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Taste of Home

Welcome
to Taste of Home,

the world's #1 source of family-favorite recipes using everyday ingredients, proven kitchen tips and heartwarming stories all shared by a nationwide community of home cooks like you.

Our family of food publications—magazines, recipe collections and cookbooks—are written and designed to capture the very essence of home cooking.

As you read through *Prize Winning Recipes*, you'll enjoy choosing from our "best of the best" dishes for your family and friends.

It's no wonder that millions of cooks make *Taste of Home* their #1 cooking resource. We're glad to welcome you among them!

Thanks for joining us!

Catherine Cassidy
Editor in Chief

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prize winning* RECIPES

Taste of Home

Pictured on Front Cover: Pepperoni Lasagna (p. 106) and Strawberry Swirl Cheesecake (p. 32).

So how does a recipe become prize winning, you might be wondering? Well, it starts when an issue of *Taste of Home* magazine or one of its "sister" publications *Country Woman, Simple & Delicious* and *Light & Tasty* is delivered to our many subscribers.

Every issue of these magazines holds a national contest, asking readers to send in their very best recipes. After much sorting through the stacks of mail, testing in our professional kitchens and tasting by a panel of judges, a Grand Prize Winner is selected as well as runners-up.

You'll come out a winner, too, with *Taste of Home Prize Winning Recipes*, which combines 276 winning appetizers, breakfast and brunch items, soups, salads, side dishes, entrees and desserts from 23 of those national contests.

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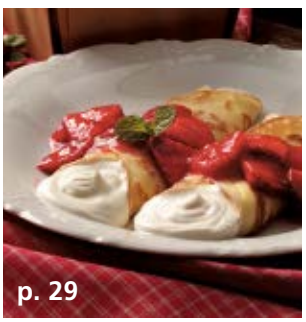
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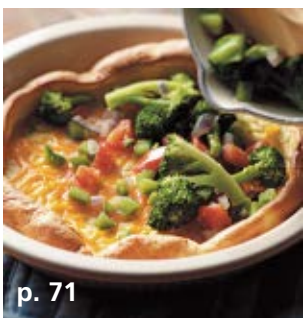
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LEMON CHEESE BRAID

lemon cheese braid

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

This Lemon Cheese Braid is a scrumptious way to start the day. And it's a family favorite of the contest Grand Prize winner, Grace Dickey of Vernonia, Oregon.

"Winning is so exciting!" exclaimed Grace, whose recipe was judged tops in the Best Breakfast recipe contest.

> "…it tastes delicious and looks so impressive."

"I have always enjoyed making breads," she adds. "My mom is a great bread baker, and when I was growing up, the only bread we ate was homemade. I used to watch her make bread all the time, so I was never intimidated working with yeast or dough."

Below is the recipe for Grace's beautiful breakfast bread.

She adds, "Although fairly simple to make, you'll feel a sense of accomplishment when you finish this recipe since it tastes delicious and looks so impressive."

1 package (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast
3 tablespoons warm water (110° to 115°)
1/3 cup milk
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup butter, melted
2 eggs
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 to 3-1/2 cups all-purpose flour

FILLING:

2 packages (one 8 ounces, one 3 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup sugar
1 egg
1 teaspoon grated lemon peel

ICING:

1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 to 3 teaspoons milk

In a large mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in warm water. Add the milk, sugar, butter, eggs, salt and 2 cups flour; beat on low speed for 3 minutes. Stir in enough of remaining flour to form a soft dough.

Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.

Meanwhile, in a small mixing bowl, beat all the filling ingredients until fluffy; set aside.

Punch dough down. Turn onto a lightly floured surface; roll into a 14-in. x 12-in. rectangle. Place on a greased baking sheet. Spread filling down center third of rectangle. On each long side, cut 1-in.-wide strips, 3 in. into center. Starting at one end, fold alternating strips at an angle across filling. Seal end. Cover and let rise for 30 minutes.

Bake at 375° for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack. Combine confectioners' sugar, vanilla and enough milk to achieve drizzling consistency; drizzle over bread. **Yield:** 12-14 servings.

buttermilk pecan waffles

Edna Hoffman, Hebron, Indiana

I like cooking with buttermilk. These nutty, golden waffles are my husband's favorite breakfast, so we enjoy them often. They're as easy to prepare as regular waffles, but their unique taste makes them exceptional. This is an impressive disk to serve to breakfast or brunch guests.

- **2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **1 tablespoon baking powder**
- **1 teaspoon baking soda**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **4 eggs**
- **2 cups buttermilk**
- **1/2 cup butter, melted**
- **3 tablespoons chopped pecans**

In a large bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt; set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs until light. Add buttermilk; mix well. Add dry ingredients and beat until batter is smooth. Stir in butter.

Pour about 3/4 cup batter onto a lightly greased preheated waffle iron. Sprinkle with a few pecans. Bake according to manufacturer's directions until golden brown. Repeat until batter and pecans are gone. **Yield:** 7 waffles (about 8 inches each).

raspberry lemon muffins

Sharon Shine, Bradford, Pennsylvania

These are my all-time favorite muffins, and I have a hard time eating just one. With their pretty color and tangy flavor, they're delectable. Serve them with brunch or as a tasty snack.

- **2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **1 cup sugar**
- **1 tablespoon baking powder**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **2 eggs, lightly beaten**
- **1 cup half-and-half cream**
- **1/2 cup vegetable oil**
- **1 teaspoon lemon extract**
- **1-1/2 cups fresh *or* frozen raspberries**

In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Combine the eggs, cream, oil and lemon extract; stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. Fold in raspberries.

Spoon into 18 greased or paper-lined muffin cups. Bake at 400° for 18 to 20 minutes or until golden brown. **Yield:** 18 servings.

egg and sausage strata

Gail Carney, Arlington, Texas

I especially like to make this breakfast casserole when we have weekend guests. I fix it the night before, and the next morning I can sit, eat and enjoy their company. People often think I spent hours preparing it.

- **12 slices white bread, crusts removed, cubed**
- **1-1/2 pounds bulk pork sausage**
- **1/3 cup chopped onion**
- **1/4 cup chopped green pepper**
- **1 jar (2 ounces) chopped pimientos, drained**
- **6 eggs**
- **3 cups milk**
- **2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce**
- **1 teaspoon ground mustard**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **1/4 teaspoon dried oregano**

Line a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. pan with bread cubes; set aside.

In a skillet, cook sausage with the onion and green pepper over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Stir in pimientos; sprinkle over bread.

In a bowl, beat eggs, milk, Worcestershire sauce, mustard, salt, pepper and oregano. Pour over sausage mixture. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Bake, covered, at 325° for 1 hour and 20 minutes. Uncover and bake 10 minutes longer or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Let stand 10 minutes before serving. **Yield:** 12-15 servings.

stuffed apricot french toast

Deb Leland, Three Rivers, Michigan

In our family, this special recipe is often served for our Christmas Day brunch. I was always looking for something unique to serve, and this rich, colorful dish certainly fits the bill. It tastes so good!

- **1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract, *divided***
- **1/2 cup finely chopped walnuts**
- **1 loaf (1-1/2 pounds) French bread**
- **4 eggs**
- **1 cup heavy whipping cream**
- **1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- **1 jar (12 ounces) apricot preserves**
- **1/2 cup orange juice**

In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and 1 teaspoon vanilla until fluffy. Stir in nuts; set aside.

Cut bread into 1-1/2-in. slices; cut a pocket in the top of each slice. Fill each pocket with about 2 tablespoons cream cheese mixture. In another bowl, beat eggs, cream, nutmeg and remaining vanilla. Dip both sides of bread into egg mixture, being careful not to squeeze out the filling.

Cook on a lightly greased griddle until golden brown on both sides. Place on an ungreased baking sheet; bake at 300° for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine preserves and orange juice in a small saucepan; heat through. Drizzle over hot French toast. **Yield:** 8 servings.

morning mix-up

Kim Scholting, Springfield, Nebraska

This filling dish is super to serve for breakfast or supper. It's one of my family's favorites—even when our daughter, Amanda, was a toddler, she would eat a hearty helping. Eggs, cheese, hash browns and ham go well together.

2 cups frozen shredded hash brown potatoes
1 cup chopped fully cooked ham
1/2 cup chopped onion
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
6 eggs
Salt and pepper to taste
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
Minced fresh chives

In a large skillet, saute potatoes, ham and onion in oil for 10 minutes or until potatoes are tender. In a small bowl, beat eggs, salt and pepper. Add to the skillet; cook, stirring occasionally, until eggs are set. Remove from the heat and gently stir in cheese.

Spoon onto a serving platter; sprinkle with chives. **Yield:** 4 servings.

breakfast wassail

Amy Holtsclaw, Carbondale, Illinois

This fruity beverage is great all year-round, and tasty hot or chilled. I got the recipe from a co-worker and made it one Christmas for a family gathering. Now whenever we get together for the holidays, I'm the designated wassail-maker. It's so pretty and wonderfully tangy.

1 can (64 ounces) cranberry juice
1 can (32 ounces) apple juice
1 can (12 ounces) frozen pineapple juice concentrate, undiluted
1 can (12 ounces) frozen lemonade concentrate, undiluted
3 to 4 cinnamon sticks
1 quart water, optional

In a large saucepan or Dutch oven, combine juices, lemonade and cinnamon sticks. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 1 hour. Add water if desired. Serve hot or cold. **Yield:** about 4 quarts.

baked peach pancake

Nancy Wilkinson, Princeton, New Jersey

This dish makes for a dramatic presentation. I usually take it right from the oven to the table, fill it with peaches and sour cream and serve it with bacon or ham. Whenever I go home, my mom (the best cook I know) asks me to make this.

2 cups fresh *or* frozen sliced peeled peaches
4 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon lemon juice
3 eggs
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons butter
Ground nutmeg
Sour cream, optional

In a bowl, combine peaches with sugar and lemon juice; set aside. In a mixing bowl, beat eggs until fluffy. Add flour, milk and salt; beat until smooth.

Place butter in a 10-in. skillet; bake at 400° for 3 to 5 minutes or until melted. Immediately pour batter into hot skillet. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until pancake has risen and puffed all over.

Fill with peach slices and sprinkle with nutmeg. Serve immediately with sour cream if desired. **Yield:** 4-6 servings.

oat pancakes

Linda Hicks, Pinconning, Michigan

My daughter brought this recipe home from school one day, and we loved it. Since then, these pancakes have been a regular part of Sunday morning breakfast, served with maple syrup, flavored syrup or applesauce and a big helping of grits.

1 cup quick-cooking oats
1 cup all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1-1/2 cups milk
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1 teaspoon lemon juice

In a large bowl, combine the first five ingredients. Combine the eggs, milk, oil and lemon juice; add to dry ingredients and stir just until moistened.

Pour batter by 1/4 cupfuls onto a lightly greased hot griddle; turn when bubbles form on top of pancakes. Cook until second side is golden brown. **Yield:** 6 servings.

bacon and cheese breakfast pizza

Dina Davis, Madison, Florida

An area firefighter shared this recipe with me. This deliciously different pizza is good for breakfast and even a light dinner. As a busy college student, I'm a big fan of this easy recipe. It only calls for six ingredients. And if you use a ready-made crust and precooked bacon, the assembly goes very quickly.

Pastry for single-crust pie (9 inches)
1/2 pound bacon, cooked and crumbled
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese
4 eggs
1-1/2 cups (12 ounces) sour cream
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Roll pastry to fit a 12-in. pizza pan. Bake at 425° for 5 minutes.

Sprinkle bacon and cheese evenly over crust. In a bowl, beat eggs, sour cream and parsley until smooth; pour over pizza. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until pizza is puffy and lightly browned. **Yield:** 6 servings.

breakfast burritos

Catherine Allan, Twin Falls, Idaho

I discovered this fun burrito recipe at a workshop of holiday breakfasts offered at our church. It was a big hit there and with my family! It works really well when you're cooking for a crowd. I like to serve salsa or hot sauce with them.

1 bag (16 ounces) frozen Southern-style hash browns
12 eggs
1 large onion, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
1/2 pound bulk pork sausage, browned and drained
12 flour tortillas (10 inches), warmed
3 cups (12 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
Salsa, optional

In a large skillet, fry hash browns according to package directions; remove and set aside.

In a large bowl, beat eggs; add onions and green pepper. Pour into the same skillet; cook and stir until eggs are set. Remove from heat. Add hash browns and sausage; mix gently.

Place about 3/4 cup filling on each tortilla and top with about 1/4 cup cheese. Roll up and place on a greased baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 15 to 20 minutes or until heated through. Serve with salsa if desired. **Yield:** 12 servings.

hash brown quiche

Jan Peters, Chandler, Minnesota

We love to have guests stay with us, and this is a great dish to serve for breakfast. To save time in the morning, I sometimes make the hash brown crust and chop the ham, cheese and peppers the night before.

- **3 cups frozen loose-pack shredded hash browns, thawed**
- **1/3 cup butter, melted**
- **1 cup diced fully cooked ham**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**
- **1/4 cup diced green pepper**
- **2 eggs**
- **1/2 cup milk**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**

Press hash browns between paper towel to remove excess moisture. Press into the bottom and up the sides of an ungreased 9-in. pie plate. Drizzle with butter. Bake at 425° for 25 minutes.

Combine the ham, cheese and green pepper; spoon over crust. In a small bowl, beat eggs, milk, salt and pepper. Pour over all. Reduce heat to 350°; bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Allow to stand for 10 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 6 servings.

***** prize winning tips

*I buy several pounds of bacon when it's on sale. I put the strips in a single layer on jelly roll pans and pop them in the oven to bake at 350° for 30-45 minutes or until they're crisp. I then place the strips on paper towels to drain before storing them in a freezer container. This makes it easy to remove only the number of strips needed for a quick breakfast or sandwich. A short time in the microwave reheats the bacon.

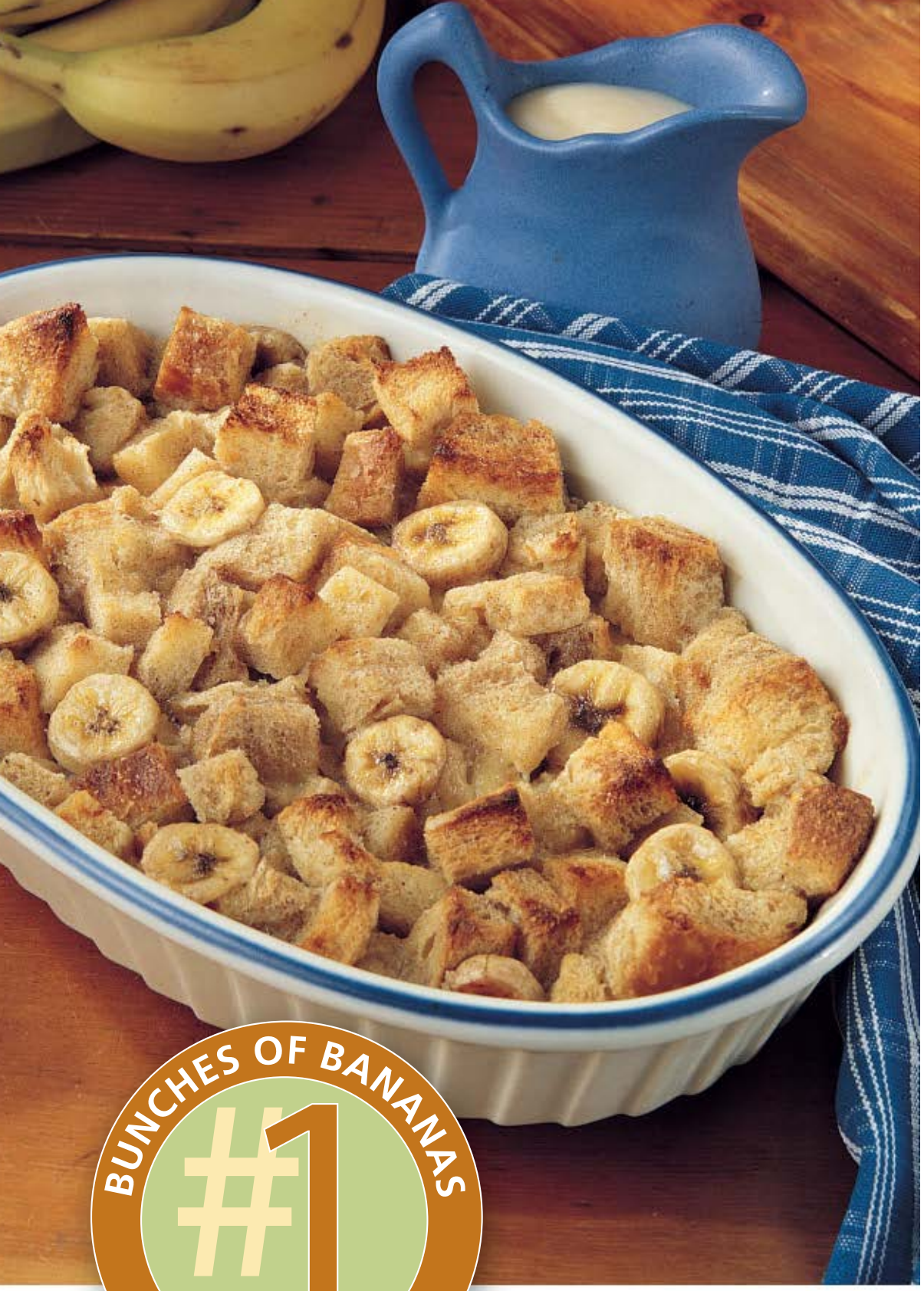
Dale H., Holland, Michigan

*Leftover rice can be used to make a quick-and-easy breakfast or sweet side dish. Simply reheat the rice and add brown sugar, cinnamon, butter and milk. Sometimes I use brown rice for more nutrition. It's quite yummy.

Abby N., Pensacola, Florida

*On Saturday mornings, I mix up a big batch of pancakes or waffles. What our family doesn't eat, I freeze to use throughout the week. It's a snap to heat up individual servings in the toaster for quick breakfasts.

Jennifer P., Havelock, North Carolina



BANANA BREAD PUDDING

banana bread pudding

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

"Grandparents are so special for what they give us," declares Mary Detweiler of West Farmington, Ohio. She should know—it was her grandmother's recipe for Banana Bread Pudding that made Mary the Grand Prize winner in our Bunches of Bananas recipe contest!

"This bread pudding is a real homespun dessert."

Mary, an Amish homemaker, says the wonderful taste and aroma of this dessert always reminds her of her grandmother. "When I would visit my grandmother in the summer, I always looked forward to her making this scrumptious pudding," she says. "With its crusty golden top, custard-like inside and smooth vanilla sauce, this bread pudding is a real homespun dessert." Mary prepares this comforting and satisfying treat often for her own grandchildren.

"I love to try new recipes," says Mary, who once cooked for a camp and also was head cook at a restaurant. The eldest child in a family of 17 children, Mary was helping in her mother's kitchen by the time she was 10 years old. "To me, cooking and baking are a real joy," she adds.

4 cups cubed day-old French *or* sourdough bread (1-inch pieces)
1/4 cup butter, melted
3 eggs
2 cups milk
1/2 cup sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup sliced firm bananas (1/4-inch pieces)

SAUCE:

3 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon cornstarch
3/4 cup milk
1/4 cup light corn syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Place the bread cubes in a greased 2-qt. casserole; pour butter over and toss to coat. In a medium bowl, lightly beat eggs; add milk, sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Stir in bananas.

Pour over bread cubes and stir to coat. Bake, uncovered, at 375° for 40 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean.

Meanwhile, for sauce, melt butter in a small saucepan. Combine sugar and cornstarch; add to butter. Stir in milk and corn syrup. Cook and stir over medium heat until the mixture comes to a full boil. Boil for 1 minute. Remove from the heat; stir in the vanilla. Serve warm sauce over warm pudding. **Yield:** 6 servings.

french banana pancakes

Cheryl Sowers, Bakersfield, California

These pancakes are a real breakfast favorite in our family. Even our daughters make them all by themselves when they have friends spend the night. Now their friends' mothers are asking for the recipe.

PANCAKES:

- **1 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1/4 cup confectioners' sugar**
- **1 cup milk**
- **2 eggs**
- **3 tablespoons butter, melted**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **1/4 teaspoon salt**

FILLING:

- **1/4 cup butter**
- **1/4 cup packed brown sugar**
- **1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- **1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- **1/4 cup half-and-half cream**
- **5 to 6 firm bananas, halved lengthwise**

Whipped cream and additional cinnamon, optional

Sift flour and confectioners' sugar into a mixing bowl. Add milk, eggs, butter, vanilla and salt; beat until smooth.

Heat a lightly greased 6-in. skillet; add about 3 tablespoons batter, spreading to almost cover bottom of skillet. Cook until lightly browned; turn and brown the other side. Remove to a wire rack. Repeat with remaining batter (make 10-12 pancakes), greasing skillet as needed.

For filling, melt butter in large skillet. Stir in brown sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg. Stir in cream and cook until slightly thickened. Add half of the bananas at a time to skillet; heat for 2-3 minutes, spooning sauce over them. Remove from the heat.

Roll a pancake around each banana half and place on a serving platter. Spoon sauce over pancakes. Top with whipped cream and dash of cinnamon if desired. **Yield:** 5-6 servings.

south seas chicken and bananas

Wendy Smith, Eagleville, Pennsylvania

Your taste buds get a tropical vacation when you prepare a platter of this chicken! My father-in-law loves coconut, so this dish is one of his favorites. Whenever I serve this for dinner, everyone raves over it.

- **1/4 cup lemon juice**
- **1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk**
- **1/3 cup milk**
- **1/2 cup flaked coconut**
- **1/8 teaspoon ground cardamom**
- **6 very firm bananas, halved lengthwise**
- **3 cups cornflakes crumbs**
- **5 to 6 pounds chicken pieces**
- **3/4 cup butter, melted, *divided***

Sliced kiwifruit and starfruit, optional

In a food processor or blender, blend the lemon juice, condensed milk, milk, coconut and cardamom until smooth. Pour into a bowl. Dip bananas into milk mixture; roll in cornflakes and set aside.

Dip chicken into remaining milk mixture; roll in remaining cornflakes and place in two greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pans. Drizzle with 1/2 cup of the melted butter. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 1 hour.

Arrange bananas over the chicken. Drizzle with remaining butter. Bake 15 minutes longer or until chicken juices run clear. Garnish with kiwi and starfruit if desired. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

black-bottom banana bars

Rene Wright, Ferryville, Wisconsin

These bars stay very moist, and their rich banana and chocolate flavor is even better the second day. My mother-in-law gave me this recipe, and it's a special treat for my husband and two sons.

1/2 cup butter, softened
1 cup sugar
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1-1/2 cups mashed ripe bananas (about 3 medium)
1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup baking cocoa

In a mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Add egg and vanilla; beat until thoroughly combined. Blend in the bananas. Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt; add to creamed mixture and mix well.

Divide batter in half. Add cocoa to half; spread into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Spoon remaining batter on top and swirl with a knife. Bake at 350° for 25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool. **Yield:** 2-1/2 to 3 dozen.

frosted banana bars

Karen Dryak, Niobrara, Nebraska

These bars are always a hit at potlucks here in the small rural farming community where my husband and I live. I also like to provide them for coffee hour after church. They're so moist and delicious that wherever I take them, they don't last long.

1/2 cup butter, softened
2 cups sugar
3 eggs
1-1/2 cups mashed ripe bananas (about 3 medium)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
Pinch salt
FROSTING:
1/2 cup butter, softened
1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
4 cups confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

In a mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in eggs, bananas and vanilla. Combine the flour, baking soda and salt; add to creamed mixture and mix well.

Pour into greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 25 minutes or until bars test done. Cool.

For frosting, cream butter and cream cheese in a mixing bowl. Gradually add confectioners' sugar and vanilla; beat well. Spread over bars. **Yield:** 3 dozen.

frozen cranberry banana salad

Phylis Hoffman, Conway, Arkansas

A luscious combination of sweet, tangy, crunchy and creamy, this pretty salad makes a great side dish or dessert. Its light pink color and delicate banana flavor make it perfect for a bridal shower or ladies' luncheon.

- **1 can (20 ounces) pineapple tidbits**
- **5 medium firm bananas, halved lengthwise and sliced**
- **1 can (16 ounces) whole-berry cranberry sauce**
- **1/2 cup sugar**
- **1 carton (12 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed**
- **1/2 cup chopped walnuts**

Drain pineapple juice into a medium bowl; set pineapple aside. Add bananas to the juice. In a large bowl, combine cranberry sauce and sugar. Remove bananas, discarding juice, and add to cranberry mixture. Stir in pineapple, whipped topping and nuts.

Pour into a 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. dish. Freeze until solid. Remove from the freezer 15 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 12-16 servings.

apricot banana bread

Betty Hull, Stoughton, Wisconsin

Making this delightfully different twist on traditional banana bread is fun. It tastes excellent spread with cream cheese or butter. When I take this bread to bake sales, it really goes fast. I also make it in small loaf pans to give as gifts. I discovered the recipe in 1955 and have been making it since.

- **1/3 cup butter, softened**
- **2/3 cup sugar**
- **2 eggs**
- **1 cup mashed ripe bananas (2 to 3 medium)**
- **1/4 cup buttermilk**
- **1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour**
- **1 teaspoon baking powder**
- **1/2 teaspoon baking soda**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1 cup 100% bran cereal (not flakes)**
- **3/4 cup chopped dried apricots (about 6 ounces)**
- **1/2 cup chopped walnuts**

In a mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Add eggs; mix well. Combine bananas and buttermilk. Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt; add to creamed mixture alternately with banana mixture. Stir in bran, apricots and nuts.

Pour into a greased 9-in. x 5-in. x 3-in. loaf pan. Bake at 350° for 55-60 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack. **Yield:** 1 loaf.

tropical chicken salad

Linda Wheatley, Garland, Texas

Over the years my husband and I have moved to different areas, and I've collected recipes from all over the United States. This scrumptious salad recipe comes from New York. I've served it for luncheons for many years, and it's one of my husband's favorites.

2 cups cubed cooked chicken
1 cup chopped celery
1 cup mayonnaise
1/2 to 1 teaspoon curry powder
1 can (20 ounces) chunk pineapple, drained
2 large firm bananas, sliced
1 can (11 ounces) mandarin oranges, drained
1/2 cup flaked coconut
Salad greens, optional
3/4 cup salted peanuts *or* cashew halves

Place chicken and celery in a large bowl. Combine mayonnaise and curry powder; add to chicken mixture and mix well. Cover and chill for at least 30 minutes.

Before serving, add the pineapple, bananas, oranges and coconut; toss gently. Serve on salad greens if desired. Sprinkle with nuts. **Yield:** 4-6 servings.

layered banana pudding

Esther Matteson, Bremen, Indiana

My mother gave me this recipe, which an old friend had shared with her. When my children were still at home, we enjoyed this satisfying pudding often, and now I make it for company. There's no comparison between this recipe and the instant pudding mixes from the grocery store!

1/2 cup all-purpose flour
2/3 cup packed brown sugar
2 cups milk
2 egg yolks, beaten
2 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup heavy whipping cream, whipped
4 to 6 medium firm bananas, sliced
Chopped walnuts, optional

In a large saucepan, combine the flour and brown sugar. Stir in milk until smooth. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until thickened and bubbly. Reduce heat; cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from the heat.

Stir a small amount of hot filling into egg yolks; return all to pan, stirring constantly. Bring to a gentle boil; cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from the heat; stir in butter and vanilla. Cool to room temperature without stirring. Fold in the whipped cream.

Layer a third of the pudding in a 2-qt. glass bowl; top with half of the bananas. Repeat layers. Top with remaining pudding. Sprinkle with nuts if desired. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving. **Yield:** 8 servings.

creamy banana pie

Rita Pribyl, Indianapolis, Indiana

When I read that Taste of Home was having a banana recipe contest, I knew instantly the recipe I should share. This delectable pie is from a recipe I found years ago, and everyone who tastes it enjoys its delicious old-fashioned flavor.

- **1 envelope unflavored gelatin**
- **1/4 cup cold water**
- **3/4 cup sugar**
- **1/4 cup cornstarch**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **2-3/4 cups milk**
- **4 egg yolks, beaten**
- **2 tablespoons butter**
- **1 tablespoon vanilla extract**
- **4 medium firm bananas, *divided***
- **1 cup heavy whipping cream, whipped**
- **1 pastry shell (10 inches), baked**
- **Juice and grated peel of 1 lemon**
- **1/2 cup apple jelly**

Soften gelatin in cold water; set aside. In a saucepan, combine the sugar, cornstarch and salt. Whisk in the milk until smooth. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until thickened and bubbly. Reduce heat; cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from the heat.

Stir a small amount of hot filling into yolks. Return all to the pan, stirring constantly. Bring to a gentle boil. Cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from the heat; stir in softened gelatin until dissolved. Stir in butter and vanilla. Cover the surface of custard with plastic wrap and chill until no longer warm.

Slice 3 bananas; fold into custard along with whipped cream. Spoon into pie shell. Cover and refrigerate until set, about 4-5 hours.

Just before serving, place lemon juice in a small bowl and slice the remaining banana into it. Melt jelly in a saucepan over low heat. Drain banana; pat dry and arrange over filling. Brush banana with the jelly. Sprinkle with grated lemon peel. Serve immediately. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 8 servings.

banana poppy seed dressing

Gloria Kirchman, Eden Prairie, Minnesota

Here's a lightly sweet, refreshing dressing that lets the flavor of banana come through. A homemaker with four grown children, I have an extensive recipe collection. This dressing is so good over crisp greens or fresh fruit. Give it a try!

- **1 ripe banana**
- **1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream**
- **1/4 cup sugar**
- **1 tablespoon poppy seeds**
- **1 tablespoon lemon juice**
- **1 teaspoon ground mustard**
- **3/4 teaspoon salt**
- **Salad greens**
- **Orange and grapefruit sections**

In a small bowl, finely mash banana. Add sour cream, sugar, poppy seeds, lemon juice, mustard and salt. Chill for at least 30 minutes.

Arrange salad greens and fruit on a platter or individual salad plates. Serve with dressing. **Yield:** 14 servings.

banana squares

Susan Miller, Raleigh, North Carolina

When we were first married, my husband was in the Navy. Stationed in Puerto Rico, we had banana trees growing in our yard, so I found ways to use dozens of ripe bananas at a time. I made these banana squares often. They freeze well and make a great snack to have on hand when friends drop in for coffee.

2 eggs, *separated*
2/3 cup shortening
1-1/2 cups sugar
1 cup mashed ripe bananas (2 to 3 medium)
1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 cup sour milk
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup chopped walnuts, optional
Whipped cream and sliced bananas, optional

In a small mixing bowl, beat egg whites until soft peaks form; set aside. In a large mixing bowl, cream shortening and sugar. Beat in egg yolks; mix well. Add bananas. Combine flour and baking soda; add to creamed mixture alternately with milk, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla. Fold in egg whites. Fold in nuts if desired.

Pour into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 45-50 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

If desired, garnish with a dollop of whipped cream and a few banana slices. **Yield:** 12-16 servings.

Editor's Note: To sour milk, place 1 teaspoon white vinegar in a measuring cup. Add enough milk to equal 1/4 cup.

***** prize winning tips

* My banana bread recipe calls for three ripe bananas. One day I had only two, so I added a chopped, peeled apple. The result was moist and delicious.

Hilary B., Las Vegas, Nevada

* Peel and mash overripe bananas with 1 teaspoon of lemon juice for each banana used. Freeze in 1- or 2-cup amounts in airtight containers for up to 6 months. When you have time to bake, about 1-1/3 cups mashed bananas equals three medium or four small bananas.

Taste of Home Test Kitchen

* For a quick banana bread, combine all the ingredients in a gallon-size plastic storage bag, zip the bag closed and knead it until everything is well blended. Squeeze the batter out into pans and bake. The loaves are delicious, and there are no dishes to wash.

Jan R., Red Lodge, Montana

* To keep bananas in a fruit salad from turning brown, squeeze the juice of an orange, lemon or lime into a bowl and then slice the banana right into it. Stir gently to coat all sides, and remove the banana slices with a slotted spoon just before adding to your salad.

Taste of Home Test Kitchen

PARADISE CRAN-APPLESAUCE

paradise cran-applesauce

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

A simple yet delicious harvest dish, Paradise Cran-Applesauce has been a family favorite for years, according to Sallie McQuay, Grand Prize winner in our popular Accent on Apples recipe contest.

"My mother got this recipe in a little booklet that came with a set of cookware when she was first married almost 60 years ago," informs Sallie of Sayre, Pennsylvania. "She's made it as long as I can remember, and I make it often for my family."

> "...it wouldn't be a feast without a beautiful bowl of this chunky applesauce."

Sallie, who works full-time as the receptionist at a local medical clinic, enjoys finding new recipes that are quick and easy to prepare like this one.

Appealing apple slices peek through a tangy, ruby-red cranberry sauce in this simple but extraordinary side dish. "Whether I use the recipe for a holiday dinner or to add spark to a Sunday supper, it wouldn't be a feast without a beautiful bowl of this chunky applesauce," she says.

Sallie—an only child—grew up in Williamsport, Pennsylvania and cooked meals frequently when she was a teen. When her mom went back to work full-time, Sallie's dad called her from work in the afternoon to tell her what to make for dinner and how to make it. Now Sallie and husband George are grandparents. Sallie hopes you try this tempting sauce soon.

4 cups fresh *or* frozen cranberries
1/4 cup water
8 cups sliced peeled cooking apples
2 cups sugar

In a covered saucepan, simmer cranberries and water for 20-25 minutes or until tender. Press through a sieve or food mill; return to the saucepan.

Add apples; cover and simmer for 35-40 minutes or until apples are tender but retain their shape. Add sugar. Simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

apple crisp pizza

Nancy Preussner, Delhi, Iowa

While visiting a Wisconsin apple orchard bakery, I tried this tempting treat. At home, I put together this recipe. My family thinks it tastes better than the one used by the bakery. As it bakes, the aroma fills my kitchen, and friends and family linger waiting for a slice.

Pastry for a single-crust pie
2/3 cup sugar
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
4 medium baking apples, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch slices
TOPPING:
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/3 cup packed brown sugar
1/3 cup rolled oats
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup butter, softened
1/4 to 1/2 cup caramel ice cream topping *or* caramel apple dip
Vanilla ice cream, optional

Roll pastry to fit a 12-in. pizza pan; fold under or flute the edges. Combine sugar, flour and cinnamon in a bowl. Add apples and toss. Arrange the apples in a single layer in a circular pattern to completely cover pastry. Combine the first five topping ingredients; sprinkle over apples.

Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until apples are tender. Remove from the oven and immediately drizzle with caramel topping or dip. Serve warm with ice cream if desired. **Yield:** 12 servings.

nutty apple muffins

Gloria Kaufmann, Orrville, Ohio

I teach quick-bread making for 4-H, and I'm always on the lookout for good new recipes. My sister-in-law shared this recipe with me for a slightly different kind of muffin. With apples and coconut, they're moist and chewy.

1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
2 eggs
3/4 cup sugar
1/3 cup vegetable oil
3 tablespoons milk
1-1/2 cups diced peeled apples
1 cup chopped walnuts
3/4 cup flaked coconut

In a large bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, salt, nutmeg and baking soda. In another bowl, beat eggs, sugar, oil and milk. Stir in apples, nuts and coconut. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened.

Fill 18 greased muffin cups three-fourths full. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes before removing to a wire rack. **Yield:** 1-1/2 dozen.

apple-topped oatcakes pancakes

nutty apple muffins

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1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
2 eggs
3/4 cup sugar
1/3 cup vegetable oil
3 tablespoons milk
1-1/2 cups diced peeled apples
1 cup chopped walnuts
3/4 cup flaked coconut

In a large bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, salt, nutmeg and baking soda. In another bowl, beat eggs, sugar, oil and milk. Stir in apples, nuts and coconut. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened.

Fill 18 greased muffin cups three-fourths full. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes before removing to a wire rack. **Yield:** 1-1/2 dozen.

apple-topped oatcakes

Lois Hofmeyer, Aurora, Illinois

During the week we have quick breakfasts, but on Saturday I like to make something special. This is one of our favorite recipes because the oatcakes and apple topping are a tasty, wholesome combination. They also can be made ahead so a hungry family doesn't have to wait long.

1-1/2 cups hot milk
3/4 cup old-fashioned oats
1 egg, beaten
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 tablespoons molasses
1 cup all-purpose flour
1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 egg whites

LEMON APPLES:

2 tablespoons butter
5 medium tart apples, peeled and sliced
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
1/2 cup sugar
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg

In a large bowl, combine milk and oats; let stand for 5 minutes. Stir in egg, oil and molasses. Combine dry ingredients; stir into oat mixture just until moistened. Beat egg whites until soft peaks form; fold gently into batter. Set aside.

Heat butter in a skillet until foamy. Add apples, lemon juice and peel; cook, uncovered, for 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, cook oatcakes. Pour batter by 1/4 cupfuls onto a hot greased griddle. Cook until bubbles form; turn and cook until browned on other side.

