1 cup butter or margarine, softened
1 cup brown sugar, packed
2 eggs
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 (4 ounce) bars sweet cooking chocolate
1/2 cup butter or margarine
2 cups confectioners' sugar
2 eggs, slightly beaten
1 (10 1/2 ounce) package colored miniature marshmallows
1 cup chopped pecans

Heat oven to 350 degrees F.

Mix the 1 cup butter, brown sugar and stir in flour. Press into an ungreased 13 x 9 x 2-inch pan. Bake for 25 minutes and cool.

Melt chocolate and the 1/2 cup butter in a 3-quart saucepan over low heat (or in microwave), stirring constantly until melted. Remove from heat. Stir in confectioners' sugar and eggs. Beat until smooth. Stir in marshmallows and pecans. Spread over cookie base. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

Cut into 2 x 1 1/2-inch bars. Store covered with aluminum foil in refrigerator. Makes 32 bars.

Candied Cherry Holiday Bars

Use white marshmallows instead of colored. Add 1 cup each whole red and green candied cherries.

Peanutty Holiday Bars

Use white marshmallows instead of colored and 2 cups salted peanuts for pecans.

Strawberry Champagne Christmas Punch

1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar
1 1/2 cups brandy
3/4 cup grenadine syrup
3 bottles ginger ale
2 bottles pink champagne
1 raspberry sherbet
1 package frozen strawberries

Chill champagne and ginger ale. Mix confectioners' sugar, brandy and syrup well with an electric mixer. Pour ginger ale over sherbet in punch bowl; add syrup mixture. Stir a couple times, then add champagne and frozen strawberries.

Sugar Plums

1 cup raisins
1 cup bite-size pitted prunes
1 cup pitted dates
1 cup currants
1 cup candied cherries, dried cherries or dried cranberries
1 cup walnuts
1/2 to 3/4 cup confectioner's sugar
Granulated sugar

Using a food processor, grind the fruit and nuts and mix well. Work into the mixture as much confectioner's sugar as it takes to form 1-inch balls. Roll balls in granulated sugar and refrigerate in single layers between sheets of wax paper in airtight containers for up to 1 month.

Yield: 4 1/2 dozen

Sugarplum Squares

2 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 cup crushed flake breakfast cereal
1 cup flaked or shredded coconut
1 (6 ounce) package semisweet chocolate chips
1 cup dried apricots, finely chopped
1 cup chopped nutmeats (filberts, pecans, or walnuts)
1 (15 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk

Melt butter in 9-inch square baking pan. Sprinkle crushed breakfast cereal evenly over butter. Layer coconut, chocolate pieces, apricot pieces and nutmeats over cereal. Pour milk evenly over all. Bake at 350 degrees F for about 30 minutes. Refrigerate until set. Cut into squares.

Yields 3 dozen squares.

Sugarplums

6 ounces semisweet chocolate morsels
1/2 cup granulated sugar, plus more sugar for coating
1/4 cup light corn syrup
1/3 cup apple juice*
2 1/2 cups finely ground vanilla wafers
1 cup finely chopped pecans
Candied cherry halves

* For "grown-up" sugarplums, substitute brandy for the apple juice.

Melt the chocolate in the top of a double boiler over simmering water. Stir in the 1/2 cup sugar, the corn syrup and the apple juice. Off the heat, stir in the wafer crumbs and pecans to make a paste-like mixture. Let mixture cool enough to handle.

Roll small bits of mixture into 1-inch balls. Roll each ball in the additional sugar. Press a candied cherry half into top center of each ball. Store in an airtight container. These cookies improve with age.

Makes about 48.

Super Liqueur Balls

These are an adults-only candy!

2 cups finely crushed vanilla wafers
1 cup confectioners' sugar
1/4 cup almond paste
2 1/2 tablespoons Kahlúa
2 1/2 tablespoons Grand Marnier
2 1/2 tablespoons Baileys Irish Cream
2 tablespoons white corn syrup
10 to 12 ounces semisweet chocolate
2 cups finely crushed toasted almonds

In a bowl mix wafers, sugar, almond paste, liqueurs and syrup, making sure that the paste is well blended.

Press mix into pie plate, and refrigerate until firm enough to form balls, about 20 minutes.