Combine sugar, cornstarch and nutmeg; add to the apple mixture and cook 2 minutes longer or until tender. Serve warm over oatcakes. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

overnight apple french toast

Debra Blazer, Hegins, Pennsylvania

My in-laws own and operate an orchard, so we have an abundance of fruit fresh from the trees. This dish includes fresh apples, apple jelly and applesauce all in one recipe. It's a warm, hearty breakfast for busy days.

1 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 cup butter, cubed
2 tablespoons light corn syrup
2 large tart apples, peeled and sliced 1/4 inch thick
3 eggs
1 cup milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
9 slices day-old French bread (3/4 inch thick)

SYRUP:

1 cup applesauce
1 jar (10 ounces) apple jelly
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves

In a small saucepan, cook brown sugar, butter and syrup until thick, about 5-7 minutes. Pour into an ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan; arrange apples on top.

In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs, milk and vanilla. Dip bread slices into the egg mixture for 1 minute; place over apples. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 35-40 minutes.

Meanwhile combine syrup ingredients in a medium saucepan; cook and stir until hot. Serve with French toast. **Yield:** 9 servings.

apple turnovers with custard

Leora Muellerleile, Turtle Lake, Wisconsin

I'm almost finished writing my own cookbook. When I was working on the apple section, I knew I had to submit this recipe for the contest. With the flaky turnovers and rich sauce, it outshines every other apple recipe I make!

CUSTARD:

1/3 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 cups milk *or* half-and-half cream
3 egg yolks, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon vanilla extract

TURNOVERS:

4 medium baking apples, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch slices
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 tablespoons butter, diced
1/3 cup sugar
3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 tablespoon cornstarch
Pastry for double-crust pie
Milk

Combine sugar and cornstarch in a saucepan. Stir in milk until smooth. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until thickened and bubbly. Reduce heat; cook and stir for 2 minutes. Remove from heat; stir 1 cup into yolks. Return all to pan. Bring to a gentle boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in vanilla. Cool slightly. Cover surface of custard with waxed paper; chill.

Place apples in a bowl; sprinkle with lemon juice. Add butter. Combine sugar, cinnamon and cornstarch; mix with apples and set aside.

Divide pastry into eight portions; roll each into a 5-in. square. Spoon filling off-center on each. Brush

edges with milk. Fold over to form a triangle; seal. Crimp with tines of fork. Make steam vents on top.

Place on greased baking sheets. Chill 15 minutes. Brush with milk. Bake at 400° for 35 minutes. Serve warm with custard. **Yield:** 8 servings.

saucy apple cake

DeEtta Twedt, Mesa, Arizona

I found this recipe in a Midwestern cookbook. My friends and family consider it their favorite.

1 cup sugar
1/4 cup shortening
1 egg, beaten
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cups shredded peeled tart apples
1/4 cup chopped walnuts

VANILLA SAUCE:

1 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/2 cup half-and-half cream
1/2 cup butter
1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

In a mixing bowl, cream sugar and shortening. Add egg and mix well. Add the dry ingredients; mix well. Fold in the apples and walnuts.

Spread in a greased 8-in. square baking pan. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the cake comes out clean.

For sauce, combine sugar, cornstarch and cream in a saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat; boil for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat. Add butter and vanilla; stir until butter is melted. Serve warm over warm cake. **Yield:** 9 servings.

apple tart

Marilyn Begres, Dexter, Michigan

For 15 years my husband, daughter and I owned and operated an apple orchard, where we raised 27 variations of apples on 2,200 trees. This recipe is the best one I have. My family even prefers this wonderful tart over traditional apple pie. I hope you enjoy it, too.

1 cup sugar, *divided*
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
6 medium baking apples, peeled and thinly sliced
1 tablespoon butter
Pastry for a single-crust pie

In a small skillet, heat 3/4 cup sugar, stirring constantly until it is liquefied and just golden. Remove from the heat and quickly pour into a 10-in. pie plate; set aside.

In a small bowl, combine the flour, cinnamon and remaining sugar. Arrange half of the apples in a single layer in a circular pattern in pie plate. Sprinkle with half of the sugar mixture. Arrange half of the remaining apples in circular pattern over sugar; sprinkle with remaining sugar mixture. Place remaining apples over all, keeping the top as level as possible. Dot with butter.

Roll out pastry to 9-in.; place over apples, pressing gently to completely cover. Do not flute. Bake at 400° for 50 minutes or until golden brown and apples are tender. As soon as tart comes out of the oven, carefully invert onto a large serving plate and remove pie plate. Cool. **Yield:** 8 servings.

lemony apple dumplings

Kristy Deloach, Baker, Louisiana

The first time I made this recipe, I was serving guests who had two little daughters. The girls weren't sure about eating a dessert that looked so different. But after just one bite, they proclaimed the treat "yummy" and cleaned their plates. The smooth lemon sauce adds a bit of zip.

1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1-1/4 teaspoons salt, *divided*
1/3 cup shortening
4 to 5 tablespoons cold milk
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
3 tablespoons butter, softened
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
4 medium baking apples, peeled and cored
1 egg white, beaten

LEMON SAUCE:

1/2 cup sugar
4 teaspoons cornstarch
1 cup cold water
3 tablespoons butter
4 teaspoons lemon juice
2 teaspoons grated lemon peel
1/8 teaspoon salt

Combine flour and 1 teaspoon salt. Cut in shortening until crumbly. Stir in milk until pastry forms a ball; set aside. Stir brown sugar, butter, cinnamon and remaining salt to form a paste. Divide and press into center of each apple; pat any extra filling on outside of apples.

On a floured surface, roll pastry into a 14-in. square. Cut into four 7-in. squares. Place one apple in center of each square. Brush edges of pastry with egg white. Fold up corners to center; pinch to seal.

Place in a greased 9-in. square baking dish. Bake at 375° for 35-40 minutes or until golden brown.

Meanwhile, combine sugar and cornstarch in a saucepan. Stir in water. Bring to a boil; boil 2 minutes. Remove from the heat; stir in the remaining ingredients until smooth. Serve warm over warm dumplings. **Yield:** 4 servings.

ambrosia waldorf salad

Janet Smith, Smithton, Missouri

A light, lovely pink salad, this recipe puts a different spin on traditional Waldorf salad. It is super served with roast turkey or baked ham. People always go back for seconds. My family didn't think they liked cranberries until they tried this sweet crunchy salad.

2 cups fresh *or* frozen cranberry halves
1/2 cup sugar
3 cups miniature marshmallows
2 cups diced unpeeled apples
1 cup seedless green grape halves
3/4 cup chopped pecans
1 can (20 ounces) pineapple tidbits, drained
1 cup heavy whipping cream, whipped
Shredded *or* flaked coconut

Combine cranberries and sugar. In a large bowl, combine the marshmallows, apples, grapes, pecans and pineapple. Add cranberries and mix well. Fold in whipped cream. Cover and chill. Sprinkle with coconut before serving. **Yield:** 12-14 servings.

candy apple pie

Cindy Kleweno, Burlington, Colorado

This is the only apple pie my husband will eat, but that's all right since he makes it as often as I do. Like a combination of apple and pecan pie, it's a sweet treat that usually tops off our holiday meals from New Year's all the way through to Christmas!

6 cups thinly sliced peeled baking apples
2 tablespoons lime juice
3/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon *or* nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon salt
Pastry for double-crust pie (9 inches)
2 tablespoons butter
TOPPING:
1/4 cup butter
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
2 tablespoons heavy whipping cream
1/2 cup chopped pecans

In a large bowl, toss apples with lime juice. Combine dry ingredients; add to the apples and toss lightly.

Line a 9-in. pie plate with bottom crust and trim even with edge; fill with apple mixture. Dot with butter. Roll out remaining pastry to fit top of pie. Place over filling. Trim, seal and flute edges high; cut slits in pastry. Bake at 400° for 40-45 minutes or until golden brown and apples are tender.

Meanwhile, melt butter in a small saucepan. Stir in brown sugar and cream; bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat; and stir in pecans.

Pour over top crust. Bake 3-4 minutes longer or until bubbly. Serve warm. **Yield:** 8 servings.

***** prize winning tips

* Sliced apples freeze well if properly prepared. Peel and slice the apples, then drop into Fruit Fresh to keep them from discoloring. Place the slices in boiling water for 2 minutes, then cool in ice water for 2 minutes. Drain. Pack slices into plastic freezer bags in the amounts needed for your favorite recipes. Seal, label and freeze. If you need diced or chopped apples, cut the slices after they're defrosted. Now you can keep sliced or diced apples through the winter for use in apple breads, muffins and pies.

Taste of Home Test Kitchen

* For enhanced flavor in your pie crust, add a bit of sugar and a few drops of vanilla to your basic recipe. If you're making an apple or pumpkin pie, also add cinnamon to the crust. Delicious!

Bonnie G., Brunswick, Ohio

* When asked to bring a salad for a dinner, I topped lettuce greens with chopped carrot, celery and apple plus raisins and sliced almonds. It was so pretty and a nice change from traditional tossed salad ingredients.

Ruth J., Everson, Pennsylvania

STRAWBERRY CREPES

strawberry crepes

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Debra Latta of Port Matilda, Pennsylvania admits she made lots of mistakes when she was learning to bake back in junior high. But the high school principal and former English teacher was obviously a good student.

> "The Strawberry Crepes…win raves whenever I serve them."

Debra earned an "A-plus" from our judges, who awarded her luscious Strawberry Crepes the Grand Prize in our Sensational Strawberries contest. Our panel raved about the creamy filling and strawberry topping, calling this dessert a "five-star" recipe.

Over the years, Debra has tweaked the recipe, which she got from a friend. "I enjoy preparing crepes," she notes. "The more I make them, the easier they are. I have recipes for crabmeat crepes and chicken crepes…and my family adores my breakfast crepes. The Strawberry Crepes are extra special and win raves whenever I serve them."

She and husband Stan have two daughters, Erinn and Aimee.

1-1/2 cups milk
3 eggs
2 tablespoons butter, melted
1/2 teaspoon lemon extract
1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons sugar
Dash salt
TOPPING:
1/2 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
3/4 cup water
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon strawberry extract
1/4 teaspoon red food coloring, optional
4 cups sliced fresh strawberries
FILLING:
1 cup heavy whipping cream
1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
2 cups confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

In a large mixing bowl, combine milk, eggs, butter and extract. Combine flour, sugar and salt; add to milk mixture and beat until smooth. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Heat a lightly greased 8-in. nonstick skillet. Stir batter; pour 2 tablespoons into center of skillet. Lift and tilt pan to evenly coat bottom. Cook until top appears dry; turn and cook 15-20 seconds longer. Remove to a wire rack. Repeat with remaining batter, greasing skillet as needed. When cool, stack crepes with waxed paper or paper towels in between.

In a small saucepan, combine sugar and cornstarch; stir in water and lemon juice until smooth. Bring to a boil over medium heat; cook and stir for 1 minute or until thickened. Stir in extract and food coloring if desired. Cool. Add strawberries.

In a small mixing bowl, beat the cream until stiff peaks form; set aside. In a large mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, confectioners' sugar and vanilla until smooth; fold in whipped cream. Spoon 2 rounded tablespoons of filling down the center of each crepe; roll up. Top with strawberry topping. **Yield:** 22 crepes.

summer chicken salad

Nancy Whitford, Edwards, New York

I found this recipe many years ago in a church cookbook. It's special enough for a fancy dinner but easy enough to fix for a light lunch. There's a kick to the tangy citrus dressing, which even my picky son enjoys.

- **4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (4 ounces *each*)**
- **1 can (14-1/2 ounces) chicken broth**
- **6 cups torn mixed salad greens**
- **2 cups halved fresh strawberries**

CITRUS DRESSING:

- **1/2 cup fresh strawberries, hulled**
- **1/3 cup orange juice**
- **2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- **1 tablespoon lemon juice**
- **2 teaspoons grated lemon peel**
- **1 teaspoon sugar**
- **1/2 teaspoon chili powder**
- **1/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **1/4 cup chopped walnuts, toasted**

Place chicken in a large skillet; add broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 20-25 minutes or until juices run clear. Drain; cover and refrigerate. In a large bowl, combine the greens and sliced strawberries; refrigerate.

In a blender, combine the hulled strawberries, orange juice, oil, lemon juice and lemon peel, sugar, chili powder, salt and pepper. Cover and process until smooth. Pour into a small saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer for 5-6 minutes until slightly thickened. Cool slightly.

Drizzle half of the dressing over greens and berries; toss to coat. Divide among four plates. Cut chicken into 1/8-in. slices; arrange over salads. Drizzle remaining dressing over chicken; sprinkle with nuts. **Yield:** 4 servings.

strawberry puff pastry dessert

Anna Ginsberg, Austin, Texas

My failed attempt to make a triple-layer strawberry malt mousse resulted in this scrumptious dessert. I don't use puff pastry often, but it was simple to work with. My husband declared it one of the best desserts ever.

- **1 package (17.3 ounces) frozen puff pastry**
- **5 cups sliced fresh strawberries, *divided***
- **6 squares (1 ounce *each*) white baking chocolate**
- **1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **1 cup confectioners' sugar**
- **1/3 cup malted milk powder**
- **2 cups heavy whipping cream, whipped**

Strawberry syrup, optional

Thaw one puff pastry sheet (save remaining sheet for another use). Unfold pastry; cut lengthwise into three 3-in.-wide strips. Cut each strip into thirds, making nine squares. Place 1 in. apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 400° for 11-13 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to wire racks to cool.

Place 2-1/2 cups strawberries in a blender; cover and puree. Set aside. In a large microwave-safe mixing bowl, melt the white chocolate; cool slightly. Add cream cheese and vanilla; beat until smooth. Beat in the confectioners' sugar and malted milk powder until smooth. Stir in the puree. Fold in whipped cream.

Split pastry squares in half horizontally. Line an ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. dish with bottom pastry halves, cut side up; spread with 3-1/2 cups strawberry cream. Top with 1 cup of sliced berries. Cover with pastry tops, cut side down.

Spread with remaining strawberry cream. Sprinkle with remaining berries. Drizzle with strawberry syrup if desired. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 12 servings.

berry-cream cookie snaps

Crystal Briddick, Colfax, Illinois

My mom and I made up this recipe by combining two others. These cute cookies are crispy on the outside and light and fluffy inside. You could also bake the cookies flat and serve the filling as a cookie dip if you like.

4 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup sugar
2 tablespoons seedless strawberry jam
1/4 cup heavy whipping cream, whipped
1 to 3 drops red food coloring, optional

BATTER:

1/2 cup sugar
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
2 egg whites
1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup butter, melted and cooled
1/2 cup chopped fresh strawberries

Additional sugar

For filling, in a small mixing bowl, combine cream cheese, sugar and jam until blended. Fold in whipped cream and food coloring if desired. Chill.

In a bowl, whisk the sugar, flour, egg whites, vanilla and salt until smooth. Whisk in butter until blended. Line baking sheets with parchment paper. Preparing four cookies at a time, drop batter by 1-1/2 teaspoonfuls 4 in. apart onto prepared pan. Bake at 400° for 5-8 minutes or until edges are lightly browned.

Immediately remove one cookie at a time from parchment and form into a tube around a greased clean round wooden clothespin. Press lightly to seal; hold until set, about 20 seconds. Remove cookie from clothespin; place on waxed paper to cool. Continue with remaining cookies. If cookies become too cool to shape, return to oven for 1 minute to soften. Repeat with remaining batter.

Just before serving, pipe or spoon filling into cookie shells. Dip end of cookie into strawberries and additional sugar. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** about 2 dozen.

sensational slush

Connie Friesen, Atlona, Manitoba

Colorful and refreshing, this sweet-tart slush has become a family favorite. I freeze the mix in 2- and 4-cup containers so it can be served in small portions for individuals or the whole family. I also freeze crushed strawberries to make preparation simpler.

1/2 cup sugar
1 package (3 ounces) strawberry gelatin
2 cups boiling water
2 cups sliced fresh strawberries
1 cup unsweetened pineapple juice
1 can (12 ounces) frozen lemonade concentrate, thawed
1 can (12 ounces) frozen limeade concentrate, thawed
2 cups cold water
2 liters lemon-lime soda, chilled

In a large bowl, dissolve sugar and gelatin in boiling water. Place the strawberries and pineapple juice in a blender or food processor; cover and process until smooth. Add to the gelatin mixture. Stir in concentrates and cold water. Cover and freeze for 8 hours or overnight.

Remove from freezer 45 minutes before serving. For each serving, combine 1/2 cup slush mixture with 1/2 cup lemon-lime soda; stir well. **Yield:** 20 servings.

strawberry popovers

Sandy Holton-Vanthoff, San Diego, California

These tender popovers "pop up" nicely in the oven and hold a delicate cream filling dotted with fresh chopped strawberries. If you don't have a popover pan on hand, you might try muffin cups.

1 cup heavy whipping cream
1/3 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups chopped fresh strawberries
4-1/2 teaspoons shortening

POPOVERS:

4 eggs
2 cups milk
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon sugar
1 teaspoon salt

In a mixing bowl, beat cream until it begins to thicken. Add sugar and vanilla; beat until stiff peaks form. Fold in the strawberries. Cover and refrigerate until serving.

Using 1/2 teaspoon shortening for each cup, grease the bottom and sides of nine popover cups. In a small mixing bowl, beat eggs; beat in milk. Add the flour, sugar and salt; beat until smooth (do not overbeat). Fill prepared cups half full.

Bake at 450° for 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350°; bake 15 minutes longer or until very firm. Immediately cut a slit in the top of each popover to allow steam to escape. Spoon strawberry filling into popovers. Serve immediately. **Yield:** 9 servings.

strawberry swirl cheesecake

Mary Ellen Friend, Ravenswood, West Virginia

This melt-in-your-mouth delight is doubly delicious, with two creamy layers…one strawberry, one vanilla. To avoid cracking, run the knife just through the very top when swirling the strawberry puree.

1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon sugar
1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
1/2 cup cold butter

FILLING:

4 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1-1/3 cups sugar
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons heavy whipping cream
4 eggs, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup pureed fresh strawberries, *divided*
8 to 10 drops red food coloring, optional

In a small bowl, combine the flour, sugar and lemon peel; cut in butter until crumbly. Pat dough onto the bottom and 1 in. up the sides of a greased 9-in. springform pan. Place on a baking sheet. Bake at 325° for 15-20 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack.

In a large mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, sugar, flour and cream until smooth. Add eggs; beat on low speed just until combined. Beat in lemon juice and vanilla just until blended. Pour 2-1/2 cups batter into a bowl; set aside.

Stir 3/4 cup pureed strawberries and food coloring if desired into remaining batter. Pour into crust. Place pan on a double thickness of heavy-duty foil (about 16 in. square). Securely wrap foil around pan. Place in a large baking pan. Add 1 in. of hot water to larger pan. Bake for 35 minutes.

Carefully pour reserved batter over bottom layer. Spoon remaining pureed berries over batter in three concentric circles. Carefully cut through top layer only with a knife to swirl. Bake 40-50 minutes longer or until center is almost set. Remove pan from water bath. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight. **Yield:** 12 servings.

frozen strawberry pie

Awynne Thurstenson, Siloam Springs, Arkansas

This recipe makes two attractive pies using store-bought chocolate crumb crust and can be made ahead. I serve each slice with a dollop of whipped cream, a strawberry and chocolate curls.

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 cups chopped fresh strawberries
1 carton (12 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed
1/2 cup chopped pecans, toasted
2 chocolate crumb crusts (9 inches)
Chocolate curls, optional

In a large mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, sugar and vanilla until smooth. Beat in the strawberries. Fold in the whipped topping and pecans. Pour into crusts. Cover and freeze for 3-4 hours or until firm. Remove from the freezer 15-20 minutes before serving. Garnish with chocolate curls, if desired. **Yield:** 2 pies (6 servings each).

berry pinwheel cake

Becky Ruff, Monona, Iowa

Perfect for special meals, this lovely chiffon cake is a nice change from strawberry pie or shortcake.

4 egg yolks
2 eggs
1/2 cup sugar
4-1/2 teaspoons water
2 teaspoons vegetable oil
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup cake flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
Confectioners' sugar
FILLING:
1 cup heavy whipping cream
1 tablespoon sugar
3 tablespoons lemon curd
2 cups chopped fresh strawberries

In a large mixing bowl, beat egg yolks, eggs and sugar until thick and lemon-colored. Beat in water, oil and vanilla. Combine flour, baking powder and salt; gradually add to egg mixture. Grease a 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan and lined with waxed paper; grease and flour the paper. Spread batter into pan.

Bake at 375° for 10-12 minutes or until cake springs back when lightly touched. Cool 5 minutes. Turn cake onto a kitchen towel dusted with confectioners' sugar. Peel off waxed paper. Roll up cake in towel jelly-roll style, starting with a short side. Cool on a wire rack.

In a mixing bowl, beat cream until soft peaks form; add sugar, beating until stiff. Fold in lemon curd; gradually fold in strawberries. Unroll cake; spread filling evenly to within 1/2 in. of edges. Roll up again; dust with confectioners' sugar. Cover and chill for 1 hour before serving. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 8 servings.

almond berry muffins

Deborah Feinberg, East Setauket, New York

I made these moist muffins to take to the office, and they were a hit. Sugared almonds give them a crunchy topping. When strawberries aren't in season, I use frozen cut strawberries directly from the freezer.

1-1/4 cups sliced almonds, *divided*
1 egg white, lightly beaten
1-1/2 cups sugar, *divided*
1/4 cup shortening
1/4 cup butter, softened
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 cup buttermilk
1-1/4 cups fresh strawberries, chopped

In a bowl, combine 1 cup almonds and egg white. Add 1/2 cup sugar; toss to coat. Spoon into a greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 9-11 minutes or until golden brown, stirring occasionally.

In a large mixing bowl, cream shortening, butter and remaining sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in extracts. Combine the flour, baking powder, salt and baking soda; add to the creamed mixture alternately with buttermilk. Fold in strawberries and remaining almonds.

Fill greased or paper-lined muffin cups two-thirds full. Sprinkle with sugared almonds. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool for 5 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks. **Yield:** 1-1/2 dozen.

asparagus berry salad

Trisha Kruse, Eagle, Idaho

When strawberries and asparagus are at their peak, this salad is sensational! I like to serve it for brunch or dinner. Sometimes I add grilled chicken or salmon to create a refreshing but filling main-dish salad.

1 pound fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
3 tablespoons olive oil, *divided*
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon coarsely ground pepper
8 cups spring mix salad greens
3 cups sliced fresh strawberries
1/2 small red onion, thinly sliced
1/2 cup chopped walnuts, toasted
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 teaspoons sugar

In a bowl, toss the asparagus with 1 tablespoon oil. Spread in a single layer in a greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake at 400° for 15-20 minutes or until tender.

In a large salad bowl, toss greens, strawberries, onion, walnuts and asparagus. In a small bowl, whisk the vinegar, sugar and remaining oil. Drizzle over salad and toss to coat. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

strawberry tartlets

Joy Van Meter, Thornton, Colorado

This elegant-looking dessert is easy to make, and the cute wonton "cups" can be made in advance. They're a different way to present fresh strawberries when entertaining. The recipe is easy to double, too.

12 wonton wrappers
3 tablespoons butter, melted
1/3 cup packed brown sugar
3/4 cup Mascarpone cheese
2 tablespoons honey
2 teaspoons orange juice
3 cups fresh strawberries, sliced
Whipped cream and fresh mint, optional

Brush one side of each wonton wrapper with butter. Place brown sugar in a shallow bowl; press buttered side of wontons into sugar to coat. Press wontons sugared side up into greased muffin cups. Bake at 325° for 7-9 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Remove to a wire rack to cool.

In a bowl, combine the cheese, honey and orange juice. Spoon about 1 tablespoon into each wonton cup. Top with strawberries. Garnish with whipped cream and mint if desired. **Yield:** 1 dozen.

***** prize winning tips

- When buying strawberries, pick the plumpest and most fragrant berries. They should be firm, bright and fresh-looking, with no mold or bruised spots.

  Taste of Home Test Kitchen

- Strawberries stay fresh longer if stored unwashed, with the stems on, in a sealed glass jar in the refrigerator.

  Mary M., Williamsport, Pennsylvania

- Instead of quartering strawberries to garnish the top of your dessert, slice them widthwise into disks to add a pretty decorative twist!

  Theresa S., Newington, Connecticut

- A quick and easy way to hull strawberries is to insert a straw into the tip of the berry and push it through the other end.

  Natalie C., Ross, Texas

- For a quick and delicious dessert, I bake brownie batter in my waffle iron. I serve the brownie waffles warm with ice cream or as a base for strawberry shortcake.

  Clarice S., Sun City, Arizona

HAM AND BEAN CHOWDER

ham and bean chowder

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Plenty of good cooks pick pork for its great taste and versatility—roasted, grilled, simmered or stir-fried, this meat is a real meal-maker.

Not surprisingly, recipes entered in our recent Perfect Pork contest ranged from hearty breakfasts to soups, salads, snacks and satisfying suppers. Mild, savory or spicy, pork proved delicious in dish after dish…and picking one winner proved a real challenge for our panel of judges.

> "…it's a meaty, cheesy blend that makes a meal in a bowl."

A few second helpings finally helped those tasters make up their minds. The Grand Prize went to Joe Ann Heavrin of Memphis, Tennessee for her Ham and Bean Chowder. "Rich and flavorful, it's a meaty, cheesy blend that makes a meal in a bowl," says Joe Ann.

"Anytime baked ham is on the menu, everyone knows my chowder will follow," Joe Ann explained. "They make sure I have lots of leftover ham to work with!"

Besides being a favorite family supper, this chowder's fine for company. "When my sister and cousin visit, it's the first thing they ask for," Joe Ann assured. "It's also popular as a nutritious get-well gift for folks who aren't feeling up to cooking."

Grown daughter Mary Ann gets the credit for sharing the recipe with her mom, who added some personal touches before trying out the chowder on husband Charles. "He loved it from the very first spoonful," Joe Ann reports. "Now, we're rarely without a kettle-ready supply in our freezer.

1 pound dried great northern beans
2 cups chopped onion
1 cup sliced celery
2 garlic cloves, minced
3 tablespoons butter
1 meaty ham bone
2 cups water
1 can (14-1/2 ounces) chicken broth
1 can (14-1/2 ounces) stewed tomatoes
2 bay leaves
2 whole cloves
1/2 teaspoon pepper
2 cups milk
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese

Place beans in a Dutch oven or soup kettle; add water to cover by 2 in. Bring to a boil; boil for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat; cover and let stand for 1 hour.

Drain beans and discard liquid. In the same kettle, saute onion, celery and garlic in butter until tender. Add beans, ham bone, water, broth, tomatoes, bay leaves, cloves and pepper; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 2 hours.

Remove ham bone, bay leaves and cloves. When cool enough to handle, remove ham from bone; cut into small pieces and return to soup. Chill for 8 hours or overnight.

Skim fat from soup. Stir in milk; cook on low until heated through. Just before serving, stir in cheese. **Yield:** 12-14 servings (3-1/4 quarts).

baked breakfast burritos

Carol Towey, Pasadena, California

Every week, I try a minimum of three new recipes. This is one I clipped from the paper. When I served it to my five grown children, not a morsel was left!

- **6 to 8 bacon strips**
- **8 fresh mushrooms, sliced**
- **6 green onions, sliced**
- **1/3 cup chopped green pepper**
- **1 garlic clove, minced**
- **8 eggs**
- **1/4 cup sour cream**
- **3/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese, *divided***
- **3 tablespoons enchilada sauce**
- **1 tablespoon butter**
- **4 large flour tortillas (10 inches)**
- **Sour cream and additional enchilada sauce, optional**

In a skillet, cook bacon until crisp; remove to paper towel to drain. Reserve 1 tablespoon of drippings. Saute mushrooms, onions, green pepper and garlic in drippings until tender; set aside and keep warm.

In a bowl, beat eggs and sour cream. Stir in 1/4 cup cheese and enchilada sauce. In a skillet, melt butter; add egg mixture. Cook over low heat, stirring occasionally until eggs are set. Remove from heat.

Crumble the bacon; add to eggs with mushroom mixture. Spoon down center of tortillas; roll up.

Place, seam side down, in an 11-in. x 7-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake at 350° for 5 minutes or until cheese melts. Serve with sour cream and enchilada sauce if desired. **Yield:** 4 servings.

pork chops with mushroom gravy

Nancy Schilling, Berkeley Springs, West Virginia

Based on the "moist meat" method of preparation my grandmother used, these chops get passed around the table a second time. Even people who think that pork is dry like it. I serve it with mashed potatoes and peas.

- **1/2 cup all-purpose flour, *divided***
- **1/2 cup seasoned bread crumbs, *divided***
- **4 pork chops (1/2 inch thick)**
- **2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- **1 medium onion, sliced**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **3 cups water**
- **2 tablespoons beef bouillon granules**
- **1 teaspoon browning sauce, optional**
- **2 bay leaves**
- **1 jar (4-1/2 ounces) sliced mushrooms, drained**
- **1/2 cup cold water**

In a shallow bowl, combine half of the flour and bread crumbs; coat the pork chops. In a large skillet over medium heat, brown pork chops on both sides in oil. Add onion, garlic, pepper and water. Stir in bouillon, browning sauce and bay leaves; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 1-1/2 hours or until pork is tender.

Remove bay leaves. Remove pork to serving platter and keep warm. Add mushrooms to skillet. Combine cold water and remaining flour until smooth; stir into pan juices. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly until thickened and bubbly. Stir in the remaining bread crumbs. Serve over pork chops. **Yield:** 4 servings.

cranberry-glazed pork roast

Madeline Strauss, Clinton Township, Michigan

Many pork recipes were too spicy for me, so I decided to try this sweeter alternative. That was over 18 years ago, and it became a family favorite. It tastes great the day after in a cold sandwich, too. Today, our two daughters make this roast often. We also have grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/2 teaspoon pepper**
- **1 boneless rolled pork loin roast (3 pounds)**
- **1 cup jellied cranberry sauce**
- **1/2 cup orange juice**
- **1/4 cup packed brown sugar**

Combine salt and pepper; rub over the roast. Place roast, fat side up, on a rack in a greased roasting pan. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 1-1/2 hours.

Meanwhile, combine cranberry sauce, orange juice and brown sugar in a saucepan; cook over medium heat until cranberry sauce melts. Brush a fourth over the roast. Bake 30 minutes longer; brush with another fourth of the glaze. Return to the oven for 15 minutes or until a meat thermometer reads 160°. Let stand for 10 minutes before slicing. Warm remaining glaze; serve with roast. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

honey pork and peppers

Carol Heim, Nokesville, Virginia

I'm always trying new recipes on my husband and son. This easy, quick and delicious one is a keeper—a nice change from pork roast or pork chops. The tangy sauce nicely coats the meat and vegetables.

- **1-1/2 pounds boneless pork, cut into 1-inch cubes**
- **2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- **1 envelope (.87 ounce) brown gravy mix**
- **1 cup water**
- **1/4 cup honey**
- **3 tablespoons soy sauce**
- **2 tablespoons red wine vinegar**
- **1/2 teaspoon ground ginger**
- **1/8 teaspoon garlic powder**
- **1 medium onion, cut into wedges**
- **1 medium sweet red pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces**
- **1 medium green pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces**
- **Hot cooked rice**

In a large skillet over medium heat, cook pork in oil until browned, about 15 minutes.

Combine gravy mix, water, honey, soy sauce, vinegar, ginger and garlic powder; add to the pork. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add onion and peppers; cook 5-10 minutes longer. Serve over rice. **Yield:** 4-6 servings.

ham 'n' cheese strata

Marilyn Kroeker, Steinbach, Manitoba

Our daughter wouldn't mind if I made this every weekend! I do prepare it for holidays, serving it alongside fresh cinnamon buns and a fruit salad.

12 slices white bread, crusts removed
1 pound fully cooked ham, diced
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
6 eggs
3 cups milk
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon ground mustard
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
Dash cayenne pepper
1/4 cup finely chopped onion
1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper
1/4 cup butter, melted
1 cup crushed cornflakes

Arrange six slices of bread in the bottom of a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Top with ham and cheese. Cover with remaining bread.

In a bowl, beat eggs, milk, Worcestershire sauce, mustard, salt, pepper and cayenne. Stir in onion and green pepper; pour over all. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Pour butter over bread; sprinkle with cornflakes. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 50-60 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Let stand 10 minutes before serving. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

spicy pork stir-fry

Jane Flatgard, Circle Pines, Minnesota

The first time I made this recipe, back some years ago, my closest girlfriend came over for dinner. Between the two of us, we managed to finish the entire panful! Nowadays, I cook for my husband and daughter.

1-1/4 pounds pork tenderloin
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon sugar
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 medium onion, thinly sliced
1 medium carrot, julienned
1 garlic clove, minced
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 package (6 ounces) frozen snow peas, thawed
Boston lettuce leaves *or* hot cooked rice
Toasted sesame seeds, optional

Cut the pork into 1/8-in. wide slices; cut each slice into 3-in. strips. In a bowl, combine the soy sauce, cornstarch, salt, sugar, ginger and cayenne. Add pork; toss to coat and set aside.

In a large skillet or wok, stir-fry onion, carrot and garlic in oil until crisp-tender. Remove with a slotted spoon and keep warm.

In the same skillet, stir-fry pork over medium-high heat until browned and no longer pink. Add onion mixture and peas; heat through. Serve in lettuce cups or over rice. Sprinkle with sesame seeds if desired. **Yield:** 4 servings.

sweet-and-sour ribs

Kate Raleigh, Salt Lake City, Utah

When I was a girl, my three sisters and I took turns planning and cooking the Saturday meal. Now that I'm grown, I like making this for family dinners and potlucks at work. It supplies a nice change from everyday fare.

- **4 pounds pork spareribs**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons salt, *divided***
- **1/2 teaspoon pepper**
- **1/3 cup chopped celery**
- **1/3 cup chopped green pepper**
- **2 tablespoons butter**
- **1 can (20 ounces) pineapple tidbits**
- **2 tablespoons cornstarch**
- **1/3 cup white vinegar**
- **2 tablespoons soy sauce**
- **1 tablespoon sugar**
- **1 garlic clove, minced**
- **1/2 teaspoon ground ginger**

Cut ribs into serving-size pieces; place with bone side down on a rack in a greased shallow roasting pan. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon salt and pepper. Cover and bake at 400° for 30 minutes; drain. Reduce heat to 350°; cover and bake 1 hour longer.

In a saucepan, saute celery and green pepper in butter until tender. Drain pineapple, reserving juice. Set pineapple aside. Combine juice and cornstarch; add to saucepan and bring to a boil. Cook and stir until thickened, about 2 minutes.

Add pineapple, vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, garlic, ginger and remaining salt; mix well. Spoon over ribs. Bake, uncovered, 25-30 minutes longer or until meat is tender. **Yield:** 4 servings.

rice-stuffed roast

Shirley Creamer, Lamar, Colorado

When I'm having company, I like to fix something like this tempting roast. Face it, men love to eat—and we gals don't do a bad job of it either!

- **2 packages (6 ounces *each*) long grain and wild rice mix**
- **3/4 cup boiling water**
- **3/4 cup dried apricots, chopped**
- **3/4 cup chopped fresh mushrooms**
- **1/2 cup chopped green onions**
- **1/2 cup chopped sweet red pepper**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 tablespoon butter**
- **1/3 cup chopped water chestnuts**
- **2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **1 boneless rolled pork loin roast (about 4 pounds)**
- **1/2 cup apricot preserves**

Prepare rice according to package directions. Meanwhile, pour boiling water over apricots; let stand for 20 minutes. Drain and set aside.

In a large skillet, saute mushrooms, onions, red pepper and garlic in butter until tender, about 4 minutes. Remove from the heat; stir in rice, apricots, water chestnuts, parsley, salt and pepper.

Untie roast and spread 1-1/4 cups of rice mixture inside. Place the remaining stuffing in a covered 2-qt. casserole; set aside.

Retie roast and place on a rack in a greased roasting pan. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 2 to 2-1/2 hours or until a meat thermometer reads 160°. During the last 30 minutes, baste roast with preserves and bake the extra rice stuffing. Let roast stand 10 minutes before slicing. **Yield:** 10-12 servings.

cheddar-bacon dip

Carol Werkman, Neerlandia, Alberta

Both children and adults enjoy this dip. I like it, too—it's so quick and easy to prepare. I make it for special occasions like birthdays and Christmastime parties. We have children and grandchildren.

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
5 green onions, thinly sliced
4 medium tomatoes, chopped
1 large green pepper, chopped
1 jar (16 ounces) taco sauce
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
1 pound sliced bacon, cooked and crumbled
Tortilla *or* taco-flavored chips

In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sour cream. Spread in an ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. dish or on a 12-in. plate. Combine onions, tomatoes and green pepper; sprinkle over the cream cheese layer.

Pour taco sauce over the vegetables. Sprinkle with cheddar cheese. Refrigerate. Just before serving, sprinkle with bacon. Serve with tortilla or taco chips. **Yield:** 10-12 servings.

creamy pork tenderloin

Janice Christofferson, Eagle River, Wisconsin

For years, I've been making this recipe both for my husband and me and for guests as well. We're now enjoying retirement on a lake in the northwoods.

2 pork tenderloins (about 1 pound *each*)
1 egg
1 tablespoon water
1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
1/4 teaspoon pepper
Dash garlic powder
1 cup seasoned bread crumbs
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/2 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced
2 tablespoons butter
1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted
1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
1/4 cup chicken broth

Cut each tenderloin into eight pieces. Flatten each piece to 3/4-in. thickness. In a shallow dish, combine the egg, water and seasonings. Place bread crumbs in another shallow dish. Dip pork into egg mixture, then into bread crumbs.

In a large skillet over medium heat, brown pork in oil for 5 minutes on each side. Transfer to a 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish; keep warm. In the same skillet, saute mushrooms in butter until tender. Stir in the soup, sour cream and broth; pour over pork.

Cover and bake at 325° for 1 hour or until pork is tender. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

marinated pork strips

Karen Peterson, Hainesville, Illinois

Especially if you're having company, this is a good recipe. While it looks like you spent time on it, it's actually easy because it marinates overnight.

- **5 tablespoons soy sauce**
- **1/4 cup ketchup**
- **3 tablespoons white vinegar**
- **3 tablespoons chili sauce**
- **3 tablespoons sugar**
- **2 teaspoons salt**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **3 garlic cloves, minced**
- **2 cans (12 ounces *each*) lemon-lime soda**
- **2 pounds pork tenderloin, cut lengthwise into 1/2-inch strips**

In a bowl, combine the first nine ingredients. Place pork in a heavy resealable plastic bag; add marinade. Seal bag and turn to coat. Refrigerate overnight.

Drain and discard the marinade. Thread pork onto metal or soaked wooden skewers. Grill over hot coals for 12 minutes, turning once. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

***** prize winning tips

- To help keep pork chops moist while cooking, add a bit of ginger to the flour prior to breading. When I do this, I never have a dry chop.

  Monica M., Willowick, Ohio

- After a roast pork dinner, I make a potpie. In a prepared pie crust, layer leftover mashed potatoes, chopped meat and vegetables, then pour on the gravy. Put on the top crust and bake until the crust is golden. We love this and it's quick to assemble.

  Tammy S., Utica, New York

- When roasting pork (or poultry), I pour 1/4 cup of white vinegar and 1/4 cup of brown sugar, along with salt, pepper and paprika, over the meat. It gives the meat excellent flavor, and our kids say my gravy is the best!

  John R., Ripon, Wisconsin

- When frying pork chops, I use cream of mushroom soup as gravy. After removing the meat, I cook the soup and just enough water to make it the consistency we like.

  Carol P., Arkoma, Oklahoma

- A pinch of ground cloves is a terrific addition to pork chops, pork roast and bread dressing for poultry or pork.

  Lenore G., Woodbury, Minnesota

SURPRISE SAUSAGE BUNDLES

surprise sausage bundles

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

When she read of our contest, Barb Ruis of Grandville, Michigan had an entry close at hand.

It's a good thing she did—her recipe for Surprise Sausage Bundles was selected the Grand Prize winner in our Sizzlin' Sausage contest.

"My friend Stephanie gave me a gift subscription to *Taste of Home*, and this is the first contest I entered," Barb states. "I'm not sure who was more excited when I won—me or Stephanie!"

> "Kielbasa and sauerkraut star in …these scrumptious stuffed rolls."

Sausage is frequently on the menu at the Ruis home since it's a versatile meat that's quick to cook. "I especially like using Italian sausage in Italian entrees," says our winner, who also enjoys gardening and playing the piano.

"My husband, Randy, is a big fan of my Surprise Sausage Bundles," Barb adds. "Kielbasa and sauerkraut star in a tasty filling for these scrumptious stuffed rolls, which make a great dinner with soup or salad. We even eat the leftovers cold for breakfast, and they taste great—like a whole new meal."

6 bacon strips, diced
1 cup chopped onion
1 can (16 ounces) sauerkraut, rinsed and well drained
1/2 pound fully cooked smoked kielbasa *or* Polish sausage, coarsely chopped
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/4 teaspoon caraway seeds
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 package (16 ounces) hot roll mix
2 eggs, *divided*
1 cup warm water (120° to 130°)
2 tablespoons butter, softened
Poppy seeds

In a skillet, cook bacon until crisp; remove to paper towels. Reserve 2 tablespoons drippings. Saute onion in drippings until tender. Stir in sauerkraut, sausage, brown sugar, garlic salt, caraway and pepper. Cook and stir for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat; add bacon. Set aside to cool.

In a bowl, combine contents of hot roll mix. Stir in one egg, water and butter to form a soft dough. Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes. Cover dough with a large bowl; let stand for 5 minutes.

Divide dough into 16 pieces. On a floured surface, roll out each piece into a 4-in. circle. Top each with 1/4 cup filling. Fold dough around filling, forming a ball; pinch edges to seal. Place seam side down on greased baking sheets. Cover loosely with plastic wrap that has been coated with nonstick cooking spray. Let rise in a warm place for 15 minutes.

Beat remaining egg; brush over bundles. Sprinkle with poppy seeds. Bake at 350° for 16-17 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm. **Yield:** 16 servings.

italian shepherd's pie

Cindy Gage, Blair, Nebraska

For a stick-to-your-ribs main dish that's extra special, give this pie a try! The Italian sausage goes well with mashed potatoes, and both get a new twist served in a crust and cut into wedges. My family is always glad to see me preparing this dish.

- **1 unbaked pastry shell (9 inches)**
- **1 pound bulk Italian sausage**
- **1 cup cream-style cottage cheese**
- **1 egg**
- **1-1/2 cups warm mashed potatoes (without added milk and butter)**
- **1/4 cup sour cream**
- **1/2 teaspoon dried oregano**
- **1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **2 teaspoons butter, melted**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**
- **Cherry tomatoes, halved**

Line unpricked pastry shell with a double thickness of heavy-duty foil. Bake at 450° for 7 minutes. Remove from the oven and remove foil; set aside. Reduce heat to 350°.

In a skillet, cook sausage until no longer pink; drain well on paper towels. Place cottage cheese and egg in a blender; cover and process until smooth. Transfer to a large bowl; stir in potatoes, sour cream, oregano, salt and pepper.

Place sausage in pastry shell; top with potato mixture. Drizzle with butter. Bake for 50-60 minutes or until set. Sprinkle with cheese; let stand for a few minutes until cheese is melted. Garnish with tomatoes. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

kielbasa summer salad

Sara Primarolo, Sanquoit, New York

The unexpected combination of flavors and textures in this cool salad sparks taste buds. It can be a main course for a luncheon or a side dish at a dinner or a barbecue. I've gotten many compliments sharing it as a potluck dish. It's fun to have a deliciously different salad like this to share.

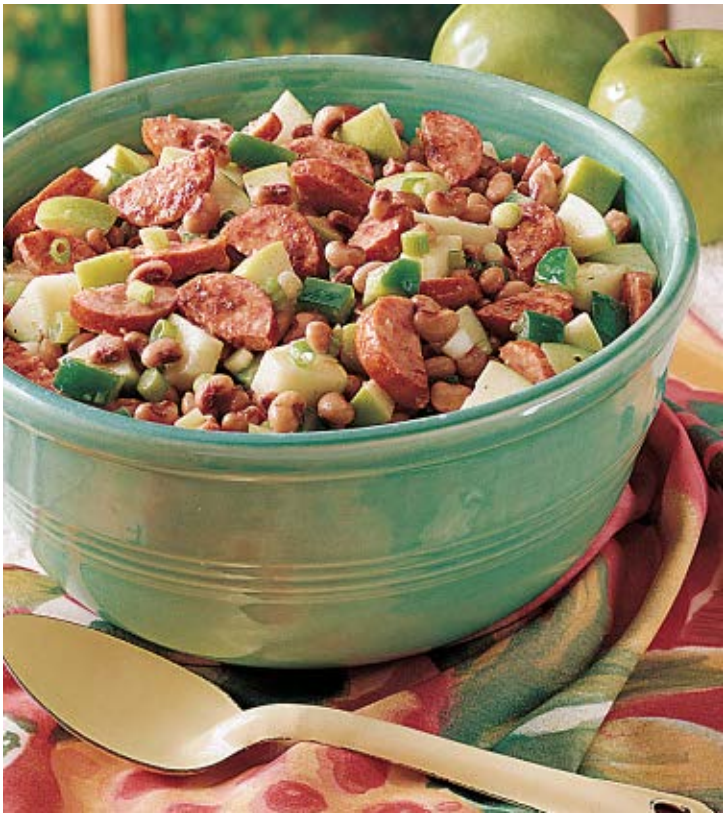
- **1 pound smoked kielbasa *or* Polish sausage, halved and cut into 1/4-inch pieces**
- **1 can (15-1/2 ounces) black-eyed peas, rinsed and drained**
- **2 medium tart apples, cut into 1/2-inch chunks**
- **1 medium green pepper, chopped**
- **4 large green onions, thinly sliced**

DRESSING:

- **1/3 cup vegetable oil**
- **3 tablespoons cider vinegar**
- **1 tablespoon Dijon mustard**
- **2 teaspoons sugar**
- **1/2 to 1 teaspoon pepper**

In a nonstick skillet, cook sausage until no longer pink. Drain on paper towels. In a large bowl, combine peas, apples, green pepper, onions and sausage.

In a small bowl, combine the dressing ingredients. Pour over sausage mixture; toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 4 hours or overnight. **Yield:** 10 servings.



sausage cabbage soup

Stella Garrett, Orlando, Florida

My family often requests this satisfying soup. I've served it to guests for lunch and as a cold-weather Sunday supper. It's really good with a tossed green salad and a crusty loaf of bread.

- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- **1 tablespoon butter**
- **2 medium carrots, thinly sliced and halved**
- **1 celery rib, thinly sliced**
- **1 teaspoon caraway seeds**
- **2 cups water**
- **2 cups chopped cabbage**
- **1/2 pound fully cooked smoked kielbasa *or* Polish sausage, halved and cut into 1/4-inch slices**
- **1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained**
- **1 tablespoon brown sugar**
- **1 can (15 ounces) white kidney beans, rinsed and drained**
- **1 tablespoon white vinegar**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **Minced fresh parsley**

In a 3-qt. saucepan, saute onion in oil and butter until tender. Add carrots and celery; saute for 3 minutes. Add caraway; cook and stir 1 minute longer. Add water, cabbage, sausage, tomatoes and brown sugar; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Add beans, vinegar, salt and pepper. Simmer, uncovered, for 5-10 minutes or until heated through. Sprinkle with parsley. **Yield:** 6 servings.

polish potato salad

Odette Dallaire, Los Alamos, New Mexico

When my in-laws from Poland visited, I made this dish for them, knowing their fondness for sausage and potatoes. They liked it enough to request the recipe, and I gained the reputation of a good cook.

- **8 to 10 small red potatoes**
- **2 fresh bratwurst links**
- **1 fresh kielbasa *or* Polish sausage link**
- **2 tablespoons butter**
- **5 teaspoons sugar**
- **4 teaspoons all-purpose flour**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1 teaspoon ground mustard**
- **1/2 teaspoon celery seed**
- **3/4 cup chicken broth**
- **1/3 cup white wine vinegar**
- **1 small red onion, sliced**
- **1/2 cup sliced celery**
- **1/4 cup minced fresh parsley**

Cook potatoes just until tender; drain. When cool, peel and slice potatoes; set aside.

In a large skillet, cook sausage until no longer pink. Remove and cut into 1/4-in. slices; set aside. Add butter, sugar, flour, salt, mustard and celery seed to the skillet. Cook and stir over medium heat until mixture is hot and bubbly. Gradually add broth and vinegar; bring to a boil. Cook and stir until thickened. Gently stir in the onion, celery, parsley, potatoes and sausage; heat through. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

handy sausage biscuits

Nancy Parker, Seguin, Texas

These are similar to old-fashioned biscuits made from scratch, but they're even better thanks to the tasty sausage throughout. It's almost impossible to stop eating them. I like to serve these biscuits with an egg dish or soup.

3/4 pound bulk pork sausage
2-2/3 cups all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons sugar
1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup shortening
1 package (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast
1/4 cup warm water (110° to 115°)
1 cup buttermilk
Melted butter

In a skillet, cook sausage over medium heat until no longer pink; drain well and set aside. In a bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt; cut in shortening until crumbly. Stir in the sausage.

In another bowl, dissolve yeast in water; let stand for 5 minutes. Add buttermilk. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened.

On a lightly floured surface, gently knead dough 6-8 times. Roll out to 1/2-in. thickness; cut with a 2 in. biscuit cutter. Place on lightly greased baking sheets.

Brush tops with butter. Bake at 450° for 10-12 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm. **Yield:** 2-3 dozen.

Editor's Note: No rising time is necessary before baking. The dough can be rerolled.

sausage calzones

Janine Colasurdo, Chesapeake, Virginia

My husband, Tom, and I both enjoy cooking Italian food. We took the filling we usually use for ravioli and wrapped it in a dough to make these calzones.

1 package (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast
1/2 cup warm water (110° to 115°)
3/4 cup warm milk (110° to 115°)
2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons olive oil, *divided*
1-1/2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon sugar
3 to 3-1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 pound bulk Italian sausage
1 package (10 ounces) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
1 carton (15 ounces) ricotta cheese
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley
1/8 teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons cornmeal
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1-1/2 cups pizza sauce, warmed

In a large mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in water. Add the milk, 2 tablespoons oil, salt, sugar and 2 cups flour; beat until smooth. Stir in enough remaining flour to form a soft dough.

Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl; turn once to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.

Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook sausage over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Add the spinach, cheeses, parsley and pepper; mix well.

Punch dough down; divide into six pieces. On a

floured surface, roll each piece into an 8-in. circle. Top each with 2/3 cup filling. Fold dough over filling; pinch to seal.

Place on greased baking sheets sprinkled with cornmeal. Brush tops lightly with remaining oil; sprinkle with garlic salt. Bake at 400° for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Serve with pizza sauce. **Yield:** 6 servings.

breakfast patties

Jeannine Stallings, East Helena, Montana

This homemade sausage is terrific because it's so lean, holds together well and shrinks very little when cooked. It's incredibly easy to mix up a batch and make any breakfast special.

- **1/4 cup water**
- **2 teaspoons salt**
- **2 teaspoons rubbed sage**
- **1 teaspoon pepper**
- **1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- **1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes**
- **1/8 teaspoon ground ginger**
- **2 pounds ground pork**

In a large bowl, combine water and seasonings. Crumble pork over mixture and mix well. Shape into eight 4-in. patties.

In a large skillet, cook patties over medium heat for 5-6 minutes on each side or until no longer pink in the center and a meat thermometer reads 160°. **Yield:** 8 patties.

saucy bratwurst supper

Robin Huber, Calgary, Alberta

For a change-of-pace dinner menu, I pull out this sensational bratwurst recipe. The caraway and other seasonings give this meaty main dish wonderful old-world flair. My husband thinks it's terrific.

- **4 to 6 fresh bratwurst links**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **3 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- **2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms**
- **2 medium tomatoes, chopped**
- **2 tablespoons cider vinegar**
- **1 bay leaf**
- **1 teaspoon caraway seeds**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/2 teaspoon pepper**
- **1 cup apple juice**
- **2 tablespoons cornstarch**
- **1/4 cup water**

In a large skillet, brown bratwurst; drain. Remove and set aside. In the same skillet, saute onion and garlic in oil until tender. Add mushrooms, tomatoes, vinegar, bay leaf, caraway, salt and pepper. Cook and stir for 2-3 minutes.

Return bratwurst to skillet. Add apple juice; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 18-22 minutes or until bratwurst is no longer pink.

Discard bay leaf. Remove bratwurst; keep warm. Combine cornstarch and water until smooth. Gradually add to sauce mixture; bring to a boil. Boil and stir for 2 minutes. Serve with the bratwurst. **Yield:** 4-6 servings.

sausage cheese olive loaves

Shana Bailey, Tulia, Texas

A friend once treated us to one of these attractive rings, and it was so good I asked for the recipe. This hearty bread is perfect for any occasion.

- **3 loaves (1 pound *each*) frozen bread dough**
- **1 pound bulk hot pork sausage**
- **1 pound bulk mild pork sausage**
- **1 pound bulk sage pork sausage**
- **1 pound fully cooked smoked kielbasa *or* Polish sausage, cut into 1/2-inch pieces**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese**
- **1 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **1 can (6 ounces) ripe olives, drained and sliced**
- **1 jar (5-3/4 ounces) stuffed olives, drained and sliced**
- **3 tablespoons butter, melted**

Thaw bread dough on a greased baking sheet according to package directions; let rise until nearly doubled.

Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook pork sausages until no longer pink; drain. Place in a large bowl. Add kielbasa, cheeses and olives; set aside.

Roll each loaf into a 17-in. x 9-in. rectangle. Spread a third of the sausage mixture on each rectangle to within 1 in. of edges. Roll up jelly-roll style, starting with a long side. Pinch seams; place seam side down on greased baking sheets. Form each into a circle; pinch ends together to seal.

Bake at 375° for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Brush with butter while warm. Store in the refrigerator or freezer. **Yield:** 3 loaves.

Editor's Note: Loaves may be frozen when cooled. Thaw at room temperature for 2 hours. Bake at 350° for 30-40 minutes.

sausage quiche squares

Linda Wheeler, Middleburg, Florida

Having done some catering, I especially appreciate interesting, appetizing finger foods. I'm constantly asked to make these popular squares to serve at parties. They're almost like a zippy quiche.

- **1 pound bulk pork sausage**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese**
- **1/2 cup finely chopped onion**
- **1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies**
- **1 tablespoon minced jalapeno pepper, optional**
- **10 eggs**
- **1 teaspoon chili powder**
- **1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/2 teaspoon garlic powder**
- **1/2 teaspoon pepper**

In a large skillet, cook sausage until no longer pink; drain. Place in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Layer with cheeses, onion, chilies and jalapeno if desired. In a bowl, beat eggs and seasonings. Pour over cheese.

Bake, uncovered, at 375° for 18-22 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes; cut into 1-in. squares. **Yield:** about 8 dozen.

Editor's Note: When cutting or seeding hot peppers, use rubber or plastic gloves to protect your hands. Avoid touching your face.

sausage florentine bake

Janice Mitchell, Aurora, Colorado

Prepare once and eat twice with this delicious lasagna-like casserole! Just bake one pan and freeze the second.

1-1/2 pounds bulk Italian sausage
2 cans (28 ounces *each*) crushed tomatoes
1 bay leaf
3 to 4 garlic cloves, minced
2 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
4 eggs, beaten
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese, *divided*
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
2 packages (10 ounces *each*) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
1 package (12 ounces) extra wide noodles, cooked and drained
4 green onions, sliced
4 cups (16 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

In a Dutch oven, cook sausage until no longer pink; drain. Add tomatoes, bay leaf, garlic, sugar, basil, oregano, salt and pepper; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, in a bowl, combine eggs, 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese and nutmeg; mix well. Stir in spinach, noodles and onions. Discard bay leaf from sausage mixture.

In each of two greased 9-in. square baking pans, layer a fourth of the noodles and a fourth of the sausage mixture. Top each with 1 cup mozzarella cheese. Repeat layers. Top with remaining Parmesan. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 30 minutes or until bubbly. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. **Yield:** 2 casseroles (4 servings each).

Editor's Note: Casseroles may be frozen before baking. Thaw in the refrigerator. Bake at 350° for 1 hour.

***** prize winning tips

* In lasagna recipes that call for ground beef, I use ground Italian sausage instead. Guests prefer mine to the lasagna served in many Italian restaurants.

Debbie W., Nampa, Idaho

* Fresh sausages can be grilled without precooking. Turn them often and, before serving, cut one in half to be certain it's no longer pink in the center. If you simmer sausages in water first, they take less time to finish on the grill and seem to stay moister. Either way, do not prick the casing, as drippings may cause grill flare-ups. Keep a spray bottle of water handy just in case.

Taste of Home Test Kitchen

* When I have leftover sausage and vegetables, I stir them into prepared macaroni and cheese for a quick and tasty meal.

Wendy S., Vernal, Utah

WESTERN-STYLE BEEF 'N' BEANS

western-style beef 'n' beans

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Beefing up family meals is no problem for seasoned homemaker Jolene Lopez. Ground beef stars in many menus at her Wichita, Kansas home.

One hearty recipe she relies on is Western-Style Beef 'n' Beans. Her family thinks it's delicious and special, and so did our panel of judges—Jolene's recipe was awarded Grand Prize in our Ground Beef Roundup contest!

> "It doesn't take long to make but tastes like it simmered all day."

This versatile blend of ground beef, baked beans and seasonings can double as a main dish or a side dish, Jolene notes. "We like bacon, so I add some as well—it's a wonderful combination," she says.

Jolene enjoys hosting dinners for her three grown children and eight grandchildren. She also collects cookbooks and crochets.

"I didn't learn to cook until after I married but picked it up quickly," she confides. "My husband, Frank, and I love Mexican food, so I fix it often."

"For your next family meal or gathering, try Western-Style Beef 'n' Beans," Jolene says. "The thick, satisfying dish is comforting on a chilly evening. It doesn't take long to make but tastes like it simmered all day."

- **3 pounds ground beef**
- **2 medium onions, chopped**
- **2 celery ribs, chopped**
- **2 teaspoons beef bouillon granules**
- **2/3 cup boiling water**
- **2 cans (28 ounces *each*) baked beans with molasses**
- **1-1/2 cups ketchup**
- **1/4 cup prepared mustard**
- **3 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons salt**
- **1/2 teaspoon pepper**
- **1/2 pound sliced bacon, cooked and crumbled**

In a Dutch oven over medium heat, cook beef, onions and celery until meat is no longer pink and vegetables are tender; drain. Dissolve bouillon in water; stir into beef mixture. Add the beans, ketchup, mustard, garlic, salt and pepper; mix well.

Cover and bake at 375° for 60-70 minutes or until bubbly; stir. Top with bacon. **Yield:** 12 servings.

baked chili

Michelle Gal, Toronto, Ontario

This main dish is wonderful the first day and also makes outstanding leftovers. As a student living on my own, I love savory one-pot suppers like this that provide several days of tasty meals.

- **1 pound ground beef**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **1 large green pepper, chopped**
- **1 can (16 ounces) kidney beans, rinsed and drained**
- **1 can (15-1/4 ounces) whole kernel corn, drained**
- **1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce**
- **1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained**
- **1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies**
- **2 teaspoons chili powder**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- **1/2 teaspoon sugar**
- **1/2 teaspoon garlic powder**

CORN BREAD BISCUITS:

- **1 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1 cup cornmeal**
- **2 teaspoons baking powder**
- **1/8 teaspoon salt**
- **1 egg**
- **1/2 cup milk**
- **1/2 cup sour cream**

In a Dutch oven or soup kettle, over medium heat, cook beef, onion and green pepper until meat is no longer pink; drain. Add remaining ingredients; bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine flour, cornmeal, baking powder and salt in a bowl. Beat egg, milk and sour cream until smooth; stir into dry ingredients just until moistened.

Transfer chili to an ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Drop batter by heaping teaspoonfuls onto hot chili. Bake, uncovered, at 400° for 15-17 minutes or until biscuits are lightly browned. **Yield:** 8 servings.

blue plate beef patties

Phyllis Miller, Danville, Indiana

A friend and I discovered this recipe together and both consider it a staple menu item. I fix the moist, mild-tasting patties often for family and friends. We love them with mashed potatoes, rice or noodles and the gravy, which gets great flavor from fresh mushrooms.

- **1 egg**
- **2 green onions with tops, sliced**
- **1/4 cup seasoned bread crumbs**
- **1 tablespoon prepared mustard**
- **1-1/2 pounds ground beef**
- **1 jar (12 ounces) beef gravy**
- **1/2 cup water**
- **2 to 3 teaspoons prepared horseradish**
- **1/2 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced**

In a bowl, beat the egg; stir in onions, bread crumbs and mustard. Crumble beef over mixture and mix well. Shape into four 1/2-in.-thick patties.

In an ungreased skillet, cook patties for 4-5 minutes on each side or until meat is no longer pink; drain.

In a small bowl, combine gravy, water and horseradish; add mushrooms. Pour over patties. Cook, uncovered, for 5 minutes or until mushrooms are tender and heated through. **Yield:** 4 servings.

garlic beef enchiladas

Jennifer Standridge, Dallas, Georgia

Enchiladas are typically prepared with corn tortillas, but my husband, Jeff, and I prefer flour tortillas. I use them in this saucy casserole that has a subtle kick.

1 pound ground beef
1 medium onion, chopped
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon rubbed sage
1 can (14-1/2 ounces) stewed tomatoes

SAUCE:

4 to 6 garlic cloves, minced
1/3 cup butter
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1 can (14-1/2 ounces) beef broth
1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce
1 to 2 tablespoons chili powder
1 to 2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 to 2 teaspoons rubbed sage
1/2 teaspoon salt
10 flour tortillas (7 inches)
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese

In a saucepan, cook beef and onion over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Stir in the flour and seasonings until blended. Stir in tomatoes; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, in another saucepan, saute garlic in butter until tender. Stir in flour until blended. Gradually stir in broth; bring to a boil. Cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Stir in tomato sauce and seasonings; heat through.

Pour about 1-1/2 cups sauce into an ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Spread about 1/4 cup beef mixture down the center of each tortilla; top with 1-2 tablespoons cheese. Roll up tightly; place seam side down over sauce. Top with the remaining sauce.

Cover and bake at 350° for 30-35 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake, uncovered, 10-15 minutes longer or until the cheese is melted. **Yield:** 4-6 servings.

ground beef snack quiches

Stacy Atkinson, Rugby, North Dakota

My husband, Cory, farms, so supper can sometimes be quite late. Hearty appetizers, like these meaty mini quiches, are a perfect way to start meals.

1/4 pound ground beef
1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 cup biscuit/baking mix
1/4 cup cornmeal
1/4 cup cold butter
2 to 3 tablespoons boiling water
1 egg
1/2 cup half-and-half cream
1 tablespoon chopped green onion
1 tablespoon chopped sweet red pepper
1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/2 cup finely shredded cheddar cheese

In a saucepan over medium heat, cook beef, garlic powder and pepper until meat is no longer pink; drain and set aside.

In a bowl, combine the biscuit mix and cornmeal; cut in butter. Add enough water to form a soft dough. Press onto the bottom and up the sides of greased miniature muffin cups. Place teaspoonfuls of beef mixture into each shell.

In a bowl, combine the egg, cream, onion, red pepper, salt and cayenne; pour over beef mixture. Sprinkle with cheese.

Bake at 375° for 20 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. **Yield:** 1-1/2 dozen.

'lil cheddar meat loaves

Kathy Bowron, Cocolalla, Idaho

I got this recipe from my Aunt when I was a teen and have made these lip-smacking miniature loaves many times. My husband and three children count this main dish among their favorites. The recipe is also great for company since it's easily doubled or tripled.

- **1 egg**
- **3/4 cup milk**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**
- **1/2 cup quick-cooking oats**
- **1/2 cup chopped onion**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1 pound lean ground beef**
- **2/3 cup ketchup**
- **1/2 cup packed brown sugar**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons prepared mustard**

In a bowl, beat the egg and milk. Stir in cheese, oats, onion and salt. Crumble beef over mixture and mix well. Shape into eight loaves; place in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Combine ketchup, brown sugar and mustard; spoon over loaves.

Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 45 minutes or until the meat is no longer pink and a meat thermometer reads 160°. **Yield:** 8 servings.

spinach beef biscuit bake

Bonnie Bootz, Scottsdale, Arizona

My family is from Greece, and I grew up on Greek food like casseroles, so I combined the two in this deliciously different main dish. I've served this to both family and friends, and it's a hit with everyone.

- **2 tubes (6 ounces *each*) refrigerated buttermilk biscuits**
- **1-1/2 pounds ground beef**
- **1/2 cup finely chopped onion**
- **2 eggs**
- **1 package (10 ounces) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry**
- **1 can (4 ounces) mushroom stems and pieces, drained**
- **4 ounces crumbled feta *or* shredded Monterey Jack cheese**
- **1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons garlic powder**
- **Salt and pepper to taste**
- **1 to 2 tablespoons butter, melted**

Press and flatten biscuits onto the bottom and up the sides of a greased 11-in. x 7-in. x 2-in. baking dish; set aside.

In a skillet over medium heat, cook beef and onion until meat is no longer pink; drain.

In a bowl, beat eggs. Add spinach and mushrooms; mix well. Stir in the cheeses, garlic powder, salt, pepper and beef mixture; mix well. Spoon into prepared crust. Drizzle with butter.

Bake, uncovered, at 375° for 25-30 minutes or until crust is lightly browned. **Yield:** 6 servings.

spicy cheeseburger soup

Lisa Mast, White Cloud, Michigan

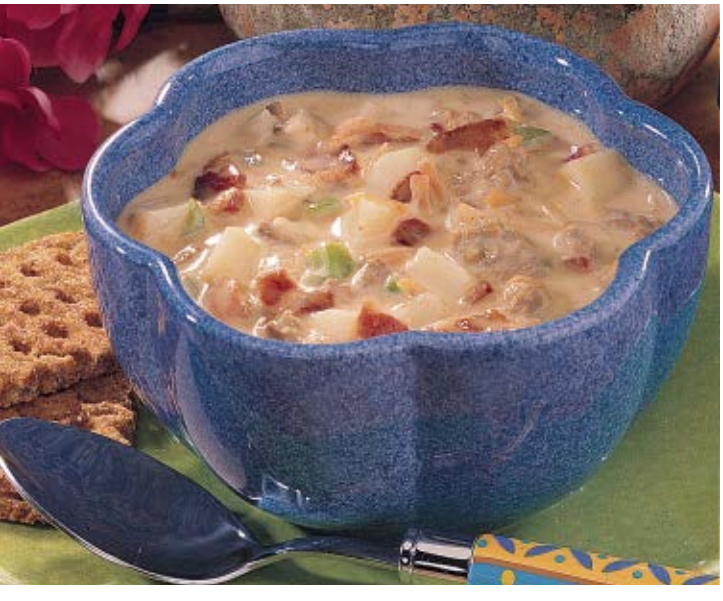
This creamy soup brings my family to the table in a hurry. I love the warming zip of cayenne, but it also tastes terrific without it if you like a milder flavor. With a few simple side dishes, this soup is a full meal.

1-1/2 cups water
2 cups cubed peeled potatoes
2 small carrots, grated
1 small onion, chopped
1/4 cup chopped green pepper
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped
1 garlic clove, minced
1 tablespoon beef bouillon granules
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 pound ground beef, cooked and drained
2-1/2 cups milk, *divided*
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
8 ounces process American cheese, cubed
1/4 to 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper, optional
1/2 pound sliced bacon, cooked and crumbled

In a large saucepan, combine the first nine ingredients; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until potatoes are tender.

Stir in beef and 2 cups of milk; heat through. Combine flour and remaining milk until smooth; gradually stir into soup. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened and bubbly. Reduce heat; stir in cheese until melted. Add cayenne if desired. Top with bacon just before serving. **Yield:** 6-8 servings (about 2 quarts).

Editor's Note: When cutting or seeding hot peppers, use rubber or plastic gloves to protect your hands. Avoid touching your face.



super sloppy joes

Ellen Stringer, Bourbonnais, Illinois

Mother made these fresh-tasting sloppy joes many times when I was growing up. She passed the recipe on to me when I got married. My brother-in-law says they're the best sandwiches he's ever tasted. He ought to know, his name is Joe.

2 pounds ground beef
1/2 cup chopped onion
2 celery ribs with leaves, chopped
1/4 cup chopped green pepper
1-2/3 cups canned crushed tomatoes
1/4 cup ketchup
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1 tablespoon white vinegar
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon steak sauce
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/4 teaspoon ground mustard
1/4 teaspoon paprika
8 to 10 hamburger buns, split

In a Dutch oven over medium heat, cook beef, onion, celery and green pepper until the meat is no longer pink and the vegetables are tender; drain.

Add the next nine ingredients; mix well. Simmer, uncovered, for 35-40 minutes, stirring occasionally. Spoon 1/2 cup meat mixture onto each bun. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

meatballs with cream sauce

Michelle Thompson, Smithfield, Utah

I get raves from my husband and even our three fussy children when I serve these satisfying meatballs with mashed potatoes. The savory cream sauce gives a new twist to meatballs and always makes a memorable meal.

- **1 egg, lightly beaten**
- **1/4 cup milk**
- **2 tablespoons ketchup**
- **1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce**
- **3/4 cup quick-cooking oats**
- **1/4 cup finely chopped onion**
- **1/4 cup minced fresh parsley**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **1-1/2 pounds lean ground beef**
- **3 tablespoons all-purpose flour**

CREAM SAUCE:

- **2 tablespoons butter**
- **2 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **1/4 teaspoon dried thyme**
- **Salt and pepper to taste**
- **1 can (14 ounces) chicken broth**
- **2/3 cup heavy whipping cream**
- **2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley**

In a large bowl, combine the egg, milk, ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, oats, onion, parsley, salt and pepper. Crumble beef over mixture and mix well. Shape into 1-1/2-in. balls. Roll in flour, shaking off excess.

Place 1 in. apart on greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pans. Bake, uncovered, at 400° for 10 minutes. Turn meatballs; bake 12-15 minutes longer or until meat is no longer pink.

Meanwhile, for sauce, melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Stir in the flour, thyme, salt and pepper until smooth. Gradually add broth and cream. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened.

Drain meatballs on paper towels; transfer to a serving dish. Top with sauce; sprinkle with parsley. **Yield:** 6 servings.

mashed potato beef casserole

Helen McGeorge, Abbotsford, British Columbia

This recipe came out of my Mother's cookbook. The smudges and splatters show that Mom used it extensively to feed our large family. The tarragon really comes through to make a flavorful main dish.

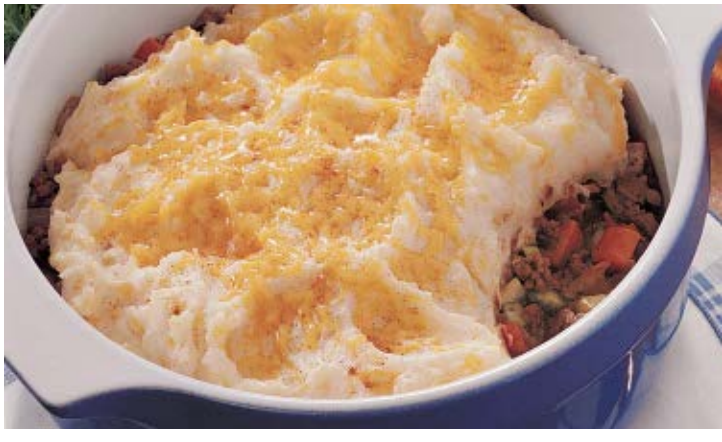
- **2 bacon strips, diced**
- **1 pound ground beef**
- **1 large onion, finely chopped**
- **1/4 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced**
- **1 large carrot, finely chopped**
- **1 celery rib, finely chopped**
- **3 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **1 cup beef broth**
- **1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce**
- **1 teaspoon dried tarragon**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **3 cups hot mashed potatoes**
- **3/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese, *divided***
- **Paprika**

In a skillet, cook bacon until crisp; drain, reserving 1 teaspoon drippings. Set bacon aside. Cook beef in drippings over medium heat until no longer pink; drain.

Toss onion, mushrooms, carrot and celery in flour; add to skillet with the broth, Worcestershire sauce, tarragon and pepper. Bring to a boil; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, 15-20 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.

Add bacon; transfer to a greased 2-qt. baking dish. Combine potatoes and 1/2 cup of cheese; spread over beef mixture. Sprinkle with paprika and remaining cheese.

Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until heated through. Broil 4 in. from the heat for 5 minutes or until bubbly. **Yield:** 4-6 servings.



classic cabbage rolls

Beverly Zehner, McMinnville, Oregon

I've always enjoyed cabbage rolls but didn't make them since most methods were too complicated. This recipe is fairly simple and results in the best cabbage rolls.

- **1 medium head cabbage, cored**
- **1-1/2 cups chopped onion, *divided***
- **1 tablespoon butter**
- **2 cans (14-1/2 ounces *each*) Italian stewed tomatoes**
- **4 garlic cloves, minced**
- **2 tablespoons brown sugar**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons salt, *divided***
- **1 cup cooked rice**
- **1/4 cup ketchup**
- **2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **1 pound lean ground beef**
- **1/4 pound bulk Italian sausage**
- **1/2 cup V8 juice, optional**

In a Dutch oven, cook cabbage in boiling water for 10 minutes or until outer leaves are tender; drain. Rinse in cold water; drain. Remove eight large outer leaves (refrigerate remaining cabbage for another use); set aside.

In a saucepan, saute 1 cup onion in butter until tender. Add tomatoes, garlic, brown sugar and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Simmer for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, in a bowl, combine rice, ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, pepper and remaining onion and salt. Crumble beef and sausage over mixture and blend well. Remove thick vein from cabbage leaves for easier rolling. Place about 1/2 cup meat mixture on each leaf; fold in sides. Starting at an unfolded edge, roll up leaf to completely enclose filling. Place seam side down in a skillet. Top with the sauce.