Melt chocolate in double boiler over simmering water.

Roll mix into small balls, stick with a wooden pick, then dip into melted chocolate coating evenly.

Roll gently in toasted almonds then place on large trays to harden.

Store in airtight containers in the refrigerator. Serve at room temperature.

Superb English Plum Pudding

Fruit Mixture (to be made 4 days ahead)

1 pound seedless raisins
1 pound sultana raisins
1/2 pound currants
1 cup thinly sliced citron
1 cup chopped candied peel
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon mace
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon allspice
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 pound finely chopped suet (powdery fine)
1 1/4 cups cognac

Pudding

1 1/4 pounds (approximately) fresh bread crumbs
1 cup scalded milk
1 cup sherry or port
12 eggs, well beaten
1 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon salt
Cognac

Blend the fruits, citron, peel, spices and suet and place in a bowl or jar. Add 1/4 cup cognac, cover tightly and refrigerate for 4 days, adding 1/4 cup cognac each day.

Soak the bread crumbs in milk and sherry or port. Combine the well-beaten eggs and sugar. Blend with the fruit mixture. Add salt and mix thoroughly. Put the pudding in buttered bowls or tins, filling them about 2/3 full. Cover with foil and tie it firmly. Steam for 6–7 hours. Uncover and place in a 250 degree F oven for 30 minutes. Add a dash of cognac to each pudding, cover with foil and keep in a cool place.

To use, steam again for 2 to 3 hours and unmold. Sprinkle with sugar; add heated cognac. Ignite and bring to the table.

Serve with hard sauce or cognac sauce.

Each pudding serves 12.

Swedish Christmas Kola (Caramel Candy)

2 cups granulated sugar
1 cup dark corn syrup
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
3 1/2 cups heavy cream
1 1/3 cups almonds, chopped

Mix all ingredients except the almonds in a large sauté pan, and simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Test by placing a drop of the hot caramel into a glass of cold water. If you can make a soft ball by rolling it between your fingers, it is ready.

Pour caramel onto a large nonstick baking sheet, and sprinkle with chopped almonds. Refrigerate to chill. When partially set, slice into small portions and wrap in wax paper squares cut to fit.

Swedish Christmas Rosettes

Divide this batter in half. Add red food coloring to one half and green to the other. After the rosettes are fried, dust the red ones in confectioners' sugar mixed with cherry gelatin and the green ones in confectioners' sugar mixed with lime gelatin.

Batter

2 large eggs

1 cup milk

1 cup unsifted flour

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

In a medium bowl, combine eggs and milk. With fork or wire whisk, mix well. Stir in flour, sugar and vanilla extract; blend until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate one hour or overnight.

In a 5–quart Dutch oven, heat 2 quarts vegetable oil to 365 degrees F on a candy thermometer. Attach selected iron to handle. Dip iron into hot oil for 15 seconds; drain slightly on paper towel. Dip lower part of hot iron into batter, letting excess drip back into bowl. (Do not get batter on top of iron.)

Dip iron into hot oil; as batter becomes cooked, it will loosen and drop into oil. Cook until golden on one side; turn and cook on other side. Repeat. As pastries turn golden, remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

Pastries may be sprinkled with confectioners' sugar or cinnamon–sugar. Tart shells may be filled with sweet or savory fillings.

Savory Pastries

Omit sugar and vanilla extract from basic batter. Add 1 teaspoon dried dillweed and 1/4 teaspoon salt.

Spice Pastries

To basic batter add 1/2 teaspoon each ground ginger and ground cinnamon and 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice.

Swedish Limpa Bread

A traditional Christmas bread.

2 packages active dry yeast
1 1/2 cups warm water (105 to 115 degrees F)
1/2 cup molasses
1/3 cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon shortening
1 1/2 teaspoons aniseed
2 tablespoons grated orange peel
2 1/2 cups medium rye flour
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
Corn meal

Dissolve yeast in warm water in mixing bowl. Stir in molasses, sugar, salt, shortening, aniseed, orange peel and rye flour. Beat until smooth. Stir in enough all-purpose flour to make dough easy to handle (dough will be sticky). Turn dough onto slightly floured surface. Cover; let rest 10 to 15 minutes. Knead until smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes. Place in greased bowl; turn greased side up. Cover, let rise in warm place until double, about 1 hour. Dough is ready if an indentation remains when touched. Punch down dough; round up and let rise until double, about 40 minutes.