Cover and cook over medium-low heat for 1 hour. Add V8 juice if desired. Reduce heat to low; cook 20 minutes longer or until rolls are heated through and meat is no longer pink. **Yield:** 4 servings.

***** prize winning tips

*I always use my microwave to quickly cook ground beef. I put the meat in a plastic colander placed inside a shallow dish. I microwave it for 1 minute, drain the shallow dish and stir the meat. I continue this routine until the meat is no longer pink. It ends up crumbled just like it would be if cooked in a skillet and is also nicely drained.

Hester N., Sun City Center, Florida

*When I buy ground beef for burgers, I place the amounts I'll need for a meal in heavy-duty resealable plastic bags. Then I flatten the beef in the bags into squares and press out all the air. The packages stack well in the freezer to conserve space, and I find that they defrost faster, too.

Patricia B., Smyrna, Georgia

*When I need to cook ground beef with celery, onions and peppers for a casserole or sauce, I always make extra. I freeze the leftover mixture in 3/4- to 1-pound packages, so I always have the basic ingredients for spaghetti sauce or another casserole ready to go.

Lee D., Lansing, Michigan

SESAME CHICKEN WITH MUSTARD SAUCE

sesame chicken with mustard sauce

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Everything was all fowled up in the *Taste of Home* test kitchen, thanks to the thousands of entries for our Country Chicken recipe contest.

The result was a feast for poultry-loving judges. They awarded the Grand Prize to Wanda White, Antioch, Tennessee, for her savory Sesame Chicken with Mustard Sauce.

> "I serve it for family meals and at parties and holiday buffets."

Wanda generally includes a fair amount of fowl in her menus. "No self-respecting Southern cook could get by without plenty of chicken recipes!" she affirms.

This one, passed along by her mother, is a special favorite with husband Ed and grown sons Ray and Hunter. Wanda adds, "I serve it for family meals and at parties and holiday buffets. Once, I used 75 chicken breasts to make a big batch for a church picnic. Everyone loved it!"

Big on flavor, this dish is a treat for the eyes as well. "Sometimes, I cut the chicken into tenders and fan them out on a pretty platter with the sauce in a bowl in the middle," Wanda informs. "Cherry tomatoes and parsley sprigs make an attractive garnish."

Sure to satisfy served either hot or cold (and as an appetizer or an entree), this versatile dish is simple to prepare and travels very well. "To cut down on prep time," Wanda notes, "I marinate and freeze the chicken ahead. Then it's ready for coating and baking."

1-1/2 cups buttermilk
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon soy sauce
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
2 garlic cloves, minced
6 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (about 1-1/2 pounds)
2 cups dry bread crumbs
1/2 cup sesame seeds
1/4 cup butter, melted
1/4 cup shortening, melted

SAUCE:
1-1/2 cups prepared mustard
1-1/2 cups plum jam
4-1/2 teaspoons prepared horseradish
1-1/2 teaspoons lemon juice

In a large resealable plastic bag or shallow glass container, combine the first nine ingredients; mix well. Add chicken and turn to coat. Seal or cover and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight, turning occasionally. Drain and discard marinade.

In a shallow dish, combine bread crumbs and sesame seeds. Dredge the chicken in the crumb mixture. Place in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Combine butter and shortening; drizzle over chicken. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until juices run clear.

Meanwhile, combine sauce ingredients in a saucepan; heat through. Serve with the chicken. **Yield:** 6 servings.

crab-stuffed chicken breasts

Therese Bechtel, Montgomery Village, Maryland

Busy as an active-duty member of the Coast Guard and the mother of a young son, I prepare this elegant dish for guests and special occasions.

- **4 tablespoons butter, *divided***
- **1/4 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1 cup chicken broth**
- **3/4 cup milk**
- **1/4 cup chopped onion**
- **1 can (6 ounces) crabmeat, drained, flaked and cartilage removed**
- **1 can (4 ounces) mushroom stems and pieces, drained**
- **1/3 cup crushed saltines (about 10 crackers)**
- **2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **Dash pepper**
- **4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (about 1 pound)**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese**
- **1/2 teaspoon paprika**
- **Hot cooked rice, optional**

In a saucepan, melt 3 tablespoons butter. Stir in flour until smooth. Gradually stir in broth and milk. Bring to a boil; boil and stir for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat; set aside.

In a skillet, saute onion in remaining butter until tender. Add the crab, mushrooms, cracker crumbs, parsley, salt, pepper and 2 tablespoons of the white sauce; heat through.

Flatten chicken to 1/4-in. thickness. Spoon about 1/2 cup of the crab mixture on each chicken breast. Roll up and secure with a toothpick.

Place in a greased 9-in. square baking dish. Top with remaining white sauce. Cover and bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until chicken juices run clear. Sprinkle with cheese and paprika. Bake, uncovered, 5 minutes longer or until cheese is melted. Remove toothpicks. Serve with rice if desired. **Yield:** 4 servings.

chicken wild rice casserole

Elizabeth Tokariuk, Lethbridge, Alberta

While this comforting dish is perfect for a company dinner, it's also too good not to make for everyday meals.

- **1 small onion, chopped**
- **1/3 cup butter**
- **1/3 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons salt**
- **1/2 teaspoon pepper**
- **1 can (14-1/2 ounces) chicken broth**
- **1 cup half-and-half cream**
- **4 cups cubed cooked chicken**
- **4 cups cooked wild rice**
- **2 jars (4-1/2 ounces *each*) sliced mushrooms, drained**
- **1 jar (4 ounces) diced pimientos, drained**
- **1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley**
- **1/3 cup slivered almonds**

In a large saucepan, saute onion in butter until tender. Stir in flour, salt and pepper until blended. Gradually stir in broth; bring to a boil. Boil and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened and bubbly. Stir in the cream, chicken, rice, mushrooms, pimientos and parsley; heat through.

Transfer to a greased 2-1/2-qt. baking dish. Sprinkle with almonds. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 30-35 minutes or until bubbly. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

old-fashioned chicken potpie

Marilyn Hockey, Lisle, Ontario

Although this uses leftover chicken, I serve it sometimes as an impressive company dinner. My husband enjoys it more than the original roasted bird with all the fixings!

- 1/3 cup butter
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1-1/2 cups water
- 2/3 cup milk
- 2 teaspoons chicken bouillon granules
- 2 cups cubed cooked chicken
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables

PASTRY:

- 1-2/3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons celery seed
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, cubed
- 1/3 cup cold butter

In a saucepan, melt butter. Stir in flour, garlic, salt and pepper until blended. Gradually stir in water, milk and bouillon. Bring to a boil; boil and stir for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in chicken and vegetables; set aside.

For pastry, combine flour and celery seed in a bowl. Cut in cream cheese and butter until crumbly. Work mixture by hand until dough forms a ball. On a lightly floured surface, roll two-thirds of dough into a 12-in. square. Transfer to an 8-in. square baking dish. Pour filling into crust. Roll remaining dough into 9-in. square; place over filling. Trim, seal and flute edges. Cut slits in pastry.

Bake at 425° for 30-35 minutes or until crust is golden brown and filling is bubbly. **Yield:** 6 servings.

sweet-sour chicken dippers

Kari Caven, Post Falls, Idaho

Since you can chop up all the ingredients the night before, this can be ready in about 30 minutes. You can also serve it as a snack or an appetizer.

- 1 can (8 ounces) crushed pineapple
- 1-1/2 cups sugar
- 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup chopped green pepper
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

BATTER:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup cornstarch
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1-1/3 cups cold water

Oil for deep-fat frying

- 1-1/2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into chunks

Drain pineapple, reserving juice. In a saucepan, combine sugar, tomatoes, vinegar, onion, green pepper, soy sauce, ginger and pineapple. Simmer for 20 minutes.

In a bowl, combine cornstarch and the reserved pineapple juice until smooth; add to tomato mixture. Bring to a boil; boil and stir for 2 minutes or until slightly thickened. Remove from the heat; set aside.

In a bowl, combine the flour, cornstarch, baking powder, baking soda, sugar and water until smooth.

In a deep-fat fryer, heat oil to 375°. Dip chicken pieces in batter; drop into oil and fry until golden brown and juices run clear, about 5 minutes. Serve immediately with sweet-sour sauce. **Yield:** 4 dozen appetizers.

grilled chicken pasta salad

Lori Thon, Basin, Wyoming

During the summer, my family often requests this recipe. Simply add garlic bread for a great meal. It's wonderful, too, for a picnic or any gathering.

1-1/2 cups Italian salad dressing
1/2 cup cider vinegar
1/3 cup honey
2 teaspoons dried oregano
1 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon pepper
6 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (4 ounces *each*)
1 package (12 ounces) fettuccine
1-1/2 cups broccoli florets
3 medium carrots, thinly sliced
2 celery ribs, thinly sliced
1 cup chopped green pepper
2 cans (2-1/4 ounces *each*) sliced ripe olives, drained

DRESSING:

1-1/2 cups Italian salad dressing
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning

In a large resealable plastic bag or shallow glass container, combine the first six ingredients. Cut each chicken breast into four strips; add to dressing mixture. Seal or cover and refrigerate for 2-3 hours. Drain and discard marinade. Grill chicken, uncovered, over medium heat for 4-5 minutes on each side or until juices run clear.

Meanwhile, cook fettuccine according to package directions; drain and cool. Cut chicken into bite-size pieces; set aside.

In a large bowl, combine vegetables, olives and fettuccine. Combine dressing ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid; shake well. Pour over salad and toss to coat. Top with chicken. **Yield:** 6 servings.

fried chicken coating mix

Dawn Supina, Edmonton, Alberta

My family—husband and our two sons—tell me they'd like me to fix chicken with this coating mix all of the time. I've had the recipe for years. In fact, I can't recall how I got it…just my many additions and deletions.

2 cups all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons salt
2 tablespoons pepper
1 tablespoon dried thyme
1 tablespoon dried tarragon
1 tablespoon ground ginger
1 tablespoon ground mustard
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon dried oregano
2 eggs
1/2 cup milk
1 broiler/fryer chicken (2-1/2 to 3-1/2 pounds), cut up
Oil for frying

Combine the first nine ingredients; store in an airtight container. **Yield:** 2-1/2 cups coating mix (enough for 3 batches of chicken).

To prepare chicken: In a shallow bowl, beat eggs and milk. Place 3/4 cup coating mix in a large resealable plastic bag. Dip chicken into egg mixture, then add to the bag, a few pieces at a time; shake to coat.

Heat 1/4 in. of oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Brown chicken on all sides; transfer to an ungreased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 45-55 minutes or until juices run clear. **Yield:** 4-6 servings per batch.

southern chicken rice soup

Rosalie Biar, Thorndale, Texas

A favorite at soup night at our church, this recipe was one concocted by my husband after he retired. We have four children plus grandchildren. I frequently find it on the table when I get home from work.

- **1 broiler/fryer chicken (about 3 pounds)**
- **10 cups water**
- **2 teaspoons salt**
- **1/2 cup uncooked long grain rice**
- **1/2 cup chopped onion**
- **1/2 cup chopped celery**
- **1/2 cup thinly sliced carrots**
- **1/2 cup sliced fresh *or* frozen okra**
- **1 can (14-1/2 ounces) stewed tomatoes, diced**
- **1 tablespoon chopped green chilies**
- **1 garlic clove, minced**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons chili powder**
- **1 teaspoon seasoned salt**
- **1/2 teaspoon lemon-pepper seasoning**
- **1/2 teaspoon Creole seasoning**

Place chicken, water and salt in a soup kettle or Dutch oven. Bring to a boil; skim foam from broth. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 1 to 1-1/2 hours or until the chicken is tender.

Remove chicken; when cool enough to handle, debone and dice. Skim fat from broth. Add rice, vegetables and seasonings. Cook, uncovered, over medium heat for 30 minutes.

Add chicken. Simmer for 30 minutes or until vegetables are tender. **Yield:** 10 servings (about 2-1/2 quarts).

four-cheese chicken fettuccine

Rochelle Brownlee, Big Timber, Montana

As a cattle rancher, my husband is a big fan of beef. For him to compliment a poultry dish is rare. But he always tells me, "I love this casserole!" I first tasted it at a potluck; now, I fix it for my family (we have a young daughter) once or twice a month, and I'm asked to take it to most every get-together.

- **8 ounces uncooked fettuccine**
- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted**
- **1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, cubed**
- **1 jar (4-1/2 ounces) sliced mushrooms, drained**
- **1 cup heavy whipping cream**
- **1/2 cup butter**
- **1/4 teaspoon garlic powder**
- **3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **1/2 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese**
- **1/2 cup shredded Swiss cheese**
- **2-1/2 cups cubed cooked chicken**

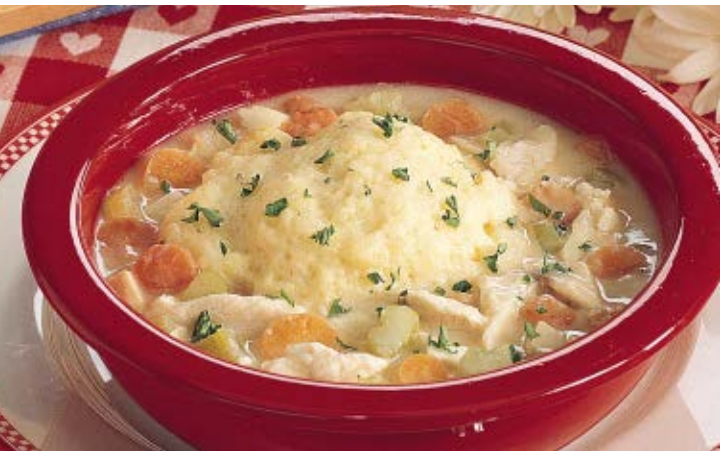
TOPPING:

- **1/3 cup seasoned bread crumbs**
- **2 tablespoons butter, melted**
- **1 to 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese**

Cook fettuccine according to package directions.

Meanwhile, in a large kettle, combine the soup, cream cheese, mushrooms, cream, butter and garlic powder. Stir in cheeses; cook and stir until melted. Add chicken; heat through. Drain fettuccine; add to the sauce.

Transfer to a shallow greased 2-1/2-qt. baking dish. Combine topping ingredients; sprinkle over chicken mixture. Cover and bake at 350° for 25 minutes. Uncover; bake 5-10 minutes longer or until golden brown. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.



mom's chicken 'n' buttermilk dumplings

Ellen Proefrock, Brodhead, Wisconsin

I serve this—with a tossed or cucumber salad—to friends dining with us or on visits by our children and grandchildren.

- **1 stewing chicken (about 5 pounds), cut up**
- **10 cups water**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **2 medium carrots, sliced**
- **3 celery ribs, chopped**
- **4 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 cup butter**
- **6 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **1/8 teaspoon paprika**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **1/2 cup half-and-half cream**

DUMPLINGS:

- **2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **4 teaspoons baking powder**
- **4 teaspoons sugar**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **2 eggs**
- **1/2 cup buttermilk**
- **1/4 cup butter, melted**

In a soup kettle or Dutch oven, combine the first seven ingredients. Bring to a boil; skim foam from broth. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 1-1/2 hours or until chicken is tender. Remove chicken; when cool enough to handle, debone and dice. Strain broth, reserving broth and vegetables.

In the same kettle, melt butter. Stir in flour, paprika and pepper until smooth. Gradually stir in 6 cups reserved broth (save remaining broth for another use). Bring to a boil; boil and stir for 2 minutes. Reduce heat; stir in the cream, reserved vegetables and chicken. Cover and bring to a boil; reduce the heat to simmer.

For dumplings, combine flour, baking powder, sugar and salt in a bowl. Combine eggs, buttermilk and butter; stir into dry ingredients to form a stiff batter. Drop by tablespoonfuls onto simmering mixture. Cover; simmer 20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in a dumpling comes out clean (do not lift cover while simmering). Serve immediately. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

savory chicken vegetable strudel

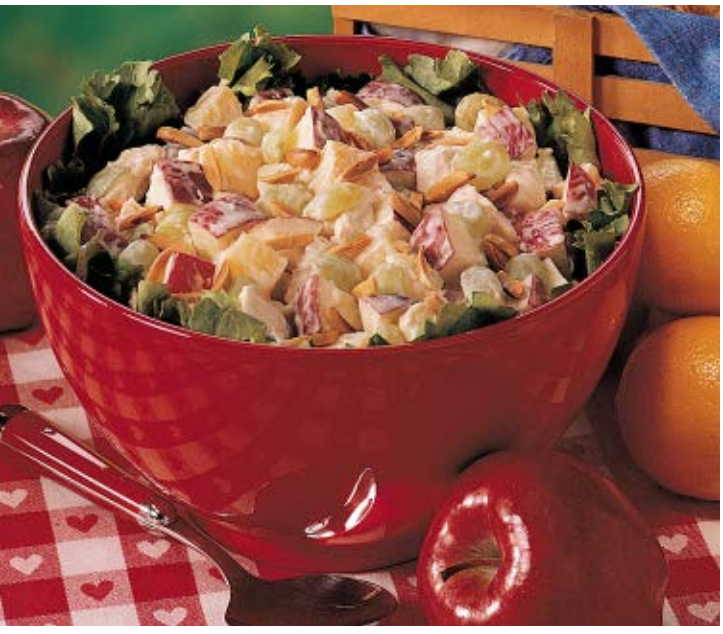
Michele Barneson, Washburn, Wisconsin

If you're looking for a way to sneak vegetables into a dish, try this one that looks fancy without the fuss.

- **2 cups diced cooked chicken**
- **1/2 cup shredded carrots**
- **1/2 cup finely chopped fresh broccoli**
- **1/3 cup finely chopped sweet red pepper**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded sharp cheddar cheese**
- **1/2 cup mayonnaise**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1/2 teaspoon dill weed**
- **1/4 teaspoon *each* salt and pepper**
- **2 tubes (8 ounces *each*) refrigerated crescent rolls**
- **1 egg white, beaten**
- **2 tablespoons slivered almonds**

In a bowl, combine the first 10 ingredients. Unroll crescent dough and place in a greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan; press seams and perforations together, forming a 15-in. x 12-in. rectangle (dough will hang over edges of pan).

Spread filling lengthwise down the center of the dough. On each long side, cut 1-1/2-in. wide strips 3-1/2-in. into center. Starting at one end, alternate strips, twisting twice and laying at an angle across filling. Seal ends. Brush dough with egg white; sprinkle with almonds. Bake at 375° for 30-35 minutes or until golden brown. Cut into slices; serve warm. **Yield:** 12 servings.



lemony chicken fruit salad

Johnece Stuard, Mansfield, Texas

Back in the 1950's, I was a home economist for the electric company, which is how I came across this recipe. During spring and summer, when it is hot here, my family especially likes it. My husband and I have two children and a pair of granddaughters, all grown. I've also found this chicken salad is good for women's luncheons and covered-plate meals since it's so different.

2 cans (8 ounces *each*) pineapple chunks
1 medium apple, diced
3 cups cubed cooked chicken
1 cup seedless grapes, halved
3 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup lemon juice
2 egg yolks, lightly beaten
1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
Lettuce leaves
1/2 cup slivered almonds, toasted

Drain pineapple, reserving the juice. Set aside pineapple and 1/2 cup juice. Toss remaining juice with apple; drain. In a large bowl, combine chicken, grapes, pineapple and apple. Cover and refrigerate.

In a saucepan, melt butter. Stir in flour, sugar and salt until smooth; gradually add lemon juice and the reserved pineapple juice. Bring to a boil; boil and stir for 2 minutes. Reduce heat. Add a small amount to egg yolks; return all to pan. Bring to a gentle boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat; chill for 10-15 minutes.

Beat cream until stiff peaks form; fold into cooled dressing. Pour over chicken mixture; gently stir to coat. Chill for 1 hour.

Serve in a lettuce-lined bowl. Sprinkle with almonds. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

***** prize winning tips

* It's easier to slice boneless chicken pieces for a stir-fry or casserole if they are slightly frozen.

Brenda H., Somerset, Colorado

* Whole roasted chicken will be juicier if you let it stand for about 10 minutes before carving.

Marilyn T., Cowiche, Washington

* I soak chicken pieces for almost an hour in milk with marjoram sprinkled in when making my Southern fried chicken. It's delicious.

Barbara C., Whitehouse, Texas

* The way I get very tender, juicy boneless chicken breasts is to marinate them in orange juice overnight before cooking.

Melissa H., Santa Barbara, California

CHICKEN IN BASIL CREAM

chicken in basil cream

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Contest winner Judy Baker of Craig, Colorado is no stranger to cooking. At age 12, she began planning menus, shopping for groceries and helping her working mom prepare meals for their family.

Now she's director of food services for Moffat County School District and oversees staffing and lunch preparation for the public schools in the northwestern Colorado county.

> "It's great for company because it's fail-proof and impressive."

On busy weeknights, Judy does not bother with meals requiring lots of ingredients or that involve several steps. She'd rather spend time with husband Bill, deliver reheatable leftovers to their two sons (who live nearby) or enjoy her hobbies of photography, sewing and crafts.

That's why she relies on made-in-minutes dishes like savory Chicken in Basil Cream.

"I buy quick-to-cook, boneless, skinless chicken breasts, which take all the work out of this recipe," Judy comments. "It's great for company because it's fail-proof and impressive."

Our judges were certainly impressed—they gave Judy top honors in our national 30-Minute Main Dishes recipe contest.

"I'll usually serve this dressed-up chicken with a lettuce salad and a potato side dish seasoned with thyme," she notes.

"Because it cooks so quickly, I usually measure the ingredients beforehand and put them in bowls so they're ready to go. If I have a little extra time, I might roast some sweet red pepper to use instead of pimientos," Judy adds.

1/4 cup milk
1/4 cup dry bread crumbs
4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (4 ounces *each*)
3 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup chicken broth
1 cup heavy whipping cream
1 jar (4 ounces) sliced pimientos, drained
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 cup minced fresh basil
1/8 teaspoon pepper

Place milk and bread crumbs in separate shallow bowls. Dip chicken in milk, then coat with crumbs. In a skillet over medium-high heat, cook chicken in butter on both sides until juices run clear, about 10 minutes. Remove and keep warm.

Add broth to the skillet. Bring to a boil over medium heat; stir to loosen browned bits. Stir in the cream and pimientos; boil and stir for 1 minute. Reduce heat. Add Parmesan cheese, basil and pepper; cook and stir until heated through. Pour over the chicken. **Yield:** 4 servings.

pork chops with apple rings

Kathleen Harris, Galesburg, Illinois

With a fruity apricot, raisin and apple topping, these tender chops are special enough to serve to company, yet simple enough to fix anytime. The best part is that the apples don't have to be peeled—just core and slice, and you're ready to go.

- **6 pork chops (1/2 inch thick)**
- **1/2 teaspoon celery salt**
- **1/2 teaspoon rubbed sage**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **2 tablespoons butter**
- **2 medium unpeeled Golden Delicious apples, cored and cut into 1/2-inch rings**
- **1/4 cup diced dried apricots**
- **2 tablespoons golden raisins**
- **2 tablespoons brown sugar**

Sprinkle pork chops with celery salt, sage, salt and pepper. In a large skillet, brown chops in butter on one side; turn. Top with apple rings. Sprinkle with apricots, raisins and brown sugar. Cover and cook on low for 18-22 minutes or until the meat juices run clear. **Yield:** 6 servings.

mexican chip casserole

Doris Heath, Franklin, North Carolina

This satisfying casserole relies on convenient packaged ingredients to create an entree with savory Southwestern flair. There's nothing tricky about the preparation, and I have time to set the table while it's in the oven.

- **1 pound ground beef**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **1 garlic clove, minced**
- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted**
- **1 can (11 ounces) Mexicorn**
- **1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies**
- **1 package (10-1/2 ounces) corn chips**
- **1 can (10 ounces) enchilada sauce**
- **1 to 2 cups (4 to 8 ounces) shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese**

In a skillet, cook beef, onion and garlic over medium heat until meat is no longer pink and onion is tender; drain. Add soup, corn and chilies; mix well.

In an ungreased shallow 3-qt. baking dish, layer meat mixture, chips and sauce; top with cheese. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 8-10 minutes or until heated through. **Yield:** 6 servings.

beef broccoli stir-fry

Ruth Stahl, Shepherd, Montana

My family often requests this tasty stir-fry. It's great because it combines tender beef and nutritious vegetables in one dish. We enjoy it year-round but especially in summer, when I grow my own broccoli and onions. Plus, it doesn't heat up the kitchen.

- **3 tablespoons cornstarch, *divided***
- **1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons water, *divided***
- **1/2 teaspoon garlic powder**
- **1 pound boneless beef round steak, cut into thin 3-inch strips**
- **2 tablespoons vegetable oil, *divided***
- **4 cups broccoli florets**
- **1 small onion, cut into wedges**
- **1/3 cup soy sauce**
- **2 tablespoons brown sugar**
- **1 teaspoon ground ginger**
- **Hot cooked rice**

In a bowl, combine 2 tablespoons cornstarch, 2 tablespoons water and garlic powder until smooth. Add beef and toss.

In a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat, stir-fry beef in 1 tablespoon oil until beef reaches desired doneness; remove and keep warm.

Stir-fry broccoli and onion in remaining oil for 4-5 minutes. Return beef to pan. Combine soy sauce, brown sugar, ginger, and remaining cornstarch and water until smooth; add to the pan. Cook and stir for 2 minutes. Serve over rice. **Yield:** 4 servings.

vegetable oven pancake

Mirien Church, Aurora, Colorado

I clipped this recipe when I was first married, but my husband was actually first to prepare it. The puffy pancake looked beautiful and tasted even better. It wasn't until I made this dish myself then I realized how simple it really is. We like to vary the vegetables, depending on what's in season.

- **1 teaspoon butter**
- **1/2 cup all-purpose flour**
- **2 eggs, beaten**
- **1/2 cup milk**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt, *divided***
- **2 cups fresh broccoli florets**
- **1 cup chopped green pepper**
- **1 cup chopped tomato**
- **1/2 cup chopped red onion**
- **2 tablespoons water**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **1-1/2 cups (6 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**

Place butter in a 9-in. pie plate; heat in a 450° oven until melted. Carefully tilt pan to coat bottom and sides. In a bowl, beat the flour, eggs, milk and 1/4 teaspoon salt until smooth. Pour into pie plate. Bake for 14-16 minutes or until puffed around the edges and golden brown.

Meanwhile, in a skillet, cook the broccoli, green pepper, tomato and onion in water for 8-10 minutes or until crisp-tender; drain well. Add pepper and remaining salt.

Sprinkle 1/2 cup cheese over pancake; top with vegetables and remaining cheese. Bake 3-4 minutes longer or until cheese is melted. Cut into four wedges; serve immediately. **Yield:** 4 servings.

shrimp monterey

Jane Birch, Edison, New Jersey

For a special occasion or when company's coming, this delicious seafood dish makes a lasting impression. You'll be surprised at how fast you can prepare it. A mild, fresh-tasting sauce and the Monterey Jack cheese nicely complement the shrimp, I serve it over pasta or rice.

- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **2 tablespoons butter**
- **2 pounds uncooked medium shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- **1/2 cup white wine *or* chicken broth**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese**
- **2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley**

In a skillet over medium heat, saute garlic in butter for 1 minute. Add shrimp; cook for 4-5 minutes or until pink. Using a slotted spoon, transfer shrimp to a greased 11-in. x 7-in. x 2-in. baking dish; set aside and keep warm.

Add wine or broth to the skillet; bring to a boil. Cook and stir for 5 minutes or until sauce is reduced. Pour over shrimp; top with cheese and parsley. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 10 minutes or until cheese is melted. **Yield:** 6 servings.

favorite meat loaf cups

Sue Gronholz, Columbus, Wisconsin

My family enjoys meat loaf, but sometimes I can't spare the hour or more it takes to bake in the traditional shape. A quick alternative is to divide the meat mixture into muffin cups for individual servings that are ready in less than 30 minutes.

- **2 eggs, beaten**
- **1/4 cup milk**
- **1/4 cup ketchup**
- **1/2 cup crushed cornflakes**
- **4 tablespoons dried minced onion**
- **1 teaspoon prepared mustard**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **2 pounds lean ground beef**

Additional ketchup, optional

In a large bowl, combine the eggs, milk, ketchup, cornflakes, onion, mustard, salt and pepper. Crumble beef over mixture and mix well.

Press into 12 foil-lined or greased muffin cups. Bake at 350° for 25 minutes or until the meat is no longer pink. Drain before serving. Drizzle with ketchup if desired. **Yield:** 6 servings.

turkey linguine

Audrey Thibodeau, Mesa, Arizona

Here's a combination I concocted to use when I'm in a hurry. It's a quick, delicious and complete meal that I frequently serve to guests. You may want to keep it a secret that you prepared this attractive, colorful skillet dish in just half an hour!

- **1 pound boneless turkey breast, cut into 1/2-inch strips**
- **1 tablespoon olive oil**
- **1/2 cup chopped onion**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 cup broccoli florets**
- **1 cup thinly sliced carrots**
- **1 tablespoon minced fresh basil *or* 1 teaspoon dried basil**
- **1 teaspoon minced fresh tarragon *or* 1/4 teaspoon dried tarragon**
- **1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme *or* 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **2 tablespoons cornstarch**
- **1-1/2 cups chicken broth**
- **8 ounces linguine *or* pasta of your choice, cooked**
- **1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese**

In a large skillet or wok, stir-fry turkey in oil for 2 minutes. Add onion and garlic; cook and stir for 1 minute. Add broccoli, carrots, basil, tarragon, thyme and pepper; stir-fry for 3-4 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender.

Combine cornstarch and broth until smooth; add to the turkey mixture. Cook and stir until the mixture comes to a boil; cook 2 minutes longer. Serve over linguine; sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. **Yield:** 4 servings.

hearty hamburger supper

Georgene Remm, Wausa, Nebraska

My husband and I are retired and enjoy home cooking. This hearty stovetop meal proves it need not be time-consuming. I gave this recipe to a young neighbor who tells me she uses it often since she's a nurse and is always short of time. The basic ingredients in this dish ensure it has broad appeal.

- **3/4 pound ground beef**
- **1 small onion, chopped**
- **4 cups diced cabbage**
- **1/4 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon paprika**
- **2 cups milk**
- **Hot mashed potatoes**
- **Additional paprika, optional**

In a large saucepan, cook the beef and onion over medium heat until the meat is no longer pink and onion is tender; drain.

Add cabbage; cook and stir for 2 minutes. Sprinkle with flour, salt and paprika; mix well.

Gradually add milk. Bring to boil; boil and stir for 2 minutes. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 10-12 minutes or until the cabbage is tender. Serve over potatoes. Sprinkle with paprika if desired. **Yield:** 4 servings.

chicken tortilla chowder

Jennifer Gouge, Lubbock, Texas

As a student attending college full-time, I find my time in the kitchen is limited. This recipe helps me have a hot meal on the table when my husband gets home. He's a real meat-and-potatoes man, but he absolutely loves this thick, creamy chowder with tortilla strips that puff up like homemade noodles.

- **1 can (14-1/2 ounces) chicken broth**
- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted**
- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of potato soup, undiluted**
- **1-1/2 cups milk**
- **2 cups cubed cooked chicken**
- **1 can (11 ounces) Mexicorn**
- **1 jar (4-1/2 ounces) sliced mushrooms, drained**
- **1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies**
- **1/4 cup thinly sliced green onions**
- **4 flour tortillas (6 to 7 inches), cut into 1/2-inch strips**
- **1-1/2 cups (6 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**

In a Dutch oven or soup kettle, combine broth, soups and milk. Add the chicken, corn, mushrooms, chilies and onions; mix well. Bring to a boil. Add the tortilla strips. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 8-10 minutes or until heated through. Add cheese; stir just until melted. Serve immediately. **Yield:** 8-10 servings (2-1/2 quarts).

creamed chicken 'n' biscuits

Shari Zimmerman, Deford, Michigan

We have a dairy farm and three young children, so I'm always on the lookout for easy, hearty meals like this one. Using leftover or canned chicken, I can whip up this entree in minutes. To save even more time, I sometimes serve the hot chicken mixture on buns.

BISCUITS:

- **2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **1 tablespoon baking powder**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **2/3 cup milk**
- **1/3 cup vegetable oil**

CREAMED CHICKEN:

- **1/4 cup finely chopped onion**
- **1/4 cup butter**
- **1/4 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **2 cups milk *or* chicken broth**
- **2 cups chopped cooked chicken**
- **Minced fresh parsley**

In a bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt; add milk and oil. Stir until the dough forms a ball. Knead in the bowl 10 times or until smooth.

Roll or pat dough into a 6-in. square about 1 in. thick. Cut into six rectangles. Place on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake at 450° for 10-12 minutes or until golden brown.

Meanwhile, in a skillet, saute onion in butter until tender. Stir in flour, salt and pepper until smooth. Gradually add milk; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cook and stir for 1-2 minutes or until thickened. Stir in chicken and parsley; heat through. Split biscuits; top with the creamed chicken. **Yield:** 6 servings.

bean burritos

Beth Osborne Skinner, Bristol, Tennessee

My husband and I have two young sons. With our demanding careers, main dishes like this one that can be prepared in a flash are essential for us. I always have the ingredients for this recipe on hand. Cooking the rice and shredding the cheese the night before save precious minutes at dinnertime.

- **1 can (16 ounces) refried beans**
- **1 cup salsa**
- **1 cup cooked long grain rice**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese, *divided***
- **12 flour tortillas (6 to 7 inches)**

In a bowl, combine the beans, salsa, rice and 1 cup cheese. Spoon about 1/3 cup off-center on each tortilla. Fold the sides and ends over filling and roll up.

Arrange burritos in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese. Cover and bake at 375° for 20-25 minutes or until heated through. **Yield:** 1 dozen.

***** prize winning tips

*I mix ground leftover baked ham with chopped olives and green pepper, shredded cheddar cheese, Dijon mustard and mayonnaise, then stuff it into sliced hard rolls. Wrapped in foil and baked at 375° for 30 minutes, these are tasty, hot sandwiches.

Marion S., Joseph, Oregon

*When preparing chili, I make extra so we can have this main-dish pie the next day. To make it, warm about 4 cups of chili and pour into a deep-dish pie pan. (If you have a little less than 4 cups, add some drained whole kernel corn.) Prepare a small box of corn bread mix according to package directions and drop batter over chili. Bake at 375° for 30 minutes or until the corn bread is done. Sprinkle with shredded cheddar cheese.

Barbara K., Faucett, Missouri

*I use up leftover chicken or brisket to make quesadillas. I butter one side of two tortillas and place one in a skillet butter side down. Then I layer it with canned refried beans, the leftover meat and shredded cheese. I top it with the second tortilla (butter side up) and cook until the tortillas are lightly brown. I use a pizza cutter to cut the quesadilla into four or six wedges. Delicious!

Kate B., Duncanville, Texas

*Rinse leftover noodles with cold water before putting them in the refrigerator. They won't stick together, and they can be the base of another quick meal the next day. Plus, they'll easily mix with other ingredients.

Mary F., West Chester, Ohio

PLEASING POTATO PIZZA

pleasing potato pizza

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

When Barbara Zimmer craves pizza, she naturally thinks of potatoes! That's because this Wanless, Manitoba reader combined those two favorites to create her Pleasing Potato Pizza.

Topped with mashed potatoes, onion, cheese and bacon, this unique pizza is a winner wherever it's served. That includes our Test Kitchen, where judges awarded it the Grand Prize in our Pizza Party recipe contest!

> "Guests are always excited when my Potato Pizza is on the menu."

"This distinctive pizza makes a delightful appetizer, and it can also be a savory main dish," remarks Barbara. "I first tried this delicious and distinctive pizza when a friend enjoyed it at a restaurant. It sounded great so I experimented to come up with my own recipe. The way the slices disappear, there's no doubt about their popularity. Guests are always excited when my Potato Pizza is on the menu.

"I always liked to cook, but I had to dig in after getting married—my husband's family has great cooks."

Barbara, a mother of two, runs a small catering company with her two sisters-in-law. She often prepares Pleasing Potato Pizza for parties and at her own rural home.

3 large potatoes, peeled and cubed
1 tube (13.8 ounces) refrigerated pizza crust
1/4 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 pound sliced bacon, diced
1 large onion, chopped
1/2 cup chopped sweet red pepper
1-1/2 cups (6 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
1-1/2 cups (6 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
Sour cream, optional

Place potatoes in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil; cook for 20-25 minutes or until very tender.

Meanwhile, unroll the pizza crust onto an ungreased 14-in. pizza pan; flatten dough and build up edges slightly. Prick dough several times with a fork. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack.

Drain potatoes and transfer to a mixing bowl. Mash with milk and salt until smooth. Spread over crust. In a skillet, partially cook the bacon. Add onion and red pepper; cook until bacon is crisp and vegetables are tender. Drain well; sprinkle over potatoes. Top with cheeses.

Bake at 375° for 20 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve with sour cream if desired. **Yield:** 8 slices.

pepperoni pan pizza

Susan Lindahl, Alford, Florida

I've spent years trying to come up with the perfect pizza crust and sauce, and they're paired up in this recipe. I fix this crispy, savory pizza for my family often.