Grease baking sheet; sprinkle with corn meal. Punch down dough; divide in half. Shape each half into a round, slightly flat loaf. Place loaves in opposite corners of baking sheet. Let rise 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Bake until loaves sound hollow when tapped, 30 to 35 minutes. Remove from baking sheet; cool on wire racks.

Sweet Spiced Nuts

1/4 cup honey
4 teaspoons Thai green curry paste or hot curry powder
2 teaspoons olive oil
1 1/4 teaspoons salt
1 cup cashews
1 cup macadamia nuts
1 cup almonds
1 cup pecan halves
1/3 cup sweetened shredded dried coconut

In a bowl, mix honey, curry paste, olive oil and salt. Add all the nuts and the coconut; mix well. Spread in a single layer on a 15 x 10-inch pan. Bake at 300 degrees F, turning often with a wide spatula, until nuts are dark gold, about 30 minutes.

Remove from oven and turn nuts often as they cool. Serve warm or cool.

Yields about 4 cups.

Tiny Christmas Fruit Cakes

1/4 pound candied cherries, chopped
3 candied pineapple slices, chopped
2 1/4 cups chopped pecans
1 (6 ounce) can coconut
1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
3 tablespoons butter (do not melt)
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F.

Cut or chop fruit and nuts. Add fruit, nuts and coconut to milk, butter and vanilla extract. Mix well.

Grease tiny muffin tins very well and fill three-fourths full. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until golden on top. Remove carefully when cool.

Traditional South Indian Christmas Cake

In India's Kerala state, Christians buy or make Christmas cakes to give away.

4 ounces diced orange peel (candied or plain)
1 1/2 cups golden raisins
1/2 cup currants
1/2 cup cashews
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
2 tablespoons vanilla extract
6 tablespoons brandy
2 1/2 cups butter
6 cups granulated sugar
10 eggs, separated
6 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
2 tablespoons instant dried coffee granules
1/4 cup warm water

Soak orange peel, raisins, currants, cashews, nutmeg, cinnamon and cardamom in vanilla and brandy. Set aside.

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Coat two 9-inch round cake pans with butter or nonstick cooking spray.

Beat the butter and sugar until light and fluffy, then add the egg yolks one at a time. Then mix the flour and baking powder, add to the mixture and beat well. Add the raisin mixture. Mix the instant dried coffee with 1/4 cup warm water and add to the mixture. Beat the egg whites and add last to the mixture.

Pour into the cake pans and bake 50 to 60 minutes, until the cakes turn golden brown or when a wooden pick inserted into the cakes comes out clean.

NOTE: For the best result, bake the cakes and wrap them in aluminum foil at least a week before serving. You don't need to refrigerate them.

Twelfth Night Cake

1 1/3 cups hazelnuts
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 egg yolk
1 tablespoon finely shredded orange peel
2 tablespoons Grand Marnier
1 (17 1/4 ounce) package frozen puff pastry dough, thawed
1 dried bean
1 egg, beaten
1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar

Toast hazelnuts on a baking sheet at 350 degrees F for 10 minutes. When nuts are cool, rub them in a tea towel to remove skin. Finely grind nuts in a food processor. Set aside.

To make filling, beat butter and sugar with an electric mixer on medium to high speed, until light and fluffy. Add egg yolk and beat until well blended. Gradually add nuts to butter-egg mixture with mixer on low to medium speed. Stir in orange peel and Grand Marnier. Set aside.

On a slightly floured surface, roll out one sheet of pastry slightly to remove creases. Trim to a circle about 8 inches in diameter, and place on a greased baking sheet. Heap filling over pastry in a dome shape, leaving a 1-inch border. Hide dried bean in filling. Roll out another sheet of pastry as above and trim to a 10-inch circle. Brush edge of bottom pastry with beaten egg; cover with second circle of dough and tuck edges under. Press to seal tightly; decoratively crimp edges. For a glossy crust, brush top with beaten egg. Chill cake in refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.

With a small sharp knife, score cake in cuts radiating from top and center to within 1 inch of edge. Brush again with beaten egg. Bake about 30 minutes at 375 degrees F or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack. Dust with confectioners' sugar.

Serves 8.

Ultimate Cheese Ball

16 ounces cream cheese
2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
1 tablespoon chopped pimento
1 tablespoon chopped green bell pepper
1 tablespoon chopped onion
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon lemon juice
Dash of cayenne pepper
Dash of salt

Blend well the cream cheese and Cheddar cheese. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Shape into a ball. Roll in chopped pecans.

Venetian Christmas Cookies

- 1 (12 ounce) box vanilla wafers, crushed
- 1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup nuts, chopped
- 1 cup shredded coconut
- 1 cup candied red and green cherries, chopped
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar

Combine all ingredients except the confectioners' sugar, mixing completely. Roll the dough into a log, about 2 inches thick. You may need to powder your hands with confectioners' sugar to keep the dough from sticking too much. After the log is formed, roll it in confectioners' sugar until it is completely covered. Wrap in plastic wrap or foil and refrigerate overnight.

When ready to serve, slice into cookies.

Walnut–Rum Crunch

1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
1 cup dark rum
2 cups walnut halves

Line large baking sheet with aluminum foil.

Combine granulated sugar, brown sugar and rum in medium size heavy saucepan. Bring to boiling over medium–high heat. Continue cooking until temperature registers 275 degrees F on a candy thermometer, 15 to 25 minutes (soft crack state – mixture forms pliable strands when drizzled from a metal spoon into a bowl of cold water).

Stir in walnuts. Quickly pour out onto prepared baking sheet, spreading out with metal spatula as you pour. Let cool completely.

Break into 2–inch pieces. Store in airtight container in cool, dry place for up to 2 months.

Warm Fruit Cider

- 1 (64 ounce) jar apple cider**
- 2 oranges, cut into quarters with skin on**
- 2 lemons, cut into slices**
- 4 cinnamon sticks**
- 6 whole cloves**

Pour apple cider into crockpot and add all remaining ingredients.

Cook on LOW for 3 to 4 hours.

When ready to serve, remove orange quarters, lemons, whole cloves and cinnamon sticks.

Pour into individual Christmas mugs or punch cups and serve.

Cinnamon sticks in the serving cups may be used for garnish.

Serves 10 to 12.

Wexford Christmas Cake

3 cups sifted flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1 cup butter or margarine
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons brown sugar
6 eggs
1/3 cup whiskey
1 2/3 cups white raisins
1 2/3 cups dark raisins
1 3/4 cups currants
1/2 cup mixed candied fruit, chopped
1/2 cup almonds, ground
1/2 cup chopped almonds
1 teaspoon grated lemon rind
1/2 cup whiskey

Preheat oven to 275 degrees F. Line 9-inch tube pan with brown paper, then grease the paper.

Sift flour, baking powder and cinnamon. Cream butter and add brown sugar gradually, beating until fluffy. Add eggs one at a time and beat well after each addition. Add flour mixture and the 1/3 cup whiskey. Blend well. Fold in fruit and nuts. Turn into prepared pan. Bake for 3 hours. Brush hot cake with 1/4 cup whiskey. Cool cake in pan. Remove from pan and remove paper. Brush with 1/4 cup whiskey. Wrap and store in foil.

White Chocolate Eggnog

4 large eggs
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 cup whole milk
1/2 cup white chocolate liqueur
2 tablespoons dark or golden rum
1 1/2 cups heavy cream

Garnish

Finely grated or shaved semisweet chocolate

At least 15 minutes before starting the eggnog, chill a medium bowl and beaters from a hand-held electric mixer in the refrigerator or freezer.

In a 2 1/2-quart bowl, combine eggs and sugar. Beat at low speed until mixed. Gradually increase mixer speed; beat at high speed (highest speed for a hand-held mixer) for 5 full minutes. Mixture will increase in volume and become very pale; you'll be able to see definite marks from the beaters in the egg mixture.

All at once, add milk, white chocolate liqueur and rum. Beat on lowest speed just until mixed; the egg mixture will thin out dramatically.

In chilled medium bowl, beat heavy cream at high speed just to stiff peaks. Scrape into thinned egg mixture. With large rubber spatula, fold the two mixtures together, pouring gently from one bowl to another once or twice to aid with blending process.