2-3/4 to 3 cups all-purpose flour
1 package (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup warm water (120° to 130°)
1 tablespoon vegetable oil

SAUCE:

1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained
1 can (6 ounces) tomato paste
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon *each* dried basil, oregano, marjoram and thyme
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 package (3-1/2 ounces) sliced pepperoni
5 cups (20 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 cup grated Romano cheese

In a mixing bowl, combine 2 cups flour, yeast and salt. Add water and oil; beat until smooth. Add enough remaining flour to form a soft dough. Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 5-7 minutes. Cover and let stand for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a bowl, combine tomatoes, tomato paste, oil and seasonings. Divide dough in half; press each portion into a 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan coated with nonstick cooking spray. Prick dough generously with a fork. Bake at 425° for 12-16 minutes or until crust is lightly browned.

Spread sauce over each crust; top with pepperoni and cheeses. Bake 8-10 minutes longer or until cheese is melted. Cut into squares. **Yield:** 2 pizzas (9 slices each).

pizza with stuffed crust

Sandra McKenzie, Braham, Minnesota

Cheese baked into the edge of the crust makes this extra-special pizza our favorite. It tastes like a restaurant-style pizza with mild ingredients. I sometimes substitute Canadian bacon for the pepperoni and green olives for the ripe ones.

2 teaspoons cornmeal
2 tubes (13.8 ounces *each*) refrigerated pizza crust
8 ounces string cheese
1 tablespoon butter, melted
1-1/2 teaspoons minced fresh basil *or* 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
1 can (8 ounces) pizza sauce
1 package (3-1/2 ounces) sliced pepperoni
1 can (4 ounces) mushroom stems and pieces, drained
1 can (2-1/4 ounces) sliced ripe olives, drained
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

Sprinkle cornmeal evenly over a greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Unroll pizza dough and place on pan, letting dough drape 1 in. over the edges. Pinch center seam to seal.

Place pieces of string cheese around edges of pan. Fold dough over cheese; pinch to seal. Brush the crust with butter; sprinkle with basil.

Bake at 425° for 5 minutes. Spread sauce over crust. Place two-thirds of the pepperoni in a single layer over sauce. Sprinkle with mushrooms, olives and cheese. Top with remaining pepperoni.

Bake for 10-12 minutes or until crust and cheese are lightly browned. **Yield:** 8-10 slices.

Editor's Note: 8 ounces of bulk mozzarella cheese, cut into 4-in. x 1/2-in. sticks, may be substituted for the string cheese.

deep-dish sausage pizza

Michele Madden, Washington Court House, Ohio
My grandma's pizza, hot from the oven, was covered with cheese and had fragrant herbs in the crust.

- **1 package (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast**
- **2/3 cup warm water (110° to 115°)**
- **1-3/4 to 2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **1/4 cup vegetable oil**
- **1 teaspoon *each* dried oregano, basil, marjoram**
- **1/2 teaspoon garlic salt**
- **1/2 teaspoon onion salt**

TOPPINGS:

- **4 cups (16 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese, *divided***
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **2 medium green peppers, chopped**
- **1/2 teaspoon *each* dried oregano, basil, marjoram**
- **1 tablespoon olive oil**
- **1 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **1 pound bulk pork sausage, cooked and drained**
- **1 can (28 ounces) diced tomatoes, well drained**
- **2 ounces sliced pepperoni**

In a mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in water. Add 1 cup flour, oil and seasonings; beat until smooth. Add enough remaining flour to form a soft dough.

Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl; turn once to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.

Punch dough down; roll into a 15-in. circle. Transfer to a greased 12-in. ovenproof skillet, letting dough drape over edges. Sprinkle with 1 cup mozzarella.

In another skillet, saute onion, green peppers and seasonings in oil until tender; drain. Layer half of the mixture over crust. Layer with half of the Parmesan, sausage and tomatoes. Sprinkle with 2 cups mozzarella. Repeat layers. Fold crust over to form an edge.

Bake for 400° for 20 minutes. Sprinkle with pepperoni and remaining mozzarella. Bake 10-15 minutes longer or until crust is browned. Let stand 10 minutes before slicing. **Yield:** 8 slices.

colorful crab appetizer pizza

Diane Caron, Des Moines, Iowa
If you're looking for a really easy and special appetizer, this one stands out. It's a fresh-tasting and lovely variation on a cold vegetable pizza. I make it as a snack for parties all the time and even as a light main dish with a soup or salad.

- **1 tube (8 ounces) refrigerated crescent rolls**
- **1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened**
- **1-1/2 cups coarsely chopped fresh spinach, *divided***
- **1 green onion, thinly sliced**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons minced fresh dill *or* 1/2 teaspoon dill weed**
- **1 teaspoon grated lemon peel, *divided***
- **1/2 teaspoon lemon juice**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **1-1/4 cups chopped imitation crabmeat**
- **1/4 cup chopped ripe olives**

Unroll crescent roll dough and place on an ungreased 12-in. pizza pan. Flatten dough, sealing seams and perforations. Bake at 350° for 8-10 minutes or until lightly browned; cool.

In a small mixing bowl, beat cream cheese until smooth. Stir in 1 cup spinach, onion, dill, 1/2 teaspoon lemon peel, lemon juice and pepper. Spread over the crust. Top with crab, olives and remaining spinach and lemon peel. Cut into bite-size squares. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

chicken fajita pizza

Rosemary Miller, Lagrange, Indiana

Our family loves pizza, and this variation is one we often enjoy, the chicken is unexpected but delicious. On hectic days, I can make it in a snap using a prepared crust. Either way, it disappears in a hurry.

- **1 package (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast**
- **1 cup warm water (110° to 115°)**
- **2-1/2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **4 tablespoons vegetable oil, *divided***
- **2 teaspoons salt, *divided***
- **1 teaspoon sugar**
- **1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into strips**
- **2 cups sliced onions**
- **2 cups sliced green peppers**
- **2 teaspoons chili powder**
- **1 teaspoon garlic powder**
- **1 cup salsa**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack *or* mozzarella cheese**

In a bowl, dissolve yeast in water. Add flour, 2 tablespoons oil, 1 teaspoon salt and sugar. Beat vigorously by hand 20 strokes. Cover and let rest about 15 minutes.

Divide dough in half; press each portion into a greased 12-in. pizza pan. Prick dough several times with a fork. Bake at 425° for 6-8 minutes.

In a skillet, saute chicken in remaining oil until juices run clear. Add onions, peppers, chili powder, garlic powder and remaining salt; cook until vegetables are tender. Spoon over crusts; top with salsa and cheese. Bake for 14-18 minutes or until crust is golden and cheese is melted. **Yield:** 2 pizzas (8 slices each).

sunrise mini pizzas

Teresa Silver, Melba, Idaho

I created this recipe for something different at breakfast. Even though they look like I went to a lot of trouble, these little pizzas do go together quickly. I even make them for our three children on rushed school mornings.

- **8 to 10 eggs**
- **3 tablespoons milk**
- **Salt and pepper to taste**
- **1 tablespoon butter**
- **10 frozen white dinner rolls, thawed**
- **10 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**

In a bowl, beat the eggs. Add milk, salt and pepper. Melt butter in a skillet; add the egg mixture. Cook and stir over medium heat until the eggs are set. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Roll each dinner roll into a 5-in. circle. Place on greased baking sheets. Spoon egg mixture evenly over crusts. Sprinkle with bacon and cheese. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes or until the cheese is melted. **Yield:** 10 pizzas.

two-meat pizza with wheat crust

Kathy Mulville, Sterling Heights, Michigan

When our children were younger, I made this tasty, from-scratch pizza for their birthday parties. Everyone loved it so much there was never any left over.

CRUST:

- **1 package (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast**
- **1-1/2 cups warm water (110° to 115°)**
- **2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- **1-1/4 cups whole wheat flour**
- **2 tablespoons sugar**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1-3/4 to 2 cups all-purpose flour**

TOPPINGS:

- **1 can (15 ounces) pizza sauce**
- **1 teaspoon sugar**
- **1/2 cup sliced mushrooms**
- **1/4 cup chopped onion**
- **1/4 cup sliced ripe olives**
- **1/2 pound bulk Italian sausage, cooked and drained**
- **4 ounces Canadian bacon, chopped**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese**

In a bowl, dissolve yeast in water; add oil. Combine whole wheat flour, sugar and salt; add to yeast mixture and stir until smooth. Stir in enough all-purpose flour to form a soft dough.

Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl; turn once to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm place for 15-20 minutes.

Punch dough down. Pat dough onto the bottom and 1 in. up the sides of a greased 14-in. pizza pan.

Combine pizza sauce and sugar; spread over crust. Sprinkle with mushrooms, onion and olives. Layer with sausage, Canadian bacon and cheese. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until golden and cheese is melted. **Yield:** 8 slices.

roasted veggie pizza

Cindy Elsbernd, Des Moines, Iowa

A bold, flavorful garlic and basil pesto sauce is an awesome change of pace from traditional tomato-based pizza sauce. Roasted vegetables are a fantastic topping. Whenever I serve it alongside a standard meat pizza, this one's always the first to go!

- **8 to 10 medium fresh mushrooms, sliced**
- **1 small onion, sliced**
- **1/2 cup sliced green pepper**
- **1/2 cup sliced sweet red pepper**
- **2 teaspoons olive oil**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1/4 teaspoon *each* oregano, thyme and dried rosemary, crushed**

PESTO SAUCE:

- **1/2 cup coarsely chopped fresh basil**
- **1/4 cup olive oil**
- **1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **4 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 prebaked Italian bread shell crust (1 pound)**
- **1 large tomato, thinly sliced**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese**

Place mushrooms, onion and peppers in a roasting pan or baking pan lined with heavy-duty foil. Combine oil, garlic, oregano, thyme and rosemary; drizzle over vegetables and toss to coat. Cover and bake at 400° for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, for sauce, combine basil, oil, Parmesan cheese and garlic in a food processor or blender; cover and process until smooth, scraping sides often. Set aside.

Place the crust on an ungreased 12-in. pizza pan. Spread with sauce; top with the tomato slices. Sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Top with roasted vegetables. Bake for 15 minutes or until cheese is melted and bubbly. **Yield:** 8 slices.

cherry cheese pizza

Elaine Darbyshire, Golden, British Columbia

This dessert pizza is a great way to use cherries—my family likes it better than cherry pie. Each bite just melts in your mouth. People who sample it rave about this sweet pizza.

1 cup all-purpose flour
1/8 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 cup cold butter
2 tablespoons shortening
3 to 4 tablespoons water
1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/3 cup chopped pecans

TOPPING:

2-1/2 cups fresh *or* frozen pitted tart cherries *or* 1 can (15 ounces) tart cherries
1/3 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 tablespoon butter
1/8 teaspoon almond extract
1/8 teaspoon red food coloring
Whipped cream and fresh mint, optional

In a large bowl, combine flour and baking powder; cut in butter and shortening until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Gradually add water, tossing with a fork until dough forms a ball.

Roll out into a 14-in. circle. Place on an ungreased 12-in. pizza pan. Flute edges to form a rim; prick bottom of crust. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes.

In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Stir in nuts. Spread over crust. Bake 10 minutes longer. Cool. Drain cherries, reserving 1/3 cup juice. Set cherries and juice aside.

In a large saucepan, combine sugar and cornstarch; stir in reserved juice until smooth. Add cherries. Cook and stir over medium heat until mixture comes to a boil. Cook and stir 2 minutes longer.

Remove from the heat; stir in butter, extract and food coloring. Cool to room temperature; spread over cream cheese layer. Top with whipped cream and mint if desired. **Yield:** 10-12 slices.

bacon cheeseburger pizza

Cherie Ackerman, Lakeland, Minnesota

Kids of all ages love pizza and cheeseburgers, and this recipe combines them both. My grandchildren usually request pizza for supper when they visit me. They like to help me assemble this version, and they especially enjoy eating it!

1/2 pound ground beef
1 small onion, chopped
1 prebaked Italian bread shell crust (1 pound)
1 can (8 ounces) pizza sauce
6 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled
20 dill pickle coin slices
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
1 teaspoon pizza *or* Italian seasoning

In a skillet, cook beef and onion over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain and set aside.

Place crust on an ungreased 12-in. pizza pan. Spread with pizza sauce. Top with beef mixture, bacon, pickles and cheeses. Sprinkle with pizza seasoning. Bake at 450° for 8-10 minutes or until cheese is melted. **Yield:** 8 slices.

frosted brownie pizza

Paula Riehl, Boise, Idaho

It's impossible to eat just one piece of this dessert pizza with a chewy, chocolaty crust, creamy peanut butter frosting and mouth-watering sweet and crunchy toppings. It's warmly received wherever I take it.

1/2 cup butter
2 squares (1 ounce *each*) unsweetened chocolate
1 cup sugar
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
2 eggs, beaten

FROSTING:

1 cup confectioners' sugar
1/3 cup creamy peanut butter
1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2 to 4 tablespoons milk

TOPPINGS:

3/4 cup plain M&M's
1/2 cup flaked coconut, toasted
1/2 cup chopped pecans, toasted

In a saucepan over low heat, melt butter, chocolate and sugar. Remove from the heat; stir in flour until smooth. Add eggs and beat until smooth. Spread onto a greased 12-in. pizza pan. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool completely.

For frosting, in a mixing bowl, beat sugar, peanut butter, vanilla and enough milk to achieve desired spreading consistency. Spread over brownie crust. Top with M&M's, coconut and pecans. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

***** prize winning tips

* To make mouth-watering homemade pizza, saute vegetables (pepper strips, onions, mushrooms, etc.) in butter with garlic and herbs before putting them on the pizza. It makes the flavor come alive.

Patricia F., Syracuse, New York

* Many years back, a friend invited us over for pizza. Besides the usual toppings, she sprinkled on chopped celery. It added wonderful crunch and a unique taste. I've made pizza like this ever since—I even add celery to frozen pizza.

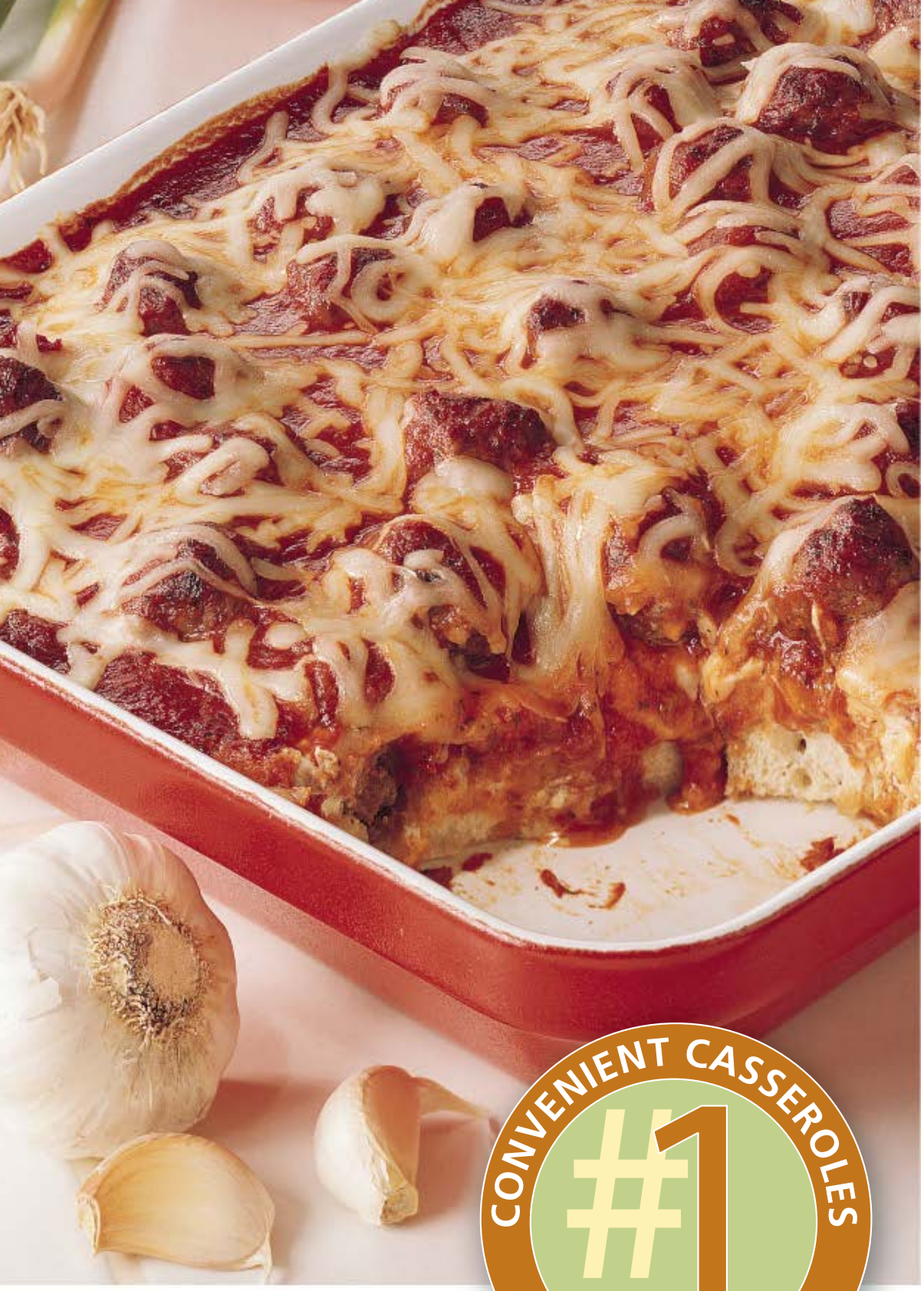
Ann Marie M., Scottsdale, Arizona

* For crispy pizza crust, try pre-baking the crust for a few minutes before adding toppings. Also, consider reducing the amount of toppings, especially sauce. Remove excess liquid from vegetables such as mushrooms and onions by sauteing and draining them first. Finally, create a barrier between the crust and toppings with a layer of cheese before adding sauce or other toppings.

Taste of Home Test Kitchen

* I use crumbled leftover meat loaf to top homemade pizza. With tomato sauce, cheese and other additions, the kids love it.

Lois R., Omaha, Nebraska



MEATBALL SUB CASSEROLE

meatball sub casserole

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Gina Harris wasn't entirely surprised when we called to say her Meatball Sub Casserole took top honors in our Convenient Casseroles Contest.

"My husband, Marty, loves this tasty meatball bake," remarks the Seneca, South Carolina cook. "He was sure it would win!

> "…all the flavor of meatball subs with none of the mess."

"I love meatball subs, but Marty doesn't like the dripping sauce and cheese on his hands," Gina relates. "He said the subs weren't worth the mess, but I was determined to have my sub and have him eat it, too.

"So I developed this fun casserole that offers all the flavor of meatball subs with none of the mess.

"I usually team this meal-in-a-dish with a crisp salad," she adds. "Marty says leftovers make a terrific lunch."

To simplify the preparation, Gina shares a time-saving tip. "I buy ground beef or ground sirloin on sale and prepare a large batch of meatballs. I freeze them on waxed paper-lined baking trays, then transfer them to freezer bags," she notes.

"When I need meatballs for this or any other recipe, I pull a bag from the freezer and bake them in a hot oven while preparing the rest of the dish. This is especially helpful during the school year, when we're busy with our daughter Savannah's activities."

1/3 cup chopped green onions
1/4 cup seasoned bread crumbs
3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
1 pound ground beef
1 loaf (1 pound) Italian bread, cut into 1-inch slices
1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup mayonnaise
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
1/4 teaspoon pepper
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese, *divided*
1 jar (28 ounces) spaghetti sauce
1 cup water
2 garlic cloves, minced

In a bowl, combine onions, crumbs and Parmesan cheese. Crumble beef over mixture and mix well. Shape into 1-in. balls; place on a rack in a shallow baking pan. Bake at 400° for 15-20 minutes or until no longer pink.

Meanwhile, arrange bread in a single layer in an ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish (all of the bread might not be used). Combine cream cheese, mayonnaise, Italian seasoning and pepper; spread over the bread. Sprinkle with 1/2 cup mozzarella.

Combine sauce, water and garlic; add meatballs. Pour over cheese mixture; sprinkle with remaining mozzarella. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 30 minutes or until heated through. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

Editor's Note: Reduced-fat or fat-free mayonnaise is not recommended for this recipe.

great pork chop bake

Rosie Glenn, Los Alamos, New Mexico

A friend brought this hearty meat-and-potatoes dish to our home when I returned from the hospital with our youngest child. Since then, we have enjoyed it many times. It's a snap to throw together on a busy day, then pop in the oven to bake. The tender chops, potato wedges and golden gravy are simple and satisfying.

- **6 bone-in pork chops (3/4 inch thick)**
- **1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted**
- **3 tablespoons ketchup**
- **2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **4 medium potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch wedges**
- **1 medium onion, sliced into rings**

In a skillet, brown pork chops in oil. Transfer to a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. In a bowl, combine the soup, ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, salt and pepper. Add potatoes and onion; toss to coat. Pour over the chops.

Cover and bake at 350° for 55-60 minutes or until meat juices run clear and potatoes are tender. **Yield:** 6 servings.

cajun cabbage

Bobbie Soileau, Opelousas, Louisiana

Looking for a different treatment for cabbage? Try this spicy, cheese-topped dish that I adapted from a friend's recipe. I added a little of this and that until it tasted the way I wanted. Not only do my husband and kids like it, I get rave reviews when I make it for company or church functions.

- **1 pound ground beef**
- **1 medium green pepper, chopped**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 can (10 ounces) diced tomatoes and green chilies**
- **1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce**
- **1/2 cup uncooked long grain rice**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/2 teaspoon dried basil**
- **1/2 teaspoon dried oregano**
- **1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon *each* white, black and cayenne pepper**
- **4 to 6 drops hot pepper sauce**
- **1 small head cabbage, chopped**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Colby cheese**

In a skillet, cook the beef, green pepper, onion and garlic until meat is no longer pink; drain. Stir in tomatoes, tomato sauce, rice and seasonings.

Spread into an ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Top with the cabbage and cheese. Cover and bake at 350° for 65-75 minutes or until the rice is tender. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

southwestern veggie bake

Julie Zeager, Kent, Ohio

Refrigerated corn bread twists create an appealing lattice top on this zippy meatless main dish.

- **3 medium carrots, sliced**
- **2 celery ribs, chopped**
- **1 small onion, chopped**
- **2 to 3 teaspoons chili powder**
- **1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- **1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper**
- **2 tablespoons butter**
- **3 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **1/2 cup milk**
- **1 can (16 ounces) kidney beans, rinsed and drained**
- **1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained**
- **1 can (15-1/4 ounces) whole kernel corn, drained**
- **1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained**
- **1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies**
- **1 tube (11-1/2 ounces) refrigerated corn bread twists**

In a large skillet, saute the carrots, celery, onion and seasonings in butter until vegetables are crisp-tender. Stir in flour until blended. Gradually add the milk. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened and bubbly.

Remove from the heat; add beans, corn, tomatoes and chilies. Spoon into an ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Separate corn bread twists; weave a lattice crust over filling.

Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until corn bread is done. **Yield:** 8 servings.

apple-a-day casserole

Elizabeth Erwin, Syracuse, New York

This sweet-tart casserole is a fun change of pace from traditional vegetable side dishes. It's super-quick to prepare if you use a food processor to slice the apples and carrots. The unique combination complements chicken, fish and pork.

- **6 medium tart apples, peeled and sliced**
- **6 medium carrots, thinly sliced**
- **1/2 cup orange juice**
- **1/3 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1/3 cup sugar**
- **1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- **2 tablespoons cold butter**

Combine apples and carrots; place in a greased shallow 2-qt. baking dish. Drizzle with orange juice. Cover and bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes or until carrots are crisp-tender.

In a bowl, combine the flour, sugar and nutmeg; cut in butter until crumbly. Sprinkle over apple mixture. Bake, uncovered, 10-15 minutes longer or until the carrots are tender. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

creamy chicken and rice

Jennifer Biggs Cassel, Mediapolis, Iowa

When my mom asked me to prepare a speedy supper to feed our family, I used leftover chicken to create this hearty casserole. Cheese and sour cream make the chicken and rice so creamy and tasty. My husband loves it too, so I fix it often when I'm short of time.

- **4 cups cooked rice**
- **1/2 cup butter, *divided***
- **1/4 cup all-purpose flour**
- **2 cups milk**
- **2 teaspoons chicken bouillon granules**
- **1/2 to 1 teaspoon seasoned salt**
- **1/2 teaspoon garlic powder**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **4 to 5 cups cubed cooked chicken**
- **12 ounces process American cheese, cubed**
- **2 cups (16 ounces) sour cream**
- **1-1/4 cups crushed butter-flavored crackers (about 32)**

Spread rice into a greased shallow 3-qt. or 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish; set aside.

In a saucepan, melt 1/4 cup butter; stir in flour until smooth. Gradually add milk, bouillon, seasoned salt, garlic powder and pepper. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened and bubbly. Reduce heat; add chicken, cheese and sour cream; stir until the cheese is melted. Pour over rice.

Melt the remaining butter; toss with crumbs. Sprinkle over the casserole. Bake, uncovered, at 425° for 10-15 minutes or until heated through. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

tasty meat pie

Cheryl Cattane, Lapeer, Michigan

I work full-time as a nurse, so I like meals that are quick and easy. This comforting all-in-one pie is filled with ground beef and tender vegetables. At my sister's suggestion, I replaced the prepared gravy I had been using with canned soups for better flavor. Now my husband and son ask for seconds and thirds.

- **1 pound ground beef**
- **1 small onion, chopped**
- **1 can (11 ounces) condensed beef with vegetables and barley soup, undiluted**
- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed golden mushroom soup, undiluted**
- **3 medium uncooked potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch cubes**
- **4 medium carrots, sliced 1/8 inch thick**
- **1/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **Pastry for double-crust pie (9 inches)**

In a skillet, cook beef and onion until meat is no longer pink; drain. Add the soups, potatoes, carrots, salt and pepper; mix well. Divide between two ungreased 9-in. pie plates.

On a floured surface, roll pastry to fit the top of each pie; place over filling. Seal and flute edges; cut slits in top.

Bake at 350° for 45-50 minutes or until golden brown. Let stand on a wire rack for 15 minutes before serving. **Yield:** 2 pies (6 servings each).

pizza tot casserole

Chris Stukel, Des Plaines, Illinois

You'll need just seven basic ingredients to make this effortless upside-down pizza casserole. Since I cook for two, I often divide it into two smaller casserole dishes—one for dinner and one to freeze. I take the frozen portion out of the freezer the night before to thaw in the fridge before baking as directed.

- **1 pound ground beef**
- **1 medium green pepper, chopped**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **1 can (11-1/8 ounces) condensed Italian tomato soup, undiluted**
- **1 jar (4-1/2 ounces) sliced mushrooms, drained**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese**
- **1 package (32 ounces) frozen Tater Tots**

In a skillet, cook the beef, pepper and onion until meat is no longer pink; drain. Add soup and mushrooms.

Transfer to a greased 13-in. x 9-in.x 2-in. baking dish. Top with cheese and potatoes. Bake, uncovered, at 400° for 30-35 minutes or until golden brown. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

squash stuffing casserole

Tara Kay Cottingham, Munday, Texas

The recipe for this zippy side dish was given to me by my husband's grandmother. Convenient corn bread stuffing mix and a can of green chilies give fast flavor to sliced summer squash. Since I cook for just my husband and me, I often freeze the leftovers for another day.

- **3/4 cup water**
- **1/4 teaspoon salt**
- **6 cups sliced yellow summer squash (1/4 inch thick)**
- **1 small onion, halved and sliced**
- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted**
- **1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream**
- **1 package (6 ounces) corn bread stuffing mix**
- **1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies**
- **Salt and pepper to taste**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**

In a large saucepan, bring water and salt to a boil. Add squash and onion. Reduce heat; cover and cook until squash is crisp-tender, about 6 minutes. Drain well and set aside.

In a bowl, combine soup, sour cream, stuffing and the contents of seasoning packet, chilies, salt and pepper; mix well. Fold in squash mixture.

Pour into a greased shallow 2-qt. baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until heated through. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

picante biscuit bake

Lanita Anderson, Jacksonville, North Carolina

This tasty, Mexican-flavored casserole calls for just six convenient ingredients, so it's a breeze to put together. Yet it tastes like you really spent some time on it. To make it heartier, you can add a pound of cooked ground beef. Or try a pizza variation using pizza sauce, pepperoni and mozzarella cheese. It's sure to be a hit with all ages.

- **2 tubes (12 ounces *each*) refrigerated buttermilk biscuits**
- **1 jar (16 ounces) picante sauce *or* salsa**
- **1 medium green pepper, chopped**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **1 can (2-1/4 ounces) sliced ripe olives, drained**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese**

Quarter the biscuits; place in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Top with picante sauce, green pepper, onion and olives.

Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 20 minutes. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake 10 minutes longer or until the cheese is melted. **Yield:** 6 servings.

french country casserole

Kim Lowe, Coralville, Iowa

This delicious dish is great for busy nights when you don't have much time to devote to dinner. It's a quick-to-fix version of a traditional French cassoulet that was an instant hit with my husband, who enjoys smoked sausage. Just mix everything together and bake.

- **1 pound smoked kielbasa *or* Polish sausage**
- **1 can (16 ounces) kidney beans, rinsed and drained**
- **1 can (15-1/2 ounces) great northern beans, rinsed and drained**
- **1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained**
- **1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce**
- **3 medium carrots, thinly sliced**
- **2 small onions, sliced into rings**
- **1/2 cup dry red wine *or* beef broth**
- **2 tablespoons brown sugar**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons dried thyme**

Combine all ingredients in a bowl; transfer to an ungreased 3-qt. baking dish. Cover and bake at 375° for 60-70 minutes or until the carrots are tender. **Yield:** 9 servings.

chicken 'n' chips

Kendra Schneider, Grifton, North Carolina

My husband, Chad, is always ready to try a new recipe, so I surprised him with this creamy chicken casserole sprinkled with crushed tortilla chips. He loves the Southwest flavor, and I like that it's the perfect size for our small family.

- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted**
- **1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream**
- **2 tablespoons taco sauce**
- **1/4 cup chopped green chilies**
- **3 cups cubed cooked chicken**
- **12 slices process American cheese**
- **4 cups broken tortilla chips**

In a bowl, combine the soup, sour cream, taco sauce and chilies.

In an ungreased shallow 2-qt. baking dish, layer half of the chicken, soup mixture, cheese and tortilla chips. Repeat layers.

Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until bubbly. **Yield:** 4-6 servings.

***** prize winning tips

*When making casseroles, I spray a fine mist of nonstick cooking spray on the dish before I fill it. It makes serving the casserole, plus the cleanup, so much easier.

Joy B., Cincinnati, Ohio

*I have trouble keeping aluminum foil on my casserole dishes when transporting them to potluck dinners. Instead, I put the dishes inside a clear plastic oven bag. The bags trap any spills, don't melt and people can see what's inside. It's so easy to slide the dish in and seal it with a twist tie.

Carlene H., Crossville, Tennessee

*I combine some french-fried onions with the cereal or crackers I crush to top my casseroles. The onions add a simple, savory boost of flavor.

Mary C., Sycamore, Illinois

*When preparing tuna casserole, I add some sour cream to the standard tuna, noodles and cream of mushroom soup for extra richness.

Rosalie L., St. Ann, Missouri

*To dot a casserole or pie with butter, use a coarse grater to shred cold butter over the dish. It's quick and effective.

Lois F., Nelson, Wisconsin

SWEET 'N' SOUR RIBS

sweet 'n' sour ribs

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

The workday begins early for Dorothy Voelz of Champaign, Illinois. As a recruiter for a large trucking company, she's usually in the office at 7 a.m. and often works until 4:30 or 5 p.m. At times, her hours can make it difficult to prepare some of the delicious meals she enjoyed as a child.

"I just dump in all the ingredients and forget about it until dinner."

"My mom always baked these Hawaiian-inspired ribs in the oven," Dorothy relates. "Because of my work schedule, I converted the recipe to take advantage of my slow cooker," she explains.

"Now this recipe is a real time-saver for tender ribs every time," she assures. "I just dump in all the ingredients and forget about it until dinner."

Our contest judges also loved the flavor and convenience of Dorothy's fuss-free ribs—and gave them the top spot in our Slow-Simmered Specialties contest.

Dorothy frequently fixes Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs for husband Erick, a carpenter in industrial construction, and sons Jason and Brandon.

"When I serve it to guests, I arrange pineapple rings on a platter to give this dish a fancier look," she notes. "People say they've never had ribs like this before. They always get rave reviews, and everyone goes home with the recipe."

3 to 4 pounds boneless country-style pork ribs
1 can (20 ounces) pineapple tidbits, undrained
2 cans (8 ounces *each*) tomato sauce
1/2 cup thinly sliced onion
1/2 cup thinly sliced green pepper
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1/4 cup cider vinegar
1/4 cup tomato paste
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
1 garlic clove, minced
Salt and pepper to taste

Place ribs in an ungreased 5-qt. slow cooker. In a large bowl, combine the remaining ingredients; pour over the ribs.

Cover and cook on low for 8-10 hours or until meat is tender. Thicken the sauce if desired. **Yield:** 8 servings.

teriyaki pork roast

Roxanne Hulsey, Gainsville, Georgia

Since my husband works full-time and attends school, I do a great deal around the house, including getting our three children where they need to go. I'm always looking for no-fuss recipes, so I was thrilled to find this one. The moist teriyaki seasoned pork roast has become a convenient family favorite.

- **3/4 cup unsweetened apple juice**
- **2 tablespoons sugar**
- **2 tablespoons soy sauce**
- **1 tablespoon white vinegar**
- **1 teaspoon ground ginger**
- **1/4 teaspoon garlic powder**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **1 boneless pork loin roast (about 3 pounds), halved**
- **7-1/2 teaspoons cornstarch**
- **3 tablespoons cold water**

Combine the first seven ingredients in a greased 3-qt. slow cooker. Add roast and turn to coat. Cover and cook on low for 7-8 hours or until a thermometer inserted into the roast reads 160°.

Remove roast and keep warm. In a saucepan, combine cornstarch and cold water until smooth; stir in cooking juices. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Serve with the roast. **Yield**: 8 servings.

slow-simmered kidney beans

Sheila Vail, Long Beach, California

My husband always puts us down for a side dish when we're invited to a potluck. Canned beans cut down on prep time yet get plenty of zip from bacon, apple, red pepper and onion. I like simmering this mixture in the slow cooker because it blends the flavors and I don't have to stand over the stove.

- **6 bacon strips, diced**
- **1/2 pound smoked Polish sausage *or* kielbasa**
- **4 cans (16 ounces *each*) kidney beans, rinsed and drained**
- **1 can (28 ounces) diced tomatoes, drained**
- **2 medium sweet red peppers, chopped**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **1 cup ketchup**
- **1/2 cup packed brown sugar**
- **1/4 cup honey**
- **1/4 cup molasses**
- **1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1 teaspoon ground mustard**
- **2 medium unpeeled red apples, cored and cut into 1/2-inch pieces**

In a large skillet, cook bacon until crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon to paper towels. Add sausage to drippings; cook and stir for 5 minutes. Drain and set aside.

In a 5-qt. slow cooker, combine the beans, tomatoes, red peppers, onion, ketchup, brown sugar, honey, molasses, Worcestershire sauce, salt and mustard. Stir in the bacon and sausage. Cover and cook on low for 4-6 hours. Stir in apples. Cover and cook 2 hours longer or until bubbly. **Yield:** 16 servings.

creamy hash browns

Donna Downes, Las Vegas, Nevada

My mother often took this comforting side dish to social dinners because it was such a hit. Now I get the same compliments when I make it. Bacon and onion jazz up a creamy mixture that takes advantage of convenient frozen hash browns and canned soups.

- **1 package (2 pounds) frozen cubed hash brown potatoes**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) cubed process cheese (Velveeta)**
- **2 cups (16 ounces) sour cream**
- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of celery soup, undiluted**
- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted**
- **1 pound sliced bacon, cooked and crumbled**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **1/4 cup butter, melted**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**

Place potatoes in an ungreased 5-qt. slow cooker. In a large bowl, combine the remaining ingredients. Pour over potatoes and mix well. Cover and cook on low for 4-5 hours or until potatoes are tender and heated through. **Yield:** 14 servings.

easy and elegant ham

Denise DiPace, Medford, New Jersey

I fix this moist, tender ham to serve my large family. It can be readied quickly in the morning, frees up my oven, tastes outstanding and can feed a crowd. Covered with colorful pineapple slices, cherries and orange glaze, this showstopping appearance appeals to both children and adults.

- **2 cans (20 ounces *each*) sliced pineapple**
- **1 fully cooked boneless ham (about 6 pounds), halved**
- **1 jar (6 ounces) maraschino cherries, well drained**
- **1 jar (12 ounces) orange marmalade**

Drain pineapple, reserving juice; set juice aside. Place half of the pineapple in an ungreased 5-qt. slow cooker. Top with the ham. Add cherries, remaining pineapple and reserved pineapple juice. Spoon marmalade over ham.

Cover and cook on low for 6-7 hours or until heated through. Remove to a warm serving platter. Let stand for 10-15 minutes before slicing. Serve pineapple and cherries with sliced ham. **Yield:** 18-20 servings.

beef barbecue

Karen Walker, Sterling, Virginia

We like to keep our freezer stocked with plenty of beef roasts. When we're not in the mood for pot roast, I fix these satisfying sandwiches instead. The meat cooks in a tasty sauce while I'm at work. Then I just slice it thinly and serve it on rolls.

- **1 boneless beef chuck roast (3 pounds)**
- **1 cup barbecue sauce**
- **1/2 cup apricot preserves**
- **1/3 cup chopped green *or* sweet red pepper**
- **1 small onion, chopped**
- **1 tablespoon Dijon mustard**
- **2 teaspoons brown sugar**
- **12 sandwich rolls, split**

Cut the roast into quarters; place in a greased 5-qt. slow cooker. In a bowl, combine barbecue sauce, preserves, green pepper, onion, mustard and brown sugar; pour over roast. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours or until meat is tender.

Remove roast and thinly slice; return meat to slow cooker and stir gently. Cover and cook 20-30 minutes longer. Skim fat from sauce. Serve beef and sauce on rolls. **Yield:** 12 servings.

ham 'n' swiss chicken

Dorothy Witmer, Ephrata, Pennsylvania

This saucy casserole allows you to enjoy all the rich flavor of traditional chicken cordon bleu with less effort. It's a snap to layer the ingredients and let them cook all afternoon. Just toss a salad to make this meal complete.

- **2 eggs**
- **2 cups milk, *divided***
- **1/2 cup butter, melted**
- **1/2 cup chopped celery**
- **1 teaspoon finely chopped onion**
- **8 slices bread, cubed**
- **12 thin slices deli ham, rolled up**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese**
- **2-1/2 cups cubed cooked chicken**
- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted**

In a large bowl, beat the eggs and 1-1/2 cups milk. Add butter, celery and onion. Stir in bread crumbs. Place half of the mixture in a greased 3-qt. slow cooker; top with half of the rolled-up ham, cheese and chicken. Combine soup and remaining milk; pour half over the chicken. Repeat layers once.

Cover and cook on low for 4-5 hours or until a thermometer inserted into bread mixture reads 160°. **Yield:** 6 servings.

raisin bread pudding

Sherry Nice, McComb, Ohio

My sister gave me the recipe for this delicious bread pudding that's dotted with raisins. It has been a big hit with everyone who has tried it. A homemade vanilla sauce goes together quickly on the stovetop and is yummy drizzled over warm servings of this old-fashioned treat.

8 slices bread, cubed
4 eggs
2 cups milk
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup butter, melted
1/4 cup raisins
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

SAUCE:

2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 cup water
3/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Place bread cubes in a 3-qt. greased slow cooker. In a large bowl, beat eggs and milk; stir in the sugar, butter, raisins and cinnamon. Pour over bread; stir.

Cover and cook on high for 1 hour. Reduce heat to low; cook for 3-4 hours or until a thermometer reads 160°.

Just before serving, melt butter in a saucepan. Stir in flour until smooth. Gradually add water, sugar and vanilla. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Serve with warm bread pudding. **Yield:** 6 servings.

polish kraut and apples

Caren Markee, Cary, Illinois

My family loves this hearty, heartwarming meal on cold winter nights. The tender apples, brown sugar and smoked sausage give this dish fantastic flavor. It tastes like you fussed over it all day. I like making it because the prep time is actually very short. All you need is some slices of rye bread to round out this meal.

1 can (14 ounces) sauerkraut, rinsed and well drained
1 package (16 ounces) smoked Polish sausage *or* kielbasa
3 medium tart apples, peeled and cut into eighths
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon caraway seeds, optional
1/8 teaspoon pepper
3/4 cup apple juice

Place half of the sauerkraut in an ungreased 3-qt. slow cooker. Top with sausage, apples, brown sugar, caraway seeds if desired and pepper. Top with remaining sauerkraut. Pour apple juice over all.

Cover and cook on low for 4-5 hours or until apples are tender. **Yield:** 4 servings.

herbed chicken and shrimp

Diana Knight, Reno, Nevada

Tender chicken and shrimp make a flavorful combination that's easy to prepare yet elegant enough to serve at a dinner party. While I clean the house, it practically cooks itself. I serve it over hot cooked rice with crusty bread and a green salad.

- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1 teaspoon pepper**
- **1 broiler/fryer chicken (3 to 4 pounds), cut up and skin removed**
- **1/4 cup butter**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce**
- **1/2 cup white wine *or* chicken broth**
- **1 garlic clove, minced**
- **1 teaspoon dried basil**
- **1 pound uncooked medium shrimp, peeled and deveined**

Combine salt and pepper; rub over the chicken pieces. In a skillet, brown chicken on all sides in butter. Transfer to an ungreased 5-qt. slow cooker. In a bowl, combine the onion, tomato sauce, wine or broth, garlic and basil; pour over chicken.

Cover and cook on low for 4-5 hours or until chicken juices run clear. Stir in the shrimp. Cover and cook on high for 20-30 minutes or until shrimp turn pink. **Yield:** 4 servings.

slow cooker lasagna

Lisa Micheletti, Collierville, Tennessee

Convenient no-cook lasagna noodles take the work out of this traditional favorite adapted for the slow cooker. Because it's so easy to assemble, it's great for workdays as well as weekends. We like it accompanied by Parmesan bread or garlic cheese toast.

- **1 pound ground beef**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 can (29 ounces) tomato sauce**
- **1 cup water**
- **1 can (6 ounces) tomato paste**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- **1 package (8 ounces) no-cook lasagna noodles**
- **4 cups (16 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese**
- **1-1/2 cups (12 ounces) small-curd cottage cheese**
- **1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese**

In a skillet, cook beef, onion and garlic over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Add the tomato sauce, water, tomato paste, salt and oregano; mix well.

Spread a fourth of the meat sauce in an ungreased 5-qt. slow cooker. Arrange a third of the noodles over sauce (break the noodles if necessary). Combine the cheeses; spoon a third of the mixture over noodles. Repeat layers twice. Top with remaining meat sauce.

Cover and cook on low for 4-5 hours or until noodles are tender. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

rich french onion soup

Linda Adolph, Edmonton, Alberta

When entertaining guests, I bring out this savory soup while we're waiting for the main course. It's simple to make—just saute the onions early in the day and let the soup simmer until dinnertime. In winter, big bowls of it make a warming supper with a salad and biscuits.

6 large onions, chopped
1/2 cup butter
6 cans (10-1/2 ounces *each*) condensed beef broth, undiluted
1-1/2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
3 bay leaves
10 slices French bread, toasted
Shredded Parmesan cheese *and* part-skim mozzarella cheese

In a large skillet, saute onions in butter until crisp-tender. Transfer to an ungreased 3-qt. slow cooker. Add the broth, Worcestershire sauce and bay leaves.

Cover and cook on low for 5-7 hours or until the onions are tender. Discard bay leaves. Top each serving with French bread and cheeses. **Yield:** 10 servings.

***** prize winning tips

* As a busy working mom, I cook most of our meat entrees in the slow cooker. To cut down on side dish preparation time, I always cook whole packages of rice or noodles and freeze the extra portions in resealable plastic bags. Later it's easy to take them out of the bag, pop in the microwave and have fresh, hot rice or noodles in a snap!

Jean B., Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

* I store all my leftover vegetables in a freezer bag. When the bag is full, I put the vegetables along with a can of beef broth and a can of tomatoes into my slow cooker and heat. It makes an excellent vegetable soup.

Debbie S., Florence, Kentucky

* To add richness to my beef stew when I make it in the slow cooker, I stir in a can of tomato soup right at the start of cooking.

Carol F., Landers, California

* After my bean soup has simmered in the slow cooker all day with ham and onions, I add a can of pureed pumpkin. This addition gives the soup an appealing color, more body and flavor, plus extra vitamins.

Loretta B., Le Claire, Iowa

TRADITIONAL LASAGNA

traditional lasagna

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Busy mom Lorri Foockle of Granville, Illinois relies on hearty casseroles like her Traditional Lasagna for a satisfying supper.

This mother of twin boys and a daughter also works part-time as a systems analyst. Lots of extended family in the area means hosting gatherings is common for Lorri and husband Dale. Again, Traditional Lasagna is ideal and well-received.

> "We think it's the perfect blend of seasonings, meat, cheese and noodles."

Lucky for Lorri, she entered her entree in our Luscious Lasagna contest—it was awarded Grand Prize!

"I modified a recipe from a family friend to suit our tastes," she explains. "We think it's the perfect blend of seasonings, meat, cheese and noodles."

Our winner has been cooking since high school, preparing supper periodically when her mother was working. That early training was good preparation for feeding her own active family.

1 pound ground beef
3/4 pound bulk pork sausage
3 cans (8 ounces *each*) tomato sauce
2 cans (6 ounces *each*) tomato paste
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
3 eggs
3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
3 cups (24 ounces) small-curd cottage cheese
1 carton (8 ounces) ricotta cheese
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
9 lasagna noodles, cooked and drained
6 slices provolone cheese
3 cups (12 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese, *divided*

In a large skillet, cook beef and sausage over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Add the tomato sauce, tomato paste, garlic, sugar, seasoning, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

In a large bowl, combine the eggs and parsley. Stir in the cottage cheese, ricotta and Parmesan.

Spread 1 cup of meat sauce in an ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Layer with three noodles, provolone cheese, 2 cups cottage cheese mixture, 1 cup mozzarella, three noodles, 2 cups meat sauce, remaining cottage cheese mixture and 1 cup mozzarella. Top with the remaining noodles, meat sauce and mozzarella (dish will be full).

Cover and bake at 375° for 50 minutes. Uncover; bake 20 minutes longer or until heated through. Let stand for 15 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 12 servings.

chicken chili lasagna

Cindee Rolston, St. Marys, West Virginia

This saucy lasagna is my adaptation of a chicken enchilada recipe. My husband and I enjoy the mild blend of seasonings, cheeses and tender chicken.

- **2 packages (3 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **8 green onions, chopped**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Mexican cheese blend, *divided***
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **3/4 teaspoon ground cumin, *divided***
- **1/2 teaspoon minced fresh cilantro**
- **3 cups cubed cooked chicken**
- **1/4 cup butter**
- **1/4 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1-1/2 cups chicken broth**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese**
- **1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream**
- **1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies, drained**
- **1/8 teaspoon dried thyme**
- **1/8 teaspoon salt**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **12 flour tortillas (6 inches), halved**

In a mixing bowl, combine cream cheese, onions, 1-1/2 cups Mexican-cheese blend, garlic, 1/4 teaspoon cumin and cilantro. Stir in chicken; set aside.

In a saucepan, melt butter. Stir in flour until smooth; gradually add broth. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Remove from the heat. Stir in Monterey Jack cheese, sour cream, chilies, thyme, salt, pepper and remaining cumin.

Spread 1/2 cup of the cheese sauce in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Top with six tortilla halves, a third of the chicken mixture and a fourth of the cheese sauce. Repeat tortilla, chicken and cheese sauce layers twice. Top with remaining tortillas, cheese sauce and Mexican cheese.

Cover and bake at 350° for 30 minutes. Uncover; bake 10 minutes longer or until heated through. Let stand 5 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 12 servings.

turkey ravioli lasagna

Anne Plesmid, Sagamore Hills, Ohio

I came up with this shortcut lasagna one day when the dinner hour was fast approaching and all I had in the freezer was some frozen ravioli. Now I make it often, and my husband and son devour it.

- **1 pound ground turkey**
- **1/2 teaspoon garlic powder**
- **Salt and pepper to taste**
- **1 cup grated carrots**
- **1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms**
- **1 tablespoon olive oil**
- **1 jar (28 ounces) spaghetti sauce**
- **1 package (25 ounces) frozen cheese ravioli, cooked and drained**
- **3 cups (12 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese**
- **1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **Minced fresh parsley**

In a skillet, cook turkey over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Sprinkle with garlic powder, salt and pepper; set aside.

In a saucepan, cook carrots and mushrooms in oil until tender. Stir in the spaghetti sauce. Spread 1/2 cup sauce in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Layer with half of the ravioli, spaghetti sauce mixture, turkey and cheeses. Repeat layers. Sprinkle with parsley.

Cover and bake at 375° for 25-30 minutes or until bubbly. Uncover; bake 10 minutes longer. Let stand 15 minutes before serving. **Yield:** 12 servings.

seafood tortilla lasagna

Sharon Sawicki, Carol Stream, Illinois

My husband and I enjoy lasagna, seafood and Mexican fare. One evening, I combined all three into this deliciously different entree. It's a tempting, memorable change of pace from traditional Italian-style lasagnas.

- **1 jar (20 ounces) picante sauce**
- **1-1/2 pounds uncooked medium shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- **4 to 6 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper**
- **1 tablespoon olive oil**
- **1/3 cup butter**
- **1/3 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1 can (14-1/2 ounces) chicken broth**
- **1/2 cup heavy whipping cream**
- **15 corn tortillas (6 inches), warmed**
- **1 package (16 ounces) imitation crabmeat, flaked**
- **3 cups (12 ounces) shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese**

Place the picante sauce in a blender or food processor; cover and process until smooth. Set aside.

In a skillet, cook shrimp, garlic and cayenne in oil until shrimp turn pink, about 3 minutes; remove and set aside. In the same skillet, melt the butter. Stir in flour until smooth. Gradually add broth. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Reduce heat. Stir in cream and picante sauce; heat through.

Spread 1/2 cup of sauce in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Layer with six tortillas, half of the shrimp, crab and white sauce and 1-1/4 cups cheese. Repeat layers. Tear or cut remaining tortillas; arrange over cheese. Sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Bake, uncovered, at 375° for 30-35 minutes or until bubbly. Let stand 15 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 12 servings.

very veggie lasagna

Bernice Baldwin, Glennie, Michigan

I concocted this quick and easy recipe to use up some of the abundant fresh produce from my garden. When I made a batch to share at a church potluck, I received lots of compliments.

- **2 medium carrots, julienned**
- **1 medium zucchini, cut into 1/4-inch slices**
- **1 yellow summer squash, cut into 1/4-inch slices**
- **1 medium onion, sliced**
- **1 cup fresh broccoli florets**
- **1/2 cup sliced celery**
- **1/2 cup julienned sweet red pepper**
- **1/2 cup julienned green pepper**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1/2 to 1 teaspoon salt**
- **2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- **1 jar (28 ounces) spaghetti sauce**
- **14 lasagna noodles, cooked and drained**
- **4 cups (16 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese**

In a large skillet, stir-fry the vegetables, garlic and salt in oil until crisp-tender.

Spread 3/4 cup spaghetti sauce in the greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Arrange seven noodles over sauce, overlapping as needed. Layer with half of the vegetables, spaghetti sauce and cheese. Repeat layers.

Cover and bake at 350° for 60-65 minutes or until bubbly. Let stand for 15 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 12 servings.

creamy beef lasagna

Jane Frawley, Charles Town, West Virginia

The creamy Stroganoff-like filling in this distinctive lasagna makes it a stick-to-your-ribs entree. My family loves the delicious taste, and I appreciate that it's inexpensive to fix.

1-1/2 pounds ground beef
2 cans (15 ounces *each*) tomato sauce
1/4 cup chopped onion
2 teaspoons sugar
2 teaspoons salt
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
2 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
1/4 cup milk
18 lasagna noodles, cooked and drained
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
Minced fresh parsley, optional

In a skillet, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Stir in tomato sauce, onion, sugar, salt, Worcestershire sauce and garlic salt. In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, sour cream and milk until smooth.

In a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish, layer a fourth of the meat sauce, six noodles and a third of the cream cheese mixture. Repeat layers twice. Top with remaining meat sauce.

Cover and bake at 350° for 40 minutes. Uncover; sprinkle with cheddar cheese. Bake 5 minutes longer or until cheese is melted. Let stand 15 minutes before cutting. Sprinkle with parsley. **Yield:** 12 servings.

four-cheese spinach lasagna

Kimberly Kneisly, Englewood, Ohio

This rich, cheesy lasagna has become one of my specialties. It's packed with fresh-tasting vegetables like spinach, carrots, red pepper and broccoli.

2 cups chopped fresh broccoli
1-1/2 cups julienned carrots
1 cup sliced green onions
1/2 cup chopped sweet red pepper
3 garlic cloves, minced
2 teaspoons vegetable oil
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
3 cups milk
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese, *divided*
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 package (10 ounces) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and well drained
1-1/2 cups small-curd cottage cheese
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
1/2 cup shredded Swiss cheese
12 lasagna noodles, cooked and drained

In a large skillet, saute the vegetables and garlic in oil until crisp-tender. Remove from the heat; set aside.

In a heavy saucepan, whisk flour and milk until smooth. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes. Reduce heat; stir in 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, salt and pepper. Cook 1 minute longer or until cheese is melted. Remove from the heat; stir in spinach. Set 1 cup aside.

In a bowl, combine the cottage cheese, mozzarella and Swiss. Spread 1/2 cup of spinach mixture in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Layer with four noodles, half of the cheese mixture and vegetables and 3/4 cup spinach mixture. Repeat layers. Top with remaining noodles, reserved spinach mixture and

remaining Parmesan cheese. Cover and bake at 375° for 35 minutes. Uncover; bake 15 minutes longer or until bubbly. Let stand for 15 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 12 servings.

bacon 'n' egg lasagna

Dianne Meyer, Graniteville, Vermont

My sister-in-law served this special dish for Easter breakfast one year, and our whole family loved the mix of bacon, eggs, noodles and cheese. Now I sometimes assemble it the night before and bake it in the morning for a terrific hassle-free entree.

- **1 pound sliced bacon, diced**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **1/3 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1/2 to 1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **4 cups milk**
- **12 lasagna noodles, cooked and drained**
- **12 hard-cooked eggs, sliced**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese**
- **1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley**

In a skillet, cook bacon until crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon to paper towels. Drain, reserving 1/3 cup drippings. In the drippings, saute onion until tender. Stir in flour, salt and pepper until blended. Gradually stir in milk. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat.

Spread 1/2 cup sauce in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Layer with four noodles, a third of the eggs and bacon, Swiss cheese and white sauce. Repeat layers twice. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until bubbly. Sprinkle with parsley. Let stand 15 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 12 servings.

easter brunch lasagna

Sarah Larson, La Farge, Wisconsin

Ham, broccoli and hard-cooked eggs are terrific together in this unique brunch lasagna. I came up with the recipe for a family gathering. Muffins and fresh fruit are all I add to nicely round out the meal.

- **1/2 cup butter**
- **1/3 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1/4 teaspoon salt**
- **Dash white pepper**
- **3 cups milk**
- **1/4 cup finely chopped green onions**
- **1 teaspoon lemon juice**
- **1/4 teaspoon hot pepper sauce**
- **9 lasagna noodles, cooked and drained**
- **2 cups diced fully cooked ham**
- **1 package (16 ounces) frozen chopped broccoli, thawed**
- **1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **3 cups (12 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**
- **4 hard-cooked eggs, finely chopped**

In a heavy saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Stir in flour, salt and pepper until smooth. Gradually add milk. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Remove from the heat; stir in the onions, lemon juice and hot pepper sauce.

Spread a fourth of the white sauce in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Layer with three noodles, half of the ham and broccoli, 3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, 1 cup cheddar cheese, half of the eggs and a fourth of the white sauce. Repeat layers. Top with the remaining noodles, white sauce and cheeses.

Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 40-45 minutes or until bubbly. Let stand for 15 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 12 servings.

pepperoni lasagna

Barbara McIntosh, Midland, Texas

I've served this satisfying lasagna for years—when our children were small, they preferred it more than a steak dinner! Now my grandchildren request that I bring a pan along when I visit…and, of course, I do.

- **1-1/2 pounds ground beef**
- **1 small onion, chopped**
- **2-1/2 cups water**
- **1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce**
- **1 can (6 ounces) tomato paste**
- **1 teaspoon beef bouillon granules**
- **1 tablespoon dried parsley flakes**
- **2 teaspoons Italian seasoning**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon garlic salt**
- **2 eggs**
- **1-1/2 cups (12 ounces) small-curd cottage cheese**
- **1/2 cup sour cream**
- **8 lasagna noodles, cooked and drained**
- **1 package (3-1/2 ounces) sliced pepperoni**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese**
- **1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese**

In a large skillet, cook beef and onion over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Add the water, tomato sauce, tomato paste, bouillon and seasonings. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 30 minutes.

In a small bowl, combine the eggs, cottage cheese and sour cream. Spread 1/2 cup meat sauce into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Layer with four noodles, the cottage cheese mixture and pepperoni. Top with remaining noodles and meat sauce. Sprinkle with mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses.

Cover and bake at 350° for 35 minutes. Uncover; bake 10 minutes longer or until heated through. Let stand for 15 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 12 servings.

german lasagna

Naomi Hochstetler, Woodburn, Indiana

Sausage and sauerkraut are a palate-pleasing duo, especially in lasagna. My family loves it.

- **3/4 cup butter**
- **3/4 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1 tablespoon beef bouillon granules**
- **2 teaspoons onion salt**
- **2 teaspoons pepper, *divided***
- **1/2 teaspoon white pepper, optional**
- **2-1/4 cups milk**
- **1 can (14-1/2 ounces) chicken broth**
- **1 pound smoked kielbasa *or* Polish sausage, chopped**
- **2 eggs**
- **1-1/2 cups (12 ounces) small-curd cottage cheese**
- **9 lasagna noodles, cooked and drained**
- **1 jar (16 ounces) sauerkraut, rinsed and squeezed dry**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese, *divided***

In a saucepan, melt butter. Stir in flour, bouillon, onion salt, 1 teaspoon pepper and white pepper if desired until smooth. Gradually stir in milk and broth. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Add sausage; heat through. Combine eggs, cottage cheese and remaining pepper.

Spread 1 cup sausage mixture in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Layer with three noodles, a third of the sausage mixture, half of the cottage cheese mixture and sauerkraut and 3/4 cup Monterey Jack. Repeat layers. Top with the remaining noodles and sausage mixture (dish will be full).

Cover and bake at 350° for 50-60 minutes or until bubbly. Sprinkle with remaining Monterey Jack. Bake 5 minutes longer or until cheese is melted. Let stand 15 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 12 servings.

sausage potato lasagna

Melissa Pokorny, Abbotsford, British Columbia

I decided to pair up two of my favorites—lasagna and potatoes—in this scrumptious dish.

1/2 pound bulk Italian sausage
2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms
4 medium potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
1 package (10 ounces) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and well drained
1-1/2 cups ricotta cheese
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 egg, beaten
1 medium onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
Salt and pepper to taste
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1-1/2 cups milk
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese, *divided*
Additional nutmeg, optional

In a skillet, cook sausage and mushrooms over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain and set aside.

Place potatoes in a saucepan; cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and cook for 5 minutes or until crisp-tender. Drain and set aside.

In a bowl, combine the spinach, ricotta, Parmesan and egg; set aside. In a saucepan, saute onion and garlic in butter until tender. Stir in flour, salt, pepper and nutmeg until blended. Gradually add milk. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat.

Layer half of the potatoes in a greased 11-in. x 7-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Top with half of the spinach mixture, sausage mixture, white sauce and mozzarella. Layer with the remaining potatoes, spinach mixture, sausage mixture and white sauce.

Cover and bake at 350° for 30-35 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Sprinkle with the remaining mozzarella. Bake, uncovered, 5 minutes longer or until cheese is melted. Let stand 15 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

***** prize winning tips

*When preparing a pan of lasagna, I place the cheese mixture in a large resealable plastic bag with one corner snipped off. Then I squeeze the mixture out evenly onto the noodles. It's easy, and there's no mess or big clumps of cheese.

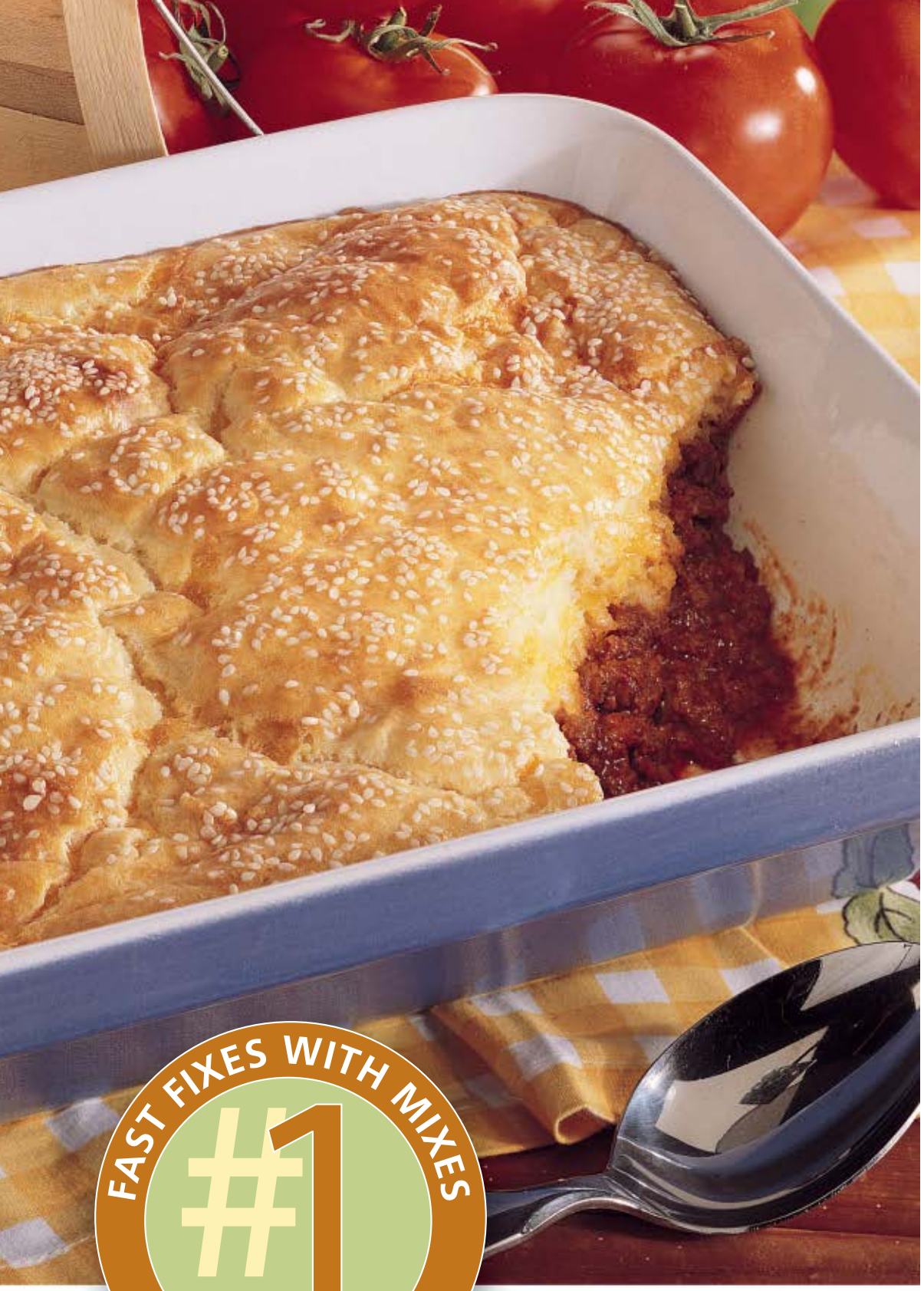
Sandy M., Ellicott City, Maryland

*When I make lasagna, I blend an 8-ounce package of softened cream cheese into the ricotta and egg mixture. Sometimes I also add a little chopped spinach, broccoli or parsley for color.

Donna M., Newton Falls, Ohio

*I replace a quarter of the mozzarella cheese in my lasagna recipe with shredded sharp cheddar. It really enhances the flavor.

Tracy L., Cincinnati, Ohio



SLOPPY JOE UNDER A BUN

sloppy joe under a bun

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

There are exceptions to every rule…and Grand Prize winner Trish Bloom proves the third time isn't necessarily the charm.

"This was the first time I'd entered a *Taste of Home* recipe contest, so I was surprised to learn one of my recipes had won," relates the delighted cook, from Ray, Michigan. "You can bet I'll be sending in more recipes from now on!"

> "Our three kids love sloppy joes, so this crowd-pleasing casserole disappears quickly."

Trish's recipe for Sloppy Joe Under a Bun, which uses a convenient biscuit mix to create its golden crust, took top honors in our Fast Fixes with Mixes contest.

"Our three kids love sloppy joes, so this crowd-pleasing casserole disappears quickly," Trish reports. "Eaten with a fork, it's less 'sloppy' than the traditional version, but it's just as tasty."

Most every night, Trish gathers husband Mike and children Kim, Kaitlyn and Jacob, for a family meal.

With their hectic work and school schedules, the Blooms appreciate fast-to-fix dishes that call for handy pantry staples.

"Quite often, meal planning is far down on the list of things I have to do in a day," Trish admits. "So it's nice to be able to go to my pantry and put a meal on the table in no time."

1-1/2 pounds ground beef
1 can (15-1/2 ounces) sloppy joe sauce
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
2 cups biscuit/baking mix
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup milk
1 tablespoon sesame seeds

In a skillet, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Stir in sloppy joe sauce; mix well. Transfer to a lightly greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish; sprinkle with cheese.

In a bowl, combine biscuit mix, eggs and milk just until blended. Pour over cheese; sprinkle with sesame seeds. Bake, uncovered, at 400° for 25 minutes or until golden brown. **Yield:** 8 servings.

chunky seafood chowder

Irene Craigue, Claremont, New Hampshire

This creamy chowder brimming with tender potato and crab tastes so good guests will never guess it starts with canned soup. The cream makes it rich enough for special occasions. I often serve it with crackers or French bread after a sporting event or outing.

- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **2 tablespoons butter**
- **2 pints half-and-half cream**
- **1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed New England clam chowder, undiluted**
- **3 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon white pepper**
- **1 package (8 ounces) imitation crabmeat, flaked**

In a saucepan, saute onion in butter until tender. Add cream and canned chowder; bring to a boil. Stir in potatoes, salt and pepper. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 15-20 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. Stir in crab and heat through. **Yield:** 8 servings (about 2 quarts).

au gratin sausage skillet

Penny Greene, Lancaster, Ohio

Using frozen vegetables and a package of au gratin potatoes, I can get this satisfying stovetop supper on the table in no time. Even our oldest daughter, who can be a picky eater, loves it—and it is an excellent way of getting her to eat her vegetables.

- **1 pound fully cooked kielbasa *or* Polish sausage, halved and sliced 1/2 inch thick**
- **2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- **1 package (4.9 ounces) au gratin potatoes**
- **2-1/2 cups water**
- **1 package (8 ounces) frozen California-blend vegetables**
- **1 to 2 cups (4 to 8 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**

In a skillet, cook sausage in oil until lightly browned; drain. Add potatoes with contents of sauce mix and water. Cover and cook over medium heat for 18-20 minutes or until the potatoes are almost tender, stirring occasionally.

Add vegetables; cover and cook for 8-10 minutes or until potatoes and vegetables are tender. Sprinkle with cheese. Remove from the heat; cover and let stand for 2 minutes or until the cheese is melted. **Yield:** 4 servings.

caramel-fudge chocolate cake

Karen Stucky, Freeman, South Dakota

To satisfy the chocolate lovers in our family, I added hot fudge topping and chocolate chips to a caramel-covered dessert that's quite popular in our area. The moist cake layer is a breeze to prepare using a boxed mix, and the rich toppings make it especially decadent.

1 package (18-1/4 ounces) chocolate cake mix
1 cup miniature semisweet chocolate chips, *divided*
1 jar (12-1/4 ounces) caramel ice cream topping, warmed
1 jar (11-3/4 ounces) hot fudge ice cream topping, warmed
1 carton (8 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed
1/2 cup English toffee bits *or* almond brickle chips

Prepare cake batter according to package directions. Stir in 3/4 cup chocolate chips.

Pour into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Immediately poke holes in the cake with a meat fork or skewer. Spread caramel and fudge toppings over cake. Cool on a wire rack.

Frost with whipped topping. Sprinkle with toffee bits and remaining chocolate chips. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 12-15 servings.

meaty mac 'n' cheese

Charlotte Kremer, Pahrump, Nevada

My husband is disabled and requires constant care. This doesn't leave me a lot of time to cook, so I came up with this tasty way to beef up a box of macaroni and cheese. The hearty mixture gets extra flavor from corn, ripe olives and zippy salsa.

1 package (7-1/4 ounces) macaroni and cheese
1 pound ground beef
1/4 cup chopped onion
1-1/2 cups salsa
1/2 cup fresh *or* frozen corn
1 can (2-1/4 ounces) sliced ripe olives, drained
3 tablespoons diced pimientos
Shredded cheddar cheese
Chopped tomato

Set aside cheese sauce mix from macaroni and cheese; cook macaroni according to package directions.

Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, cook beef and onion until meat is no longer pink; drain. Add the salsa, corn, olives and pimientos; heat through.

Drain macaroni; add to beef mixture with contents of cheese sauce mix. Mix well; heat through. Garnish with cheese and tomato. **Yield:** 4-6 servings.

Editor's Note: The milk and butter listed on the macaroni and cheese package are not used in this recipe.

zesty macaroni soup

Joan Hallford, North Richland Hills, Texas

The recipe for this thick, zippy soup caught my attention because it can be prepared in a jiffy. A chili macaroni mix provides this dish with a little spice, but sometimes I jazz it up with a can of chopped green chilies. It's a family favorite!

- **1 pound ground beef**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **5 cups water**
- **1 can (15 ounces) pinto beans, rinsed and drained**
- **1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained**
- **1 can (7 ounces) whole kernel corn, drained**
- **1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies, optional**
- **1/2 teaspoon ground mustard**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **1 package (7-1/2 ounces) chili macaroni dinner mix**
- **Salsa con queso dip**

In a saucepan, cook beef and onion over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Stir in water, beans, tomatoes, corn and chilies if desired. Stir in mustard, salt, pepper and contents of macaroni sauce mix. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Stir in contents of macaroni packet. Cover and simmer 10-14 minutes longer or until macaroni is tender, stirring once. Serve with salsa con queso dip. **Yield:** 8-10 servings (about 2-1/2 quarts).

chili nacho supper

Laurie Withers, Wildomar, California

The recipe for this creamy, chili-like dish was passed down through our church years ago. It's so warm and filling that we often prepare it when we take skiing trips to Colorado. It can be served over corn chips and eaten with a fork, or kept warm in a slow cooker and served as a hearty dip at parties. It makes a nice big batch so you can easily satisfy a crowd.

- **2-1/2 pounds ground beef**
- **3 cans (15 ounces *each*) tomato sauce**
- **2 cans (16 ounces *each*) pinto beans, rinsed and drained**
- **1 can (10 ounces) diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained**
- **2 envelopes chili mix**
- **2 pounds process cheese (Velveeta), cubed**
- **1 cup heavy whipping cream**
- **2 packages (16 ounces *each*) corn chips**
- **Sour cream**

In a Dutch oven, cook the beef until no longer pink; drain. Add tomato sauce, beans, tomatoes and chili mix; heat through.

Add cheese and cream; cook until the cheese is melted. Serve over chips. Top with sour cream. **Yield:** 14-16 servings.

coconut gingerbread cake

Paula Hartlett, Mineola, New York

This unusual dessert came from a little book I bought at a flea market many years ago. The broiled orange-coconut topping is unexpected and really dresses up a boxed gingerbread mix. It's fun to find a different cake to serve. When I bring it to potlucks and family get-togethers, it never lasts long!

- **1 package (14-1/2 ounces) gingerbread cake/cookie mix**
- **1 large navel orange**
- **1-1/3 cups flaked coconut**
- **1/2 cup packed brown sugar**
- **2 tablespoons orange juice**

Prepare and bake cake according to package directions, using a greased 8-in. square baking pan.

Meanwhile, grate 1 tablespoon of peel from the orange; set aside. Peel and section the orange, removing white pith; dice the orange.

When cake tests done according to package directions, remove from the oven and cool slightly. Combine coconut, brown sugar, orange juice, diced orange and reserved peel; spread over warm cake.

Broil 4 in. from the heat for 2-3 minutes or until the top is lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack. **Yield:** 9 servings.

spicy ravioli salad

Paula Marchesi, Lenhartsville, Pennsylvania

You'll be sitting down to dinner in no time when you prepare this main-dish salad. A convenient combination of frozen ravioli and pantry staples, including canned tomatoes, corn and olives, is dressed with easy taco sauce for tangy, fresh-tasting results. Keep these ingredients on hand because you'll get requests to make it time and time again.

- **1 package (25 ounces) frozen beef, sausage *or* cheese ravioli**
- **1 can (10 ounces) diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained**
- **1 can (8-3/4 ounces) whole kernel corn, drained**
- **1 bottle (8 ounces) taco sauce**
- **1 can (2-1/4 ounces) sliced ripe olives, drained**
- **1 small cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped**
- **1 small red onion, sliced**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1/4 teaspoon ground cumin**
- **1/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**

Cook ravioli according to package directions. Meanwhile, combine remaining ingredients in a large bowl. Drain ravioli; stir into tomato mixture. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

tex-mex biscuits

Angie Trolz, Jackson, Michigan

I love cooking with green chilies because they add so much flavor to ordinary dishes. Once while making a pot of chili, I had some green chilies left over and mixed them into my biscuit dough, creating this recipe. The fresh-from-the-oven treats are a wonderful accompaniment to soup or chili. And they're not any more complicated than making regular biscuits.