Serve immediately or chill, covered, for up to 6 hours. If mixture stands for any length of time in refrigerator, a thinner layer will separate out on the bottom. Just before serving, fold the eggnog over on itself until thinner layer at bottom is re-incorporated. In any case, serve eggnog cold. Garnish each serving with a pinch of finely grated semisweet chocolate, if desired.

White Chocolate Party Mix

- 1 pound white chocolate (can substitute white candy coating)**
- 3 cups Chex Corn cereal**
- 2 cups pretzel sticks**
- 12 ounces M&M's (use red, green and white holiday variety for holidays)**
- 3 cups Chex Rice cereal**
- 3 cups Cheerios**
- 2 cups dry roasted peanuts**

Slowly melt white chocolate in double boiler over simmering water. Combine remaining ingredients in large bowl. Slowly pour chocolate over mixture and stir to evenly coat. Spread minute on wax paper and cool.

Break into small pieces. Store in airtight container and refrigerate to keep fresh.

White Christmas Bars in a Jar

1/4 cup white chocolate or vanilla milk chips
1/2 cup chopped pecans, toasted* and cooled
1/2 cup sweetened dried cherries or cranberries
1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed**
1 cup buttermilk biscuit baking mix
1/2 cup brown sugar, packed**
1 cup buttermilk biscuit baking mix

In 1–quart wide–mouth glass jar, gently layer and pack ingredients in the order listed, beginning with the white chocolate or vanilla chips. If there is any space left after adding the last ingredient, add more white chocolate or vanilla chips to fill the jar. Place lid on top. Cut an 8–inch circle of fabric to cover lid. Place fabric over lid; secure in place with ribbon or raffia. Decorate as desired.

Make a gift card to attach as follows:

To make White Christmas Cherry Bars:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Empty contents of jar into medium bowl. Stir in:

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter or margarine, melted
1 large egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Press into an 8–inch square baking pan coated with cooking spray. Bake for 20 to 22 minutes, or until bars are light golden brown and center is almost set. Makes 16 bars.

* To toast pecans, place in a microwave–safe dish and microwave on high for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring every minute.

** After measuring the brown sugar, crumble it between your fingers for uniform texture. Be sure to pack the brown sugar firmly in the jar to prevent the baking mix from sifting down through it.

White Christmas Fudge

Makes 36 squares

2 1/2 cups Domino Confectioners' Sugar

2/3 cup milk

1/4 cup butter or margarine

12 ounces white chocolate, coarsely chopped

1/2 teaspoon almond extract (optional)

3/4 cup dried cherries, cranberries, or apricots, coarsely chopped

3/4 cup toasted almond slices

Line an 8-inch square pan with foil; grease foil.

Mix confectioners' sugar and milk in a heavy 3-quart saucepan. Over medium heat, add butter and, stirring constantly, bring to boil. Without stirring, boil constantly for 5 minutes.

Over low heat, add chocolate and almond extract. Stir, then whisk until chocolate melts and mixture is smooth. Stir in dried cherries and toasted almonds. Pour mixture into prepared pan.

Refrigerate 2 hours until firm. Invert pan, peel off foil and cut into 1-inch squares. Garnish as desired.

TIPS:

Look for dried cherries in the bulk foods or produce section of your supermarket.

To toast almonds, spread in a single layer on baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 5 to 10 minutes, shaking pan occasionally, until they begin to brown.

White Christmas Jewel Fudge

3 (6 ounce) packages premium white chocolate
1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup chopped green candied cherries
1/2 cup chopped red candied cherries

Over low heat, melt chocolate with sweetened condensed milk, vanilla extract and salt. Remove from heat; stir in cherries. Spread into foil-lined 8- or 9-inch square pan. Chill for two hours or until firm.

Turn fudge onto cutting board; peel off foil and cut into squares. Store covered in refrigerator.

Rum Raisin White Fudge

Omit vanilla extract and cherries. Add 1 1/2 teaspoons white vinegar, 1 teaspoon rum flavoring and 3/4 cup raisins. Proceed as above.

Toasted Nutty White Fudge

Omit cherries. Add 1 cup chopped toasted nuts. Proceed as above.