- **2 cups biscuit/baking mix**
- **2/3 cup milk**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) finely shredded cheddar cheese**
- **1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies, drained**

In a bowl, combine biscuit mix and milk until a soft dough forms. Stir in cheese and chilies. Turn onto a floured surface; knead 10 times.

Roll out to 1/2-in. thickness and cut with a 2-1/2-in. biscuit cutter.

Place on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 450° for 8-10 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm. **Yield:** about 1 dozen.

no-bake cherry cheesecake

Pam Noffke, Tyler, Texas

My husband and I both work full-time, and taxiing our two teenagers around town leaves me little time in the kitchen. Using prepared graham cracker crust and canned pie filling, I can extend a no-bake mix to make two light, fancy-looking pies in less than 15 minutes. Then we have one to enjoy and one to share.

- **1 package (11.1 ounces) no-bake cheesecake mix**
- **1/2 cup butter, melted**
- **2 tablespoons sugar**
- **1-1/2 cups cold milk**
- **1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened**
- **1 cup confectioners' sugar**
- **2 cups whipped topping**
- **1 graham cracker crust (9 inches)**
- **2 cans (21 ounces *each*) cherry pie filling**

In a large bowl, combine the cheesecake crust mix, butter and sugar. Press onto the bottom and up the sides of an ungreased 9-in. pie plate. Refrigerate.

In a large mixing bowl, beat cheesecake filling mix and milk on medium speed for 3 minutes. In another mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and confectioners' sugar until smooth. Add to cheesecake mixture; beat well. Fold in whipped topping.

Spoon into chilled crust and purchased crust. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Top with pie filling. **Yield:** 2 pies (6-8 servings each).

artichoke heart salad

Elizabeth Birkenmaier, Gladstone, Missouri

I put together this fast five-ingredient salad after sampling a similar mixture from a salad bar. Bottled Italian dressing gives robust flavor to this simple treatment for canned artichoke hearts. It is a snap to make as a last-minute side dish.

- **1 can (14 ounces) water-packed artichoke hearts, rinsed, drained and quartered**
- **1 can (2-1/4 ounces) sliced ripe olives, drained, optional**
- **1/3 cup chopped green pepper**
- **1/3 cup thinly sliced green onions**
- **3/4 cup Italian salad dressing**

In a bowl, combine artichokes, olives if desired, green pepper and onions. Add dressing and toss to coat.

Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Serve with a slotted spoon. **Yield:** 3-4 servings.

***** prize winning tips

*I sometimes substitute equal amounts of apple juice for the milk called for in store-bought coffee cake mixes, then I add 1-1/2 teaspoons of cinnamon to the batter. People that compliment this dish are always amazed at this easy twist of ingredients.

Joanne H., Warminster, Pennsylvania

*I prepare a box of macaroni and cheese and dress it up with a can of tuna, peas, dried onion and pepper to taste.

Jeannette C., Dracut, Massachusetts

*Try adding almost any leftovers to a can of tomato soup. I've done this with Spanish rice, pork and beans and leftover vegetables. It's a great way to clean out your refrigerator and perk up tomato soup.

Doris B., Sackets Harbor, New York

*I use buttermilk instead of milk when making waffles, biscuits or pancakes from a mix. They're extra rich and delicious.

Barbara N., Reno, Nevada

*I combine leftover chili with a prepared box of macaroni and cheese. Bake the mixture in a casserole dish topped with cheddar cheese. It's a completely different meal.

Linda B., Fairmont, Minnesota

*My mother was making fried potato patties out of leftover mashed potatoes and accidentally stirred in pancake mix instead of flour. It made delicious patties. I've made mine that way ever since.

Gwynn E., Knoxville, Tennessee

CREAM OF CAULIFLOWER SOUP

cream of cauliflower soup

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Our taste-testers couldn't wait to eat their veggies when readers' recipes flooded in for our Flavorful Florets contest!

Judges gave bravos to broccoli and kudos to cauliflower after sampling dozens of savory soups, sweet and fruity salads, saucy main dishes and best-of-the-season breads.

Finally, when things came to a harvest-fresh "head" in our Test Kitchen, our panelists presented the Grand Prize to Carol Reaves of San Antonio, Texas for her naturally nourishing Cream of Cauliflower Soup.

> "I serve it as a main dish along with crusty bread and a fruit salad."

Carol says that she comes from good down-home cooking stock.

"As a girl, I learned that Friday and Sunday were separated by 'Soup Day'," she relates. "Every Saturday, my mother stirred up the most comforting concoctions…by the potful."

Today, Carol ladles out this luscious legacy to her own appreciative family—husband Roy, five children, plus grandkids and great-grandchildren.

"This soup is also perfect for a luncheon with friends. I serve it as a main dish along with crusty bread and a fruit salad," Carol confides.

"To save time, I prepare it a day or two ahead and simply reheat it when guests arrive. I often top it with a few fresh-snipped chives (Roy and I grow every herb imaginable!) and a sprinkle of mild shredded cheese to add color and flavor."

2 medium onions, chopped
2 medium carrots, grated
2 celery ribs, sliced
2 garlic cloves, minced
1/4 cup plus 6 tablespoons butter, *divided*
1 medium head cauliflower, chopped
5 cups chicken broth
1/4 cup minced fresh parsley
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon coarsely ground pepper
1/2 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon dried tarragon
6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 cup milk
1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
1/4 cup sour cream
Fresh tarragon, optional

In a soup kettle or Dutch oven, saute the onions, carrots, celery and garlic in 1/4 cup butter until tender. Add cauliflower, broth, parsley, salt and pepper, basil and tarragon. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.

Meanwhile, in a saucepan, melt the remaining butter. Stir in flour until smooth. Gradually stir in the milk and whipping cream. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Add to cauliflower mixture. Cook for 10 minutes or until thickened, stirring frequently. Remove from the heat; stir in sour cream. Garnish with tarragon if desired. **Yield:** 8 servings (about 2 quarts).

broccoli cauliflower salad

Linda Kangas, Outlook, Saskatchewan

This salad has been to as many family gatherings as I have! It holds well, and leftovers are still tasty a day later for a quick lunch.

- **1 medium head cauliflower, broken into florets (about 7-1/2 cups)**
- **1 medium bunch broccoli, cut into florets (about 4 cups)**
- **2 cups seedless red grapes**
- **6 green onions with tops, sliced**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese**
- **2 cups mayonnaise**
- **1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **2 tablespoons sugar**
- **2 tablespoons white vinegar**
- **1/2 to 1 pound sliced bacon, cooked and crumbled**
- **Leaf lettuce**
- **Additional red grapes, optional**

In a large bowl, combine cauliflower, broccoli, grapes, onions and mozzarella. In another bowl, combine mayonnaise, Parmesan cheese, sugar and vinegar; pour over vegetable mixture; toss to coat.

Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Just before serving, stir in bacon. Transfer to a lettuce-lined bowl. Garnish with grapes if desired. **Yield:** 15-20 servings.

broccoli orange salad

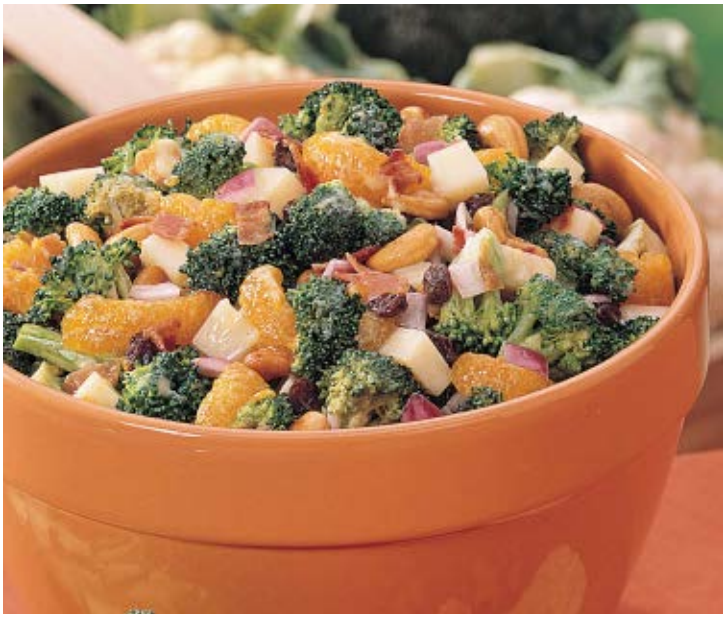
Cathy Lavers, Scotsburn, Nova Scotia

Every time I take this sweet orange salad to a potluck, I get requests to pass around the recipe.

- **1 egg**
- **1/4 cup sugar**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons honey**
- **1 teaspoon ground mustard**
- **1/2 teaspoon cornstarch**
- **2 tablespoons water**
- **2 tablespoons cider vinegar**
- **2 tablespoons mayonnaise**
- **2 tablespoons sour cream**
- **4-1/2 teaspoons butter**
- **4 cups broccoli florets (about 1 medium bunch)**
- **1 cup salted cashews**
- **1 cup cubed Swiss cheese**
- **1 can (11 ounces) mandarin oranges, well drained**
- **1/2 cup raisins**
- **6 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled**
- **1/2 cup chopped red onion, optional**

In a heavy saucepan, combine egg, sugar, honey, mustard and cornstarch with a whisk until smooth. Gradually whisk in water and vinegar. Cook and stir over medium heat until a thermometer reads 160° and mixture is thickened. Remove from the heat; stir in mayonnaise, sour cream and butter until blended. Cool.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine broccoli, cashews, cheese, oranges, raisins, bacon and onion if desired. Just before serving, add dressing and toss to coat. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.



picante broccoli chicken salad

Krista Shumway, Billings, Montana

Since our family likes things spicy, I often add a fresh jalapeno pepper to this salad. It's a simple, savory way to use up leftover chicken. It's fun to work a healthy vegetable like broccoli into a fun Southwestern entree. Plus, it's so eye-catching, it could be the main dish and the table centerpiece!

1/2 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup picante sauce
1 garlic clove, minced
1/2 to 1 teaspoon chili powder
2 cups cubed cooked chicken
2 cups broccoli florets
1 cup diced fresh tomato
1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1/2 cup chopped onion
1/4 cup julienned green pepper
1/4 cup julienned sweet red pepper
Flour tortillas, warmed

In a large bowl, combine the first four ingredients; mix well. Add chicken, broccoli, tomato, cheese, onion and peppers; toss to coat. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving. Serve with warmed tortillas. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

bacon-broccoli cheese ball

Tamara Rickard, Bartlett, Tennessee

Needing a quick appetizer one night when dinner was running late, I combined a few leftovers into this easy cheese ball. Broccoli adds color and crunch to this well-received snack. For variety, you can shape it into a log, or substitute favorite herbs for the pepper. My husband and I are the proud parents of two young children, Kenton and Katie.

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1 cup (4 ounces) finely shredded cheddar cheese
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 cup finely chopped broccoli florets
6 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled
Assorted crackers

In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, cheddar cheese and pepper until blended. Stir in broccoli. Shape into a ball and roll in bacon. Cover and refrigerate.

Remove from the refrigerator 15 minutes before serving. Serve with crackers. **Yield:** 2-1/2 cups.

savory cauliflower pie

Debbie Hart, Fort Wayne, Indiana

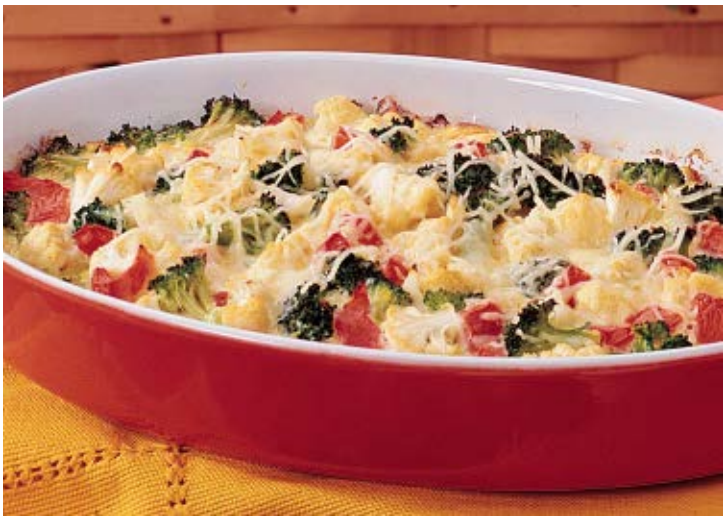
If you're looking for a meatless main dish or a hearty side to take to a church potluck or family gathering, this pie is the perfect choice. It's a favorite with my husband, our son, Brett and daughter, Holly.

- **3 cups seasoned croutons, crushed**
- **1/2 cup butter, melted, *divided***
- **1 small head cauliflower, cut into small florets (about 5 cups)**
- **1 cup chopped onion**
- **1/2 cup thinly sliced carrots**
- **1 garlic clove, minced**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese, *divided***
- **2 eggs**
- **1/4 cup milk**

In a bowl, combine croutons and 1/4 cup butter. Press onto the bottom and up the sides of an ungreased 9-in. pie plate. Bake at 375° for 8 minutes or until lightly browned; set aside.

In a large skillet, saute the cauliflower, onion, carrots, garlic, salt and oregano in remaining butter over medium heat for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Sprinkle 1/2 cup cheese into prepared crust. Top with cauliflower mixture and remaining cheese.

In a bowl, beat the eggs and milk. Pour over pie. Bake, uncovered, at 375° for 30 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean and the cauliflower is tender. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.



end of summer vegetable bake

Judy Williams, Hayden, Idaho

When my husband worked as a deputy ag commissioner, he'd bring me bushels of vegetables from area farms. This pretty side dish is the result—it's easy to fix but impressive enough for company. We're busy retirees with five grown kids and a menagerie ranging from show dogs to miniature donkeys.

- **1 small head cauliflower, broken into small florets (about 5 cups)**
- **1 medium bunch broccoli, cut into small florets (about 4 cups)**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 tablespoon butter**
- **2 medium tomatoes, chopped**
- **3/4 teaspoon dried basil**
- **3/4 teaspoon dried oregano**
- **3/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **1/4 teaspoon hot pepper sauce**
- **4 eggs**
- **1/3 cup half-and-half cream**
- **1-1/2 cups (6 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese, *divided***
- **1/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese**

Place the cauliflower and broccoli in a saucepan with a small amount of water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 5-10 minutes or until crisp-tender. Drain and set aside.

In a large skillet, saute onion and garlic in butter until tender. Stir in tomatoes, seasonings, cauliflower and broccoli. Cook, uncovered, until heated through, about 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and set aside.

In a large bowl, beat eggs and cream; stir in 1 cup Swiss cheese, Parmesan cheese and the vegetable mixture. Transfer to a greased shallow 2-qt. baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining Swiss cheese.

Bake, uncovered, at 375° for 25-30 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Let stand 10 minutes before serving. **Yield:** 12 servings.

broccoli corn bread

Lois Triplet, Springhill, Louisiana

This recipe was inspired by my husband's love of corn bread. It's so good, he and folks who dine with us (like our two grown children) eat it plain. We're retired but still "commute"—between our rural home and our fishing camp!

- **1 cup plus 1 tablespoon cornmeal, *divided***
- **1/3 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder**
- **3/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon baking soda**
- **5 eggs, beaten**
- **1 package (16 ounces) frozen chopped broccoli, thawed and drained**
- **1-1/2 cups (6 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**
- **1-1/2 cups (12 ounces) small-curd cottage cheese**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **3/4 cup butter, melted**

In a bowl, combine 1 cup of cornmeal, flour, baking powder, salt and baking soda. In another bowl, combine the eggs, broccoli, cheeses, onion and butter. Add to cornmeal mixture; mix just until moistened.

Sprinkle remaining cornmeal in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Pour batter into pan. Bake at 350° for 30-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Serve warm. **Yield:** 12-15 servings.

broccoli fish bundles

Frances Quinn, Farmingdale, New York

These bundles take a little time to assemble, but they're worth it! They're always popular at a shower or buffet, and they're great for an everyday dinner, too. This flavorful dish goes nicely with rice pilaf or a saucy pasta.

- **18 fresh broccoli spears (about 1-1/2 pounds)**
- **6 Monterey Jack cheese cubes**
- **6 sole *or* flounder fillets (about 2 pounds)**
- **1/8 teaspoon lemon-pepper seasoning, optional**
- **1/3 cup butter, melted**
- **2 teaspoons lemon juice**
- **1 garlic clove, minced**
- **1/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**

In a saucepan, place broccoli in a small amount of water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 2-3 minutes or until crisp-tender. Rinse in cold water; drain.

For each bundle, place a cheese cube on three spears. Wrap with a fish fillet and fasten with a toothpick if necessary. Place on a greased foil-lined baking sheet. Sprinkle with lemon-pepper if desired. Bake at 350° for 15-25 minutes or until fish flakes easily with a fork.

Meanwhile, combine butter, lemon juice, garlic, salt and pepper. Transfer fish bundles to a serving platter; remove toothpicks. Drizzle with butter mixture. **Yield:** 6 servings.

breaded cauliflower

Sandra Furman-Krajewski, Amsterdam, New York

My mother gets the credit for this delicious dish, which is a mainstay at our house. It can be an appetizer or side dish, and it is wonderful served with turkey, roast beef and ham.

- **1 small head cauliflower, broken into florets (about 5 cups)**
- **4 egg yolks**
- **1 teaspoon garlic powder**
- **1 teaspoon onion powder**
- **1 teaspoon minced fresh parsley**
- **1/2 teaspoon sugar**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **1 cup seasoned bread crumbs**
- **3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese**
- **3/4 cup butter**
- **Minced fresh parsley, optional**

Place cauliflower and a small amount of water in a skillet. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer until crisp-tender, about 8 minutes. Drain and set aside.

In a bowl, whisk egg yolks and seasonings. Place bread crumbs and Parmesan cheese in a large resealable plastic bag. Add a few florets at a time to the egg mixture; toss to coat. Using a slotted spoon, transfer cauliflower to crumb mixture; toss to coat.

In a skillet, melt the butter over medium-high heat. Cook cauliflower in batches until golden brown, about 4 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley if desired. **Yield:** 4-6 servings.

wild rice floret bake

Donna Torgerson, Park Rapids, Minnesota

My mom used to make this hearty casserole for family get-togethers. Now I do the same when our five grown children come to visit. My husband and I have a beautiful lake country home, and we enjoy fishing.

- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **3 tablespoons butter**
- **2 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **Dash pepper**
- **2 cups milk**
- **1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese, *divided***
- **4 cups cooked wild rice, *divided***
- **6 cups chopped cooked broccoli (about 1 large bunch)**
- **5 cups chopped cooked cauliflower (about 1 small head)**
- **6 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled**

In a saucepan, saute the onion in butter until tender. Stir in flour, salt and pepper until blended. Gradually add milk. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened and bubbly. Remove from the heat; stir in sour cream and 1/2 cup cheese until smooth.

Place 2 cups wild rice in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Top with broccoli and cauliflower. Place remaining wild rice lengthwise down the center of dish. Pour the sauce over all. Sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Cover and bake at 350° for 20 minutes. Uncover; sprinkle with bacon. Bake 10-15 minutes longer or until bubbly. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

colorful oven vegetables

Grace Ammann, Richfield, Minnesota

As a party planner for a catering company, I often serve this attractive side dish with a steak dinner or at a brunch. Our two grown sons and their families often request these fresh-tasting vegetables, too.

1/3 cup butter
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
3 cups cauliflowerets
2 cups broccoli florets
6 medium carrots, julienned
3 small onions, quartered

Place butter in a shallow 3-qt. baking dish; place in a 400° oven for 5 minutes or until melted. Stir in thyme, salt and pepper. Add the vegetables and toss to coat.

Cover and bake for 25-30 minutes or until the vegetables are crisp-tender. **Yield:** 10-12 servings.

***** prize winning tips

*I wanted my children to eat broccoli, so when I made tacos, I substituted steamed broccoli for the lettuce. Amazingly, they liked the tacos much better!

June D., Manchester, Tennessee

*I use peeled chopped broccoli stalks in place of celery to add vitamins and crunch to chicken or tuna salad and green salads.

Betty J., Ruston, Louisiana

*We particularly enjoy Greek or Italian seasoning sprinkled on steamed broccoli and cauliflower along with margarine and lemon juice.

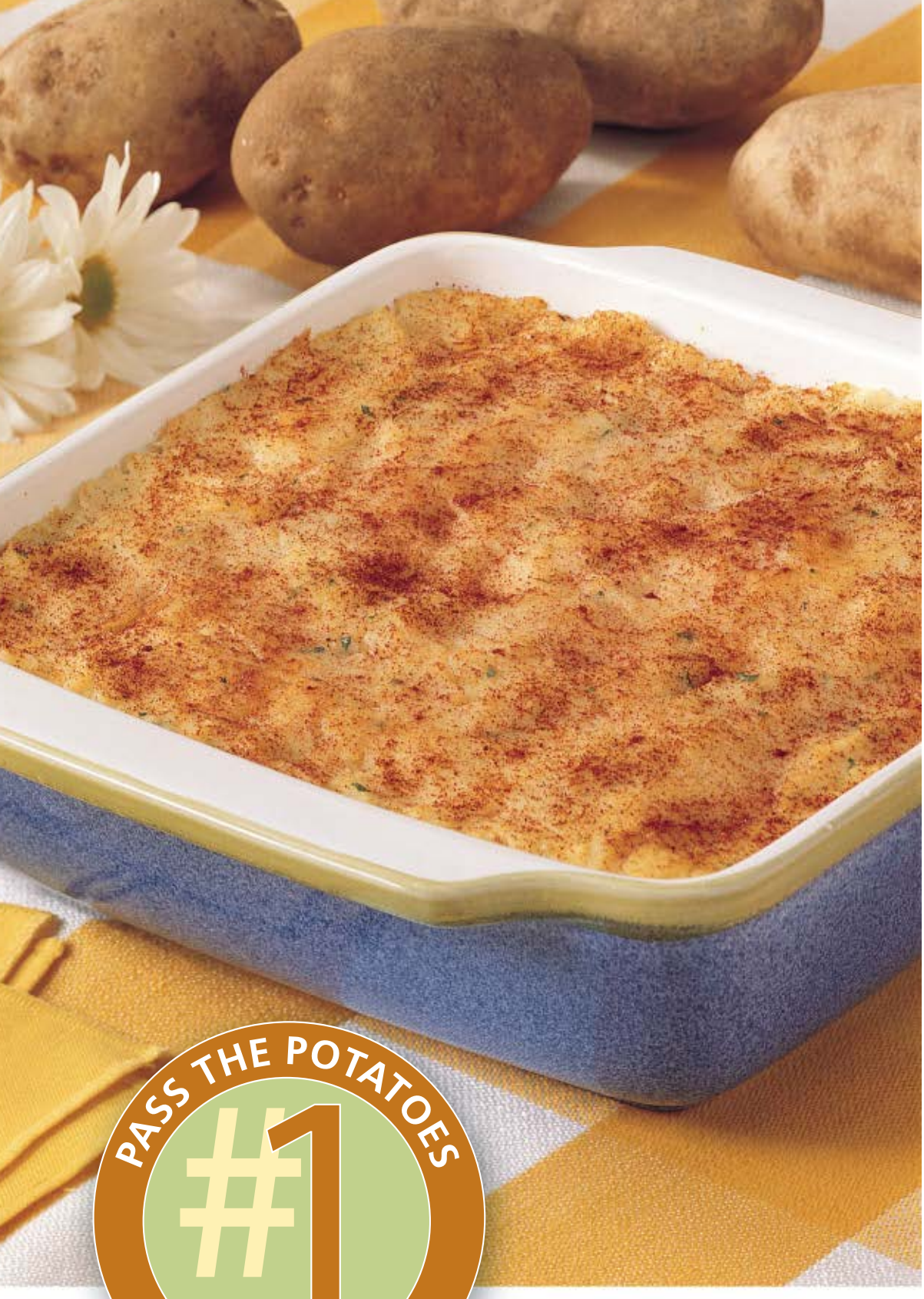
Betty H., Nokomis, Florida

*While making cheesy cauliflower soup, I discovered a sweet red pepper in my fridge that had to be used. I chopped it and added it to the soup. It tasted wonderful, and the color was beautiful.

Cheryl V., Grand Haven, Michigan

*To get all the vegetables cooked just right when stir-frying, cut them all the same size, then add them at intervals throughout the cooking process, starting with the longer-cooking vegetables (carrots and broccoli, for instance) and ending with the quicker-cooking ones (such as mushrooms). As an alternative, cut longer-cooking vegetables into smaller pieces than quicker-cooking ones, then cook them all together.

Taste of Home Test Kitchen



SWISS POTATO SQUARES

swiss potato squares

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

One potato, two potato…we quickly lost count of the spuds piling up in the Taste of Home Test Kitchen during our recipe contest. Our grocer must have thought we were feeding an army!

When the last bushel basket was empty and the votes were tallied, top honors were awarded Nancy Foust of Stoneboro, Pennsylvania for her delicious Swiss Potato Squares.

> "The top comes out puffy and luscious-looking like a cheesy quiche..."

For Nancy, satisfying the meat-and-potatoes men in her life—husband Richard and grown son Robert—has led to a large potato-recipe collection.

"This one, though, is our favorite," Nancy affirmed. "It's a regular part of our family meals and special-occasion menus. I recently took it to a reunion, and it went over big there, too."

Big on appetite appeal, Nancy's flavorful blending of potatoes, ham and cheese is eye-catching as well. "The top comes out puffy and luscious-looking like a cheesy quiche or casserole," she noted. "To dress it up, I sprinkle on extra paprika or garnish with parsley.

"It's also so versatile—I can serve it in place of any other potato side dish, or along with a salad, soup and dessert as a hearty, scrumptious main dish."

Wherever it falls in the meal, this cheesy potato pleaser is an easy one on the cook. "It calls for mostly on-hand ingredients," Nancy pointed out. "Plus, you can fix it ahead of time, store it in the refrigerator and just pop it in the oven before dinner."

8 medium russet potatoes (about 3 pounds), peeled and cubed
1/3 cup butter, melted
1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley
1-1/2 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1-1/2 cups cubed Swiss cheese
1 cup cubed fully cooked ham
1 small onion, grated
1 teaspoon garlic powder
3 eggs
1/2 cup milk
Paprika

Place potatoes in a saucepan and cover with water. Cover and bring to a boil; cook for 20-25 minutes or until very tender. Drain well. Mash with butter, parsley, salt and pepper.

Spread about 4 cups of the potato mixture onto the bottom and up the sides of a greased 8-in. square baking dish. Combine cheese, ham, onion and garlic powder; spoon into potato shell. Combine eggs and milk; pour over all. Top with remaining potato mixture. Sprinkle with paprika.

Bake, uncovered, at 400° for 45-50 minutes or until golden. Let stand 5 minutes before cutting. **Yield:** 8-9 servings.

herbed garlic potatoes

Sherry DesJardin, Fairbanks, Alaska

My mom cooks from scratch and rarely uses a recipe. That's how I learned—a pinch of this, a dash of that. But it was actually my dad who invented the basis for this recipe. The potatoes fit any kind of meal—fancy or burgers—and everyone asks me for the recipe.

15 small red potatoes (about 2 pounds)
1/3 cup butter
1/4 cup minced fresh parsley
2 tablespoons minced chives
1-1/2 teaspoons minced fresh tarragon *or* 1/2 teaspoon dried tarragon
2 to 3 garlic cloves, minced
3 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled
1/2 to 1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Cut the potatoes in half and place in a saucepan; cover with water. Cover and bring to a boil; cook until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain well.

In a large skillet, melt butter. Add the parsley, chives, tarragon and garlic; cook and stir over low heat for 1-2 minutes.

Add the potatoes, bacon, salt and pepper; toss to coat. Cook until heated through, about 5 minutes. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

green bean potato salad

Bea Vrsalijko, Belle Chasse, Louisiana

I like green beans and find them a great companion to potatoes. A versatile side dish—add ham to make the salad a meal in itself—this is among the recipes that I've invented myself.

1-1/2 pounds small red potatoes, quartered
1 garlic clove, peeled and halved
2 cups cut fresh green beans (1-1/2-inch pieces)
1 can (14-1/2 ounces) chicken broth
TARRAGON DRESSING:
3 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons cider vinegar
1 garlic clove, minced
1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley
1 to 1-1/2 teaspoons minced fresh tarragon
1/2 teaspoon ground mustard
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/4 teaspoon Creole *or* Cajun seasoning
Lettuce leaves, optional

In a saucepan, cook potatoes and garlic in boiling salted water for 5 minutes. Add beans; cook 10-14 minutes longer or until vegetables are tender. Drain; discard garlic. Place vegetables in a bowl.

Warm broth; pour over vegetables. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, stirring several times.

In a small bowl, combine oil, vinegar and seasonings; mix well. Drain vegetables; add dressing and toss to coat. Serve in a lettuce-lined bowl if desired. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

church supper potatoes

Michelle Grigsby, Beavercreek, Ohio

As a pastor's wife, I often cook for crowds. This dish is always a hit. My own family—we have a daughter and a son—thinks the potatoes are a must with London broil or grilled, marinated chicken breasts. I frequently prepare them for guests, too. The recipe is very adaptable, and the results disappear.

- **3 pounds russet potatoes (about 9 medium), peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes**
- **2 garlic cloves, peeled**
- **2 packages (3 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened**
- **2 tablespoons butter**
- **1/2 cup sour cream**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese, *divided***
- **1 teaspoon garlic salt**
- **1 teaspoon onion salt**
- **1 package (10 ounces) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry**

Place the potatoes and garlic in a large saucepan; cover with water. Cover and bring to a boil; cook for 20-25 minutes or until very tender. Drain well.

In a mixing bowl, mash potatoes and garlic with the cream cheese and butter. Add sour cream, 1 cup of cheddar cheese, garlic salt, onion salt and spinach. Stir just until mixed. Spread into a greased 2-qt. baking dish.

Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 30-35 minutes or until heated through. Top with remaining cheese; bake 5 minutes longer or until the cheese is melted. **Yield:** 10-12 servings.

grilled three-cheese potatoes

Margaret Hanson-Maddox, Montpelier, Indiana

While this is delicious grilled, I've also cooked it in the oven at 350° for an hour. Add cubed ham to it and you can serve it as a full-meal main dish. I learned cooking basics in 4-H. But mostly my education came after I was married…through trial and error!

- **6 large potatoes, sliced 1/4 inch thick**
- **2 medium onions, chopped**
- **1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded sharp cheddar cheese, *divided***
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese, *divided***
- **1 pound sliced bacon, cooked and crumbled**
- **1/4 cup butter, cubed**
- **1 tablespoon minced chives**
- **1 to 2 teaspoons seasoned salt**
- **1/2 teaspoon pepper**

Divide the potatoes and onions equally between two pieces of heavy-duty foil (about 18-in. square) that have been coated with nonstick cooking spray.

Combine Parmesan cheese and 3/4 cup each cheddar and mozzarella; sprinkle over potatoes and onions. Top with bacon, butter, chives, seasoned salt and pepper. Bring opposite ends of foil together over filling and fold down several times. Fold unsealed ends toward filling and crimp tightly.

Grill, covered, over medium heat for 35-40 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Remove from the grill. Open foil carefully and sprinkle with remaining cheeses. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

taco tater skins

Phyllis Douglas, Fairview, Michigan

The idea for my recipe started with a food demonstration I didn't like. That version used things most people don't have on hand. So I decided to experiment, and out came Taco Tater Skins. We make a meal out of these skins. But they're also great for parties as appetizers. Have the recipe handy…you'll be asked for a copy!

- **6 large russet potatoes**
- **1/2 cup butter, melted**
- **2 tablespoons taco seasoning**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese**
- **15 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled**
- **3 green onions, chopped**
- **Salsa *and/or* sour cream, optional**

Bake potatoes at 375° for 1 hour or until tender. Reduce heat to 350°. When cool enough to handle, cut the potatoes lengthwise into quarters. Scoop out pulp, leaving a 1/4-in. shell (save pulp for another use).

Combine the butter and taco seasoning; brush over both sides of potato skins. Place skin side down on a greased baking sheet. Sprinkle with cheese, bacon and onions.

Bake for 5-10 minutes or until the cheese is melted. Serve with salsa and/or sour cream if desired. **Yield:** 2 dozen.

baked german potato salad

Julie Myers, Lexington, Ohio

What makes this German potato salad so different is that it's sweet instead of tangy. The first time I took my potato salad to work, people kept coming out of their offices to find out what smelled so good. By lunch, it was gone. Now, I make a double batch to take to work!

- **12 medium red potatoes (about 3 pounds)**
- **8 bacon strips**
- **2 medium onions, chopped**
- **3/4 cup packed brown sugar**
- **1/3 cup white vinegar**
- **1/3 cup sweet pickle juice**
- **2/3 cup water, *divided***
- **2 teaspoons dried parsley flakes**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon celery seed**
- **4-1/2 teaspoons all-purpose flour**

In a saucepan, cook potatoes until just tender; drain. Peel and slice into an ungreased 2-qt. baking dish; set aside. In a skillet, cook bacon until crisp; drain, reserving 2 tablespoons drippings. Crumble bacon and set aside. Saute onions in drippings until tender. Stir in brown sugar, vinegar, pickle juice, 1/2 cup water, parsley, salt and celery seed. Simmer, uncovered, for 5-10 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine flour and remaining water until smooth; stir into onion mixture. Bring to a boil. Cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Pour over potatoes. Add bacon; gently stir to coat. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 30 minutes or until heated through. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

fried sweet potato pies

Marilyn Moseley, Toccoa, Georgia

Since my dad was a farmer who grew them, sweet potatoes have always graced our table. These, though, resulted from an experiment at a church bake sale when we had excess pastry. People couldn't get enough!

4-1/2 cups self-rising flour
3 tablespoons sugar
1/2 cup shortening
2 eggs
1 cup milk
FILLING:
3 cups mashed sweet potatoes
2 cups sugar
3 eggs, lightly beaten
1 can (5 ounces) evaporated milk
1/4 cup butter, melted
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Oil for deep-fat frying
Confectioners' sugar, optional

In a large bowl, combine flour and sugar; cut in shortening until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Combine eggs and milk; add to crumb mixture, tossing with a fork until a ball forms. Cover and chill several hours.

In a large bowl, combine seven filling ingredients; stir until smooth. Divide dough into 25 portions. On a floured surface, roll each portion into a 5-in. circle. Spoon 2 tablespoons of filling on half of each circle. Moisten edges with water; fold dough over filling; press edges with a fork to seal. Prick tops with a fork 4-5 times.

In an electric skillet, heat 1/2 in. of oil to 375°. Fry pies, a few at a time, for 1 minute on each side or until golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Dust with confectioners' sugar if desired. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 25 pies.

cheddar-mushroom stuffed potatoes

Jenean Schuetz, Longmont, Colorado

To come up with this recipe, I just put together three of my family's favorite ingredients—potatoes, mushrooms and bacon. I prepare it as a quick-and-easy party dish. It's also a natural contribution to a potluck. I also serve it as an entree at times with a side vegetable.

6 large russet potatoes
2/3 cup heavy whipping cream
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese, *divided*
1/4 cup chopped fresh mushrooms
1/2 to 1 teaspoon garlic salt
1/2 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
4 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled, *divided*

Bake potatoes at 375° for 1 hour or until tender. When cool enough to handle, cut a thin slice off the top of each potato and discard. Scoop out pulp, leaving a 1/4-in. shell; set shells aside. Place pulp in a mixing bowl; add cream and mash. Stir in 3/4 cup cheese, mushrooms, garlic salt, basil and oregano. Set aside 2 tablespoons bacon; stir the remaining bacon into potato mixture.

Spoon into potato shells. Top with remaining cheese and bacon. Microwave, uncovered, on high for 5-8 minutes or bake, uncovered, at 375° for 25-30 minutes or until potatoes are heated through. **Yield:** 6 servings.

Editor's Note: This recipe was tested with an 850-watt microwave.

mashed potato cinnamon rolls

Christine Duncan, Ellensburg, Washington

Who would have guessed these luscious cinnamon rolls are made with mashed potatoes? They are mmm good!

1/2 pound russet potatoes, peeled and quartered
2 packages (1/4 ounce *each*) active dry yeast
2 tablespoons plus 3/4 cup sugar, *divided*
2 cups warm water (110° to 115°)
3/4 cup butter, melted
2 eggs, beaten
3/4 cup sugar
2/3 cup nonfat dry milk powder
1 tablespoon salt
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
8 cups all-purpose flour

FILLING:

1/2 cup butter, melted
3/4 cup packed brown sugar
3 tablespoons ground cinnamon

ICING:

2 cups confectioners' sugar
1/4 cup milk
2 tablespoons butter, melted
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Place potatoes in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and cook for 15-20 minutes or until tender. Drain, reserving 1/2 cup cooking liquid; set aside. Mash potatoes; set aside 1 cup. (Save remaining potatoes for another use.)

Heat reserved potato liquid to 110°-115°. In a large mixing bowl, dissolve yeast and 2 tablespoons sugar in potato liquid; let stand 5 minutes. Add warm water, mashed potatoes, butter, eggs, sugar, milk powder, salt, vanilla and 5 cups flour; beat until smooth. Stir in enough remaining flour to form a soft dough.

Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl; turn once to grease top. Cover and chill overnight.

Punch dough down. Turn onto a lightly floured surface, roll each portion into a 12-in. x 8-in. rectangle. Spread butter over dough to within 1/2 in. of edges. Combine brown sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over the dough.

Roll up jelly-roll style, starting with a long side; pinch seams to seal. Cut each into 12 slices; place cut side down in three greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pans. Cover and let rise until almost doubled, 45 minutes.

Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes. Combine icing ingredients; drizzle over rolls. **Yield:** 3 dozen.

bacon potato pancakes

Linda Hall, Hazel Green, Wisconsin

Potatoes are something I can eat any time of day and almost any way. I developed this recipe several years ago to go with pigs in a blanket. Our three children are grown, and John and I have five grandchildren.

5 to 6 medium uncooked red potatoes, peeled and shredded (about 3 cups)
5 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled
1/2 cup chopped onion
2 eggs, beaten
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
Salt and pepper to taste
Dash ground nutmeg
Vegetable oil for deep-fat frying

Rinse and thoroughly drain potatoes. In a bowl, combine the potatoes, bacon, onion, eggs, flour, salt, pepper and nutmeg.

In an electric skillet, heat 1/8 in. of oil to 375°. Drop batter by 2 heaping tablespoonfuls into hot oil. Flatten to form patties. Fry until golden brown; turn and cook the other side. Drain on paper towels. **Yield:** 2 dozen.

golden mashed potatoes

Cindy Stith, Wickliffe, Kentucky

When there's no gravy with the meat, this is great to serve in place of regular mashed potatoes. I make it often to take to picnics and church socials.

- **9 large potatoes (about 4 pounds), peeled and cubed**
- **1 pound carrots, cut into 1/2-inch chunks**
- **8 green onions, thinly sliced**
- **1/2 cup butter**
- **1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons salt**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **3/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese**

In a soup kettle or Dutch oven, cook the potatoes and carrots in boiling salted water until tender; drain. Place in a mixing bowl; mash and set aside.

In a skillet, saute onions in butter until tender. Add to potato mixture. Add sour cream, salt and pepper; mix until blended.

Transfer to a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 30-40 minutes or until heated through. **Yield:** 10-12 servings.

***** prize winning tips

- For the fluffiest mashed potatoes, use only russets and be careful not to overbeat. Cook just until tender; immediately drain and let stand uncovered for 1-2 minutes. While beating, slowly add warm milk. Do not add butter.

  Taste of Home Test Kitchen

- Want to get fried potatoes on the table fast? Pop the spuds in the microwave first for a few minutes before slicing them. This will cut your cooking time almost in half.

  Tina S., Council, Idaho

- To make the best scalloped potatoes, I always sprinkle canned chopped green chilies between the layers of potatoes, cheese and sauce. What a wonderful taste!

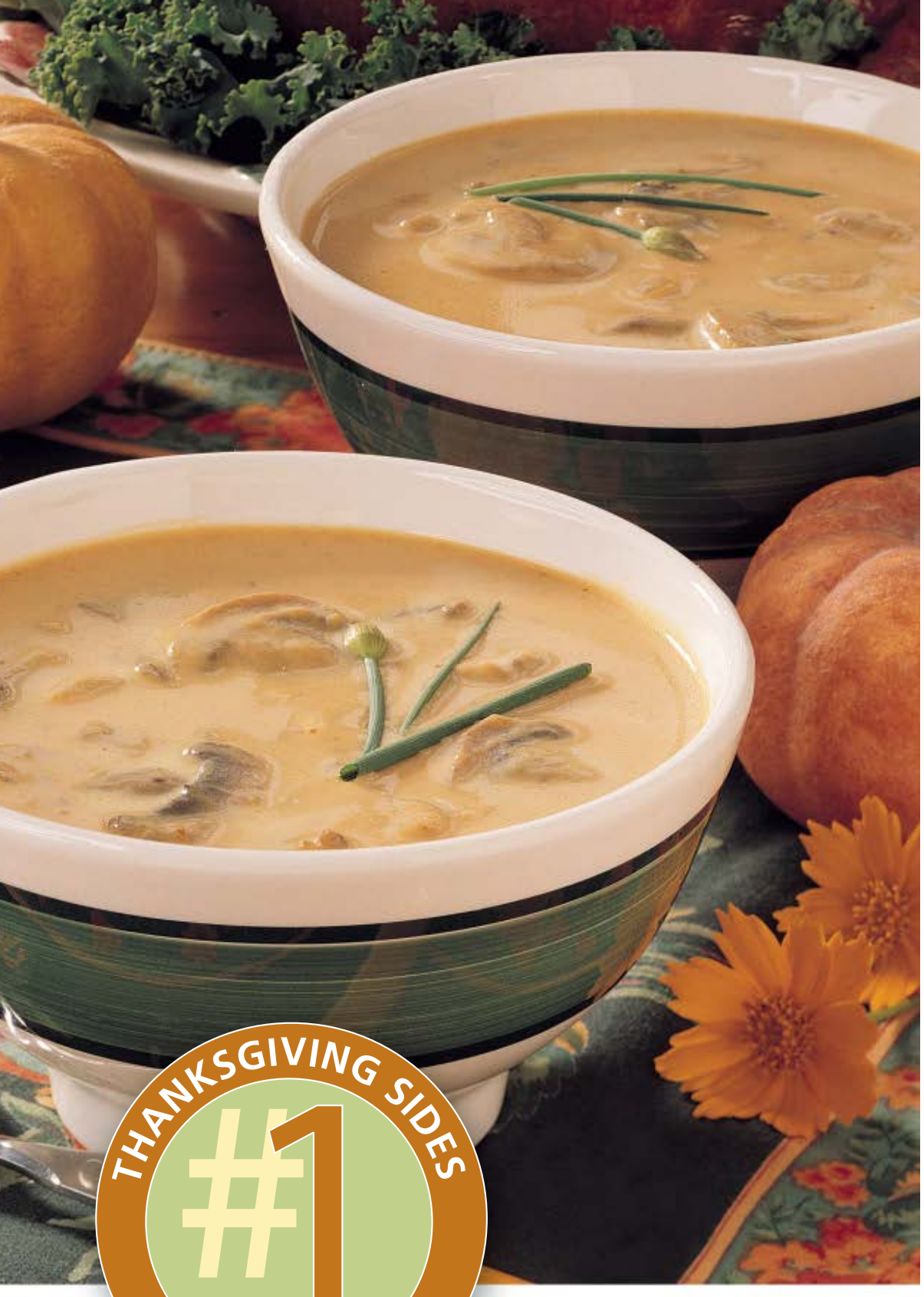
  Kathleen M., Lemoore, California

- For really memorable twice-baked potatoes, I mix in a little pickle juice from a jar of sweet, hot pickles.

  Charles T., Bowling Green, Ohio

- I add crumbled cooked bacon and stuffed olives to my favorite potato salad. It's oh, so good.

  Karla H., Lenox, Massachusetts



CURRIED PUMPKIN SOUP

curried pumpkin soup

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Thanksgiving is the time to reflect on our blessings. For many families, one reason to be thankful is the bountiful holiday dinner itself.

That's certainly the case for those related to subscriber Kimberly Knepper of Euless, Texas. She serves up a delectable feast for her husband, Emmanuel, their son, Nathaniel, her mom, brother and mother-in-law.

> "It's not tricky to prepare, but it really makes a holiday meal—or any meal—extra special."

Last year, the lucky group was treated to a first course of Curried Pumpkin Soup. The rich comforting blend won Kimberly plenty of praise from those seated at the table.

That flavorful fare also stirred up its share of compliments from our panel of judges when they sampled her entry—along with dozens of others—in our Thanksgiving Sides contest. Her soup was chosen as the Grand Prize winner.

"It's not tricky to prepare, but it really makes a holiday meal—or any meal—extra special," relates Kimberly, who enjoys being creative in the kitchen.

1/2 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced
1/2 cup chopped onion
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/2 to 1 teaspoon curry powder
3 cups vegetable broth
1 can (15 ounces) solid-pack pumpkin
1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk
1 tablespoon honey
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
Minced chives

In a large saucepan, saute the mushrooms and onion in butter until tender. Stir in the flour and curry powder until blended. Gradually add the broth. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened.

Add the pumpkin, milk, honey, salt, pepper and nutmeg; heat through. Garnish with chives if desired. **Yield:** 7 servings.

mushroom wild rice

Charlene Baert, Winnipeg, Manitoba

This colorful casserole is a standout from my mother's collection of family recipes. Excellent texture and taste guarantee it won't play second fiddle to either the turkey or the pumpkin pie!

- **4 cups water**
- **1 cup uncooked wild rice**
- **1 teaspoon butter**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons salt, *divided***
- **1/2 cup uncooked brown rice**
- **8 bacon strips, diced**
- **2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **1 medium green pepper, chopped**
- **1 medium sweet red pepper, chopped**
- **1 celery rib, thinly sliced**
- **1 can (14-1/2 ounces) beef broth**
- **2 tablespoons cornstarch**
- **1/4 cup cold water**
- **1/2 cup slivered almonds**

In a saucepan, bring water, wild rice, butter and 1/2 teaspoon salt to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 40 minutes. Stir in brown rice. Cover and simmer for 25-30 minutes longer or until rice is tender.

Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook bacon until crisp. Remove bacon to paper towels; drain, reserving 2 tablespoons drippings. In the drippings, saute mushrooms, onion, peppers and celery until tender. Stir in broth and remaining salt. Bring to a boil.

Combine the cornstarch and cold water until smooth; stir into the mushroom mixture. Cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened and bubbly; stir in almonds and bacon. Drain rice; add mushroom mixture.

Transfer to a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Cover and bake at 350° for 25 minutes. Uncover; bake 5-10 minutes longer or until heated through. **Yield:** 12 servings.

creamy herb dressing

Brigitte Hinz, Des Plaines, Illinois

This dressing for vegetables is so easy, I make it the night before Thanksgiving to save time. We like it over asparagus, but try serving it with green beans or broccoli for a delicious and eye-pleasing side dish.

- **1-1/2 cups mayonnaise**
- **2/3 cup whipped cream**
- **1/2 cup chopped green onions**
- **1/2 cup minced fresh parsley**
- **1 can (2 ounces) anchovy fillets, drained, optional**
- **2 tablespoons minced chives**
- **2 tablespoons lemon juice**
- **2 pounds fresh asparagus spears, trimmed**

In a blender, combine the first seven ingredients; cover and process until smooth. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

In a skillet, cook asparagus in a small amount of water for 3-4 minutes or until crisp-tender; drain well. Spoon dressing over asparagus. Store remaining dressing in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 6 servings (2-1/2 cups dressing).

festive tossed salad

Jauneen Hosking, Greenfield, Wisconsin

With its unique medley of fruits and festive look, this salad is a holiday tradition at our house. Our three grown daughters have come to expect it. One forkful reminds us of all the things we can be thankful for.

- **1/2 cup sugar**
- **1/3 cup red wine vinegar**
- **2 tablespoons lemon juice**
- **2 tablespoons finely chopped onion**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **2/3 cup vegetable oil**
- **2 to 3 teaspoons poppy seeds**
- **10 cups torn romaine**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese**
- **1 medium apple, cored and cubed**
- **1 medium pear, cored and cubed**
- **1/4 cup dried cranberries**
- **1/2 to 1 cup chopped cashews**

In a blender or food processor, combine the sugar, vinegar, lemon juice, onion and salt. Cover and process until blended. With blender running, gradually add oil. Add poppy seeds and blend.

In a salad bowl, combine the romaine, Swiss cheese, apple, pear and cranberries. Drizzle with desired amount of dressing. Add cashews; toss to coat. Serve immediately. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

sweet potato crescents

Rebecca Bailey, Fairbury, Nebraska

My family agrees that our Thanksgiving feast would not be complete without these light-as-air crescent rolls. They're a nice accompaniment to any menu. Baking them always puts me in the holiday spirit.

- **2 packages (1/4 ounce *each*) active dry yeast**
- **1 cup warm water (110° to 115°)**
- **1 can (15-3/4 ounces) cut sweet potatoes, drained and mashed**
- **1/2 cup sugar**
- **1/2 cup shortening**
- **1 egg**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons salt**
- **5 to 5-1/2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **1/4 cup butter, melted**

In a large mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in water; let stand for 5 minutes. Beat in the sweet potatoes, sugar, shortening, egg, salt and 3 cups flour. Add enough remaining flour to form a stiff dough.

Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.

Punch dough down; divide into thirds. Roll each portion into a 12-in. circle; cut each into 12 wedges. Brush with butter. Roll up from the wide end and place, pointed end down, 2 in. apart on greased baking sheets. Cover and let rise until doubled, about 40 minutes.

Bake at 375° for 13-15 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from pans to wire racks. **Yield:** 3 dozen.

cranberry compote

Carole Dishman, Hampton, Virginia

This best-of-the-season dish adds to the beauty and bounty of any seasonal spread. Whether served warm or cold, it's a delectable fruity treat for the taste buds as well as for the eyes when it's presented in a clear glass bowl.

- **2 medium tart apples, peeled and sliced**
- **1 package (12 ounces) fresh *or* frozen cranberries**
- **1-1/4 cups sugar**
- **1 cup golden raisins**
- **1/4 cup orange juice**
- **1 teaspoon grated orange peel**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon ground allspice**
- **1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- **1 can (15-1/4 ounces) sliced peaches, drained**
- **1 can (15 ounces) apricot halves, drained**
- **1 cup chopped pecans**

In a saucepan, combine the first nine ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes or until cranberries pop and apples are tender. Add the peaches and apricots; heat through. Stir in pecans; serve warm or chilled. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 6 cups.

carrots in almond sauce

Carol Anderson, Salt Lake City, Utah

Here's an easy way to add elegance and flavor to a plain vegetable. The combination of tender carrots and crunchy nuts is different and delightful. Plus, the touch of dill lends just the right "zip." This side dish is a tradition at my house.

- **1 pound carrots, julienned**
- **1/2 cup thinly sliced green onions**
- **1/4 cup butter**
- **1 teaspoon cornstarch**
- **1/2 cup water**
- **1/2 teaspoon chicken bouillon granules**
- **1/2 teaspoon dill weed**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **1/4 cup sliced almonds, toasted**

In a saucepan, cook carrots in a small amount of water until crisp-tender; drain. Transfer to a serving bowl and keep warm.

In the same pan, saute onions in butter until tender. Combine cornstarch and water until smooth; stir into onions. Add bouillon, dill and pepper. Bring to a boil over medium heat; cook and stir for 1 minute or until thickened and bubbly. Stir in almonds. Pour over carrots; stir to coat. **Yield:** 6 servings.

two-tone baked potatoes

Sherree Stahn, Central City, Nebraska

This recipe is doubly wonderful as far as spud lovers are concerned. I have a reputation at home and at work for trying out new recipes. Everyone is glad I took a chance on this one.

- **6 medium russet potatoes**
- **6 medium sweet potatoes**
- **2/3 cup sour cream, *divided***
- **1/3 cup milk**
- **3/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese**
- **4 tablespoons minced chives, *divided***
- **1-1/2 teaspoons salt, *divided***

Pierce russet and sweet potatoes with a fork. Bake at 400° for 60-70 minutes or until tender. Set sweet potatoes aside.

Cut a third off the top of each russet potato; scoop out pulp, leaving skins intact. Place pulp in a bowl; mash with 1/3 cup sour cream, milk, cheese, 2 tablespoons chives and 3/4 teaspoon salt. Set aside.

Cut off the tip of each sweet potato; scoop out pulp, leaving skins intact. Mash pulp with remaining sour cream, chives and salt. Stuff mixture into half of each potato skin; spoon russet potato filling into other half. Place on a baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 15-20 minutes or until heated through. **Yield:** 12 servings.

special squash casserole

Kathleen Cox, Wyoming, Michigan

Squash has traditionally been a food our family passes up, but this luscious casserole is an exception to the rule. You won't find it among our Thanksgiving leftovers—it's one of the first dishes to return empty.

- **3 pounds butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cubed**
- **3/4 cup milk**
- **6 tablespoons butter, melted**
- **3 eggs, beaten**
- **1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **3/4 cup sugar**
- **3 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- **1/8 teaspoon ground cloves**
- **1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg**

TOPPING:

- **1/2 cup crushed vanilla wafers (about 15 wafers)**
- **1/4 cup packed brown sugar**
- **2 tablespoons butter, melted**

Place squash in a large saucepan or Dutch oven; cover with water. Bring to a boil; cover and cook for 25-30 minutes or until tender. Drain and place in a mixing bowl; beat just until smooth.

Add milk, butter, eggs and vanilla; mix well. Combine the dry ingredients; add to squash mixture and mix well. Transfer to a greased 2-qt. baking dish. Cover and bake at 350° for 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine topping ingredients until crumbly; sprinkle over squash. Bake, uncovered, for 12-15 minutes or until heated through. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

pumpkin pecan loaves

Brenda Jackson, Garden City, Kansas

Among all my pumpkin bread recipes, this caramel-glazed creation is the pick of the crop. Often, I'll wrap up a lovely loaf as a homemade gift for teachers and Sunday school leaders.

3-1/3 cups all-purpose flour
3 cups sugar
2 teaspoons baking soda
1-1/2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 can (15 ounces) solid-pack pumpkin
1 cup vegetable oil
4 eggs, lightly beaten
2/3 cup water
1/2 cup chopped pecans

CARAMEL GLAZE:

1/4 cup butter
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
1/4 cup heavy whipping cream
2/3 cup confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

In a bowl, combine the first six ingredients. Combine the pumpkin, oil, eggs and water; mix well. Stir into dry ingredients just until combined; fold in the pecans.

Spoon into two greased 9-in. x 5-in. x 3-in. loaf pans. Bake at 350° for 60-65 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks.

For glaze, combine the butter, sugars and cream in a saucepan. Cook until sugar is dissolved. Cool for 20 minutes. Stir in the confectioners' sugar and vanilla until smooth. Drizzle over cooled loaves. **Yield:** 2 loaves.

parmesan onion bake

Linda Vail, Ballwin, Missouri

Dinner guests in my home know to expect the unexpected! I love experimenting with unusual combinations of ingredients. This cheesy onion bake adds flair to a meal.

6 medium onions, sliced
1 cup diced celery
8 tablespoons butter, *divided*
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1-1/2 cups milk
1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 cup chopped pecans

In a large skillet, saute onions and celery in 3 tablespoons butter until tender; drain and set aside.

In a saucepan, melt the remaining butter; stir in flour, salt and pepper until smooth. Gradually stir in milk. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Pour over vegetables; toss to coat.

Pour into an ungreased 2-qt. baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese and pecans. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until heated through. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

wild rice stuffing

Connie Olson, Green River, Wyoming

Since trying this stuffing recipe from my sister, I haven't made any other kind. We enjoy the combination of rice and seasoned bread stuffing. It's so moist and tasty.

Turkey giblets
- **4 cups water**
- **1 package (6 ounces) long grain and wild rice mix**
- **1 celery rib, chopped**
- **1 small onion, chopped**
- **1/2 cup butter**
- **2-1/2 cups crushed seasoned stuffing**
- **1-1/2 cups chicken broth**

Remove liver from giblets if desired. Place giblets and water in a saucepan. Cover and simmer for 2 hours or until tender.

Meanwhile, prepare the rice according to package directions. In a small skillet, saute celery and onion in butter; add to the rice. Drain and dice giblets. Stir stuffing, broth and giblets into rice.

Spoon into an ungreased 1-1/2-qt. baking dish. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until heated through. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

***** prize winning tips

- When making the stuffing for the holiday bird, I stir in a can of cream of mushroom soup as the liquid. I always get compliments on that side dish.

  Chris T., Portland, Oregon

- I suggest topping green bean casserole with crumbled ranch-flavored crackers in place of french-fried onions.

  Janelle S., Omaha, Nebraska

- The microwave oven does a beautiful and quick job of cooking winter squash. For acorn squash (about 1 pound), cut squash in half and remove seeds; place cut side down in a microwave-safe dish. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of water; cover and microwave on high for 6-9 minutes or until tender, turning once. Let stand for 5 minutes. Larger squash, such as butternut, buttercup and hubbard (about 1-1/2 pounds), will take a bit longer in the microwave. Follow the previous directions, but cook 9-12 minutes on high or until squash is tender.

  Taste of Home Test Kitchen

- Baked sweet potatoes are so delicious and refreshing topped with butter and a few tablespoons of crushed pineapple.

  Robert H., Boonville, Missouri

SUMMER SPINACH SALAD

summer spinach salad

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Recipe Contest winner Callie Berger has always felt at home in the kitchen. "I'm the youngest of 13 children and have enjoyed cooking as long as I can remember," she reports from her ranch house in the small town of Diamond Springs, California.

"I loved helping my mother in the kitchen. On a moment's notice, she could prepare a fabulous meal for a house full of people without making a trip to the store," she recalls.

> "Dinner guests always rave over this salad. There are never any leftovers."

That early exposure to pleasing crowds serves Callie well these days when planning family gatherings with husband Larry, children Kurt and LaRelle, and grandchildren. But she finds it especially helpful in running her catering business for functions at the local Elks Lodge.

With a full schedule, Callie knows the value of saving time in the kitchen. "I'm a very organized cook and like to plan ahead," she explains.

"I tend to try out a lot of new recipes on Larry before fixing them for a group—he's my best critic," she adds.

Such dependable in-house advice has allowed Callie to concoct plenty of fabulous family fare over the years, including her Summer Spinach Salad.

Spinach, green onions, fresh strawberries and bananas are tossed with a zippy poppy seed dressing that's fast to fix in a blender.

"Dinner guests always rave over this salad," Callie remarks. "There are never any leftovers."

For a savory variation, Callie suggests replacing the fruit with bacon bits, hard-cooked eggs, fresh mushrooms and sliced red onion.

"It's scrumptious either way," she smiles. "Be ready to share the recipe!"

1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/4 cup chopped onion
2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons sugar
1-1/2 teaspoons ground mustard
1/2 teaspoon salt
1-1/2 teaspoons poppy seeds
8 cups torn fresh spinach
3 green onions, sliced
2 pints fresh strawberries, sliced
3 large ripe bananas, cut into 1/2-inch slices
1/2 cup slivered almonds, toasted

Place the first six ingredients in a blender or food processor; cover and process until the sugar is dissolved. Add the poppy seeds; process just until blended.

In a salad bowl, combine the remaining ingredients. Drizzle with dressing; toss to coat. Serve immediately. **Yield:** 14 servings.

shrimp taco salad

Ellen Morrell, Hazleton, Pennsylvania

I created this main-dish salad to satisfy our family's love of shrimp. It has lots of contrasting textures, including firm taco-seasoned shrimp, crispy tortilla strips and hearty black beans. A convenient bag of salad greens cuts down on prep time, so I can have this meal ready in half an hour.

- **1 pound uncooked large shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- **1 envelope taco seasoning, *divided***
- **1/2 cup plus 3 tablespoons olive oil, *divided***
- **1 small onion, finely chopped**
- **3 tablespoons cider vinegar**
- **2 tablespoons diced green *or* sweet red pepper**
- **6 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1/2 teaspoon ground coriander**
- **1/4 teaspoon sugar**
- **3 corn tortillas (6 inches), cut into 1/4-inch strips**
- **1 package (8 ounces) ready-to-serve salad greens**
- **1 medium tomato, chopped**
- **1 can (8 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained**
- **2 cups (8 ounces) finely shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese**

Remove shrimp tails if desired. Place shrimp in a bowl; sprinkle with half of the taco seasoning. Set aside. In another bowl, combine 1/2 cup oil, onion, vinegar, green pepper, garlic, coriander and sugar; set aside.

In a skillet, stir-fry tortilla strips in remaining oil; drain on paper towels. Sprinkle with remaining taco seasoning. In the same skillet, saute shrimp for 8-10 minutes or until pink.

In a large bowl, combine the greens, tomato, beans, shrimp and tortilla strips. Drizzle with dressing. Sprinkle with cheese; toss. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

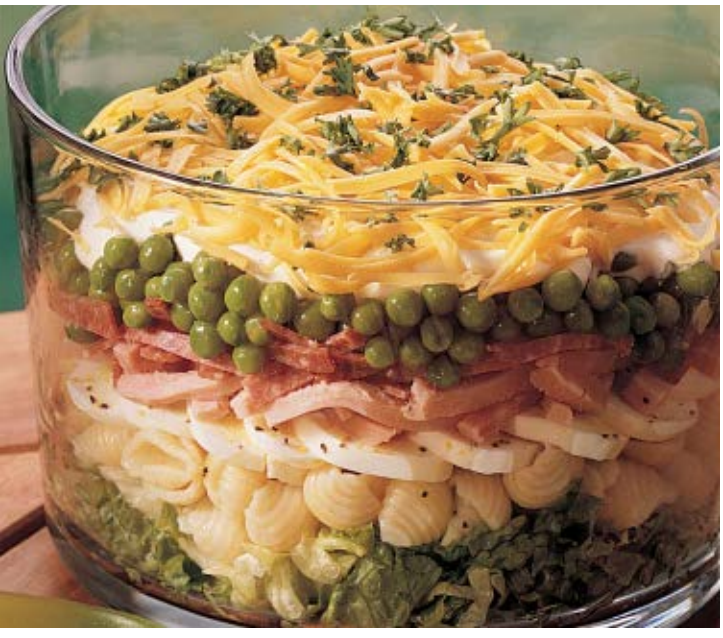
chicken chopped salad

Diane Halferty, Corpus Christi, Texas

Lime dressing gives lively flavor to this crunchy salad tossed with peaches, peppers and peanuts. The unusual combination is a great way to use up leftover chicken or turkey and packs well for lunches or picnics. It's also terrific with the addition of grapefruit sections or pineapple tidbits.

- **2 cups chopped *or* torn mixed salad greens**
- **2 cups chopped cooked chicken**
- **1 cup chopped celery**
- **1 can (15-1/4 ounces) peaches, drained and chopped**
- **1 cup chopped sweet red *or* yellow pepper**
- **1/3 cup limeade concentrate**
- **1/4 cup vegetable oil**
- **2 tablespoons white vinegar**
- **2 to 3 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons minced fresh gingerroot**
- **1/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1/2 cup dry roasted peanuts**

In a large salad bowl, combine the first five ingredients. In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the limeade concentrate, oil, vinegar, cilantro, ginger and salt; shake well. Pour over salad and toss to coat. Sprinkle with peanuts. Serve immediately. **Yield:** 6 servings.



hearty eight-layer salad

Noreen Meyer, Madison, Wisconsin

I'm a great-grandmother and have been making this satisfying salad for years. It's my most requested recipe for family gatherings. It's simple to make ahead of time and looks lovely with all of its tasty layers. Dijon mustard gives a nice kick to the dressing.

- **1-1/2 cups uncooked small pasta shells**
- **1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- **3 cups shredded lettuce**
- **3 hard-cooked eggs, sliced**
- **1/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- **1 cup julienned fully cooked ham**
- **1 cup julienned hard salami**
- **1 package (10 ounces) frozen peas, thawed**
- **1 cup mayonnaise**
- **1/4 cup sour cream**
- **1/4 cup chopped green onions**
- **2 teaspoons Dijon mustard**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Colby *or* Monterey Jack cheese**
- **2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley**

Cook pasta according to package directions; drain and rinse with cold water. Drizzle with oil; toss to coat.

Place the lettuce in a 2-1/2-qt. glass serving bowl; top with pasta and eggs. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Layer with ham, salami and peas. Combine mayonnaise, sour cream, green onions and mustard. Spread over the top. Cover and refrigerate for several hours or overnight.

Just before serving, sprinkle with cheese and parsley. **Yield:** 10 servings.

crunchy corn medley

Meredith Cecil, Plattsburg, Missouri

This recipe came from my husband's aunt, who's an excellent cook, friend and mentor. It's crunchy, colorful and combined with a light, tasty dressing. I've shared it with friends and relatives, who think it's a great addition to their recipe collection.

- **2 cups frozen peas, thawed**
- **1 can (15-1/4 ounces) whole kernel corn, drained**
- **1 can (15-1/4 ounces) white *or* shoepeg corn, drained**
- **1 can (8 ounces) water chestnuts, drained and chopped**
- **1 jar (4 ounces) diced pimientos, drained**
- **8 green onions, thinly sliced**
- **2 celery ribs, chopped**
- **1 medium green pepper, chopped**
- **1/2 cup white vinegar**
- **1/2 cup sugar**
- **1/4 cup vegetable oil**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**

In a large bowl, combine the first eight ingredients. In a small bowl, combine vinegar, sugar, oil, salt and pepper; whisk until sugar is dissolved. Pour over corn mixture; toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for at least 3 hours. Stir just before serving; serve with a slotted spoon. **Yield:** 10 servings.

grandma's potato salad

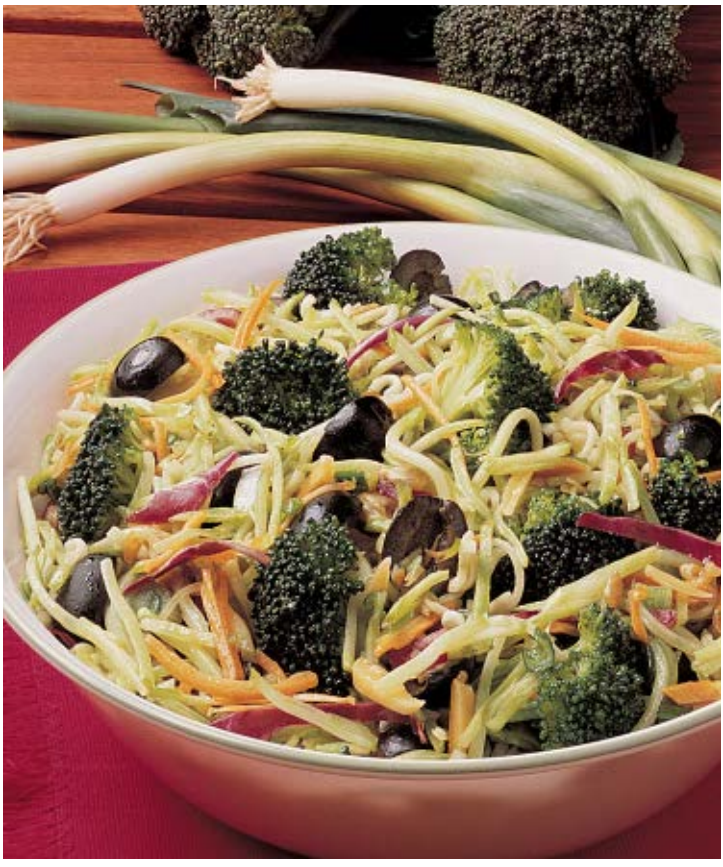
Susan Plocher, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

I've never found a better potato salad recipe than this one handed down from my grandma. Like many grandmothers, mine cooked with a dash of this and a dash of that, so I estimated the measurements on this recipe. Feel free to change them according to taste, just like Grandma did!

- **6 to 7 medium red potatoes (about 2 pounds)**
- **3/4 cup mayonnaise**
- **1/2 cup sour cream**
- **1/2 cup plain yogurt**
- **1/3 cup thinly sliced green onions**
- **2 to 3 dill pickle spears, chopped**
- **4-1/2 teaspoons Dijon mustard**
- **1 teaspoon prepared horseradish**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1/2 teaspoon celery seed**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **Dash onion salt**
- **Dash garlic powder**
- **4 hard-cooked eggs, coarsely chopped**

Place potatoes in a saucepan and cover with water; bring to a boil. Cook for 20-30 minutes or until tender; drain and cool slightly. Slice potatoes into a large bowl.

In a small bowl, combine the mayonnaise, sour cream, yogurt, onions, pickles, mustard, horseradish, garlic and seasonings. Pour over potatoes and toss to coat. Gently stir in eggs. Cover and refrigerate for 2-3 hours. **Yield:** 8 servings.



nutty broccoli slaw

Dora Mae Clapsaddle, Kensington, Ohio

My daughter gave me the recipe for this delightful salad. The sweet dressing wonderfully enhances a crisp blend of broccoli slaw mix, carrots, onions, almonds and sunflower kernels. Crushed ramen noodles provide even more crunch. It's a smash hit wherever I take it.

- **1 package (3 ounces) chicken ramen noodles**
- **1 package (16 ounces) broccoli coleslaw mix**
- **2 cups sliced green onions (about 2 bunches)**
- **1-1/2 cups broccoli florets**
- **1 can (6 ounces) ripe olives, drained and halved**
- **1 cup sunflower kernels, toasted**
- **1/2 cup slivered almonds, toasted**
- **1/2 cup sugar**
- **1/2 cup cider vinegar**
- **1/2 cup olive oil**

Set aside the noodle seasoning packet; crush the noodles and place in a large bowl. Add the slaw mix, onions, broccoli, olives, sunflower kernels and almonds.

In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the sugar, vinegar, oil and contents of seasoning packet; shake well. Drizzle over salad and toss to coat. Serve immediately. **Yield:** 16 servings.

tortellini caesar salad

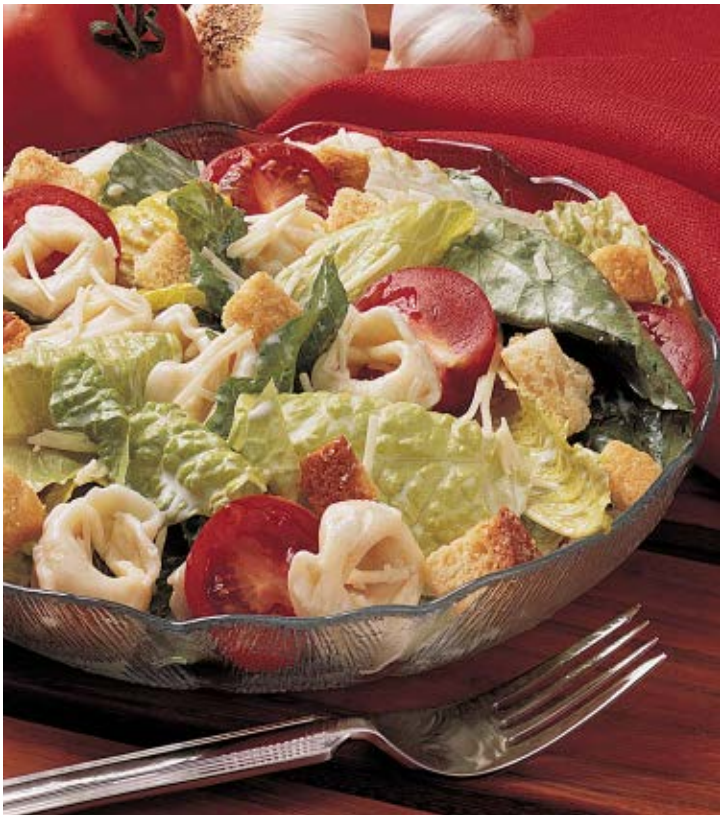
Tammy Steenbock, Sembach Air Base, Germany

This salad was served at a dear friend's baby shower by a health-conscious friend, who suggested the dressing be prepared with low-fat or fat-free ingredients. Either way, the creamy dressing has plenty of garlic and coats the pasta, romaine and croutons nicely.

- **1 package (19 ounces) frozen cheese tortellini**
- **1/2 cup mayonnaise**
- **1/4 cup milk**
- **1/4 cup plus 1/3 cup shredded Parmesan cheese, *divided***
- **2 tablespoons lemon juice**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **8 cups torn romaine**
- **1 cup seasoned salad croutons**
- **Halved cherry tomatoes, optional**

Cook tortellini according to package directions. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine the mayonnaise, milk, 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, lemon juice and garlic; mix well.

Drain tortellini and rinse in cold water; place in a large bowl. Add the romaine and remaining Parmesan. Just before serving, drizzle with dressing and toss to coat. Top with croutons and tomatoes if desired. **Yield:** 10 servings.



fruit-filled raspberry ring

Janice Steinmetz, Somers, Connecticut

People love this fruity gelatin ring that gets extra flavor from an ambrosia-like mixture in the center. I've been bringing it to potlucks, buffets and showers for more than 20 years. While it looks like you fussed, it's easy to make the night before a special occasion. It's an especially nice refreshing part of a rich meal.

- **2 packages (6 ounces *each*) raspberry gelatin**
- **4 cups boiling water**
- **1 quart raspberry sherbet**
- **1 can (14 ounces) pineapple tidbits, drained**
- **1 can (11 ounces) mandarin oranges, drained**
- **1 cup flaked coconut**
- **1 cup miniature marshmallows**
- **1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream**

In a bowl, dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Stir in sherbet until melted. Pour into an 8-cup ring mold coated with nonstick cooking spray. Chill overnight or until firm.

In a bowl, combine the pineapple, oranges, coconut, marshmallows and sour cream. Cover and chill. To serve, unmold gelatin onto a serving plate. Spoon fruit mixture into center of ring. **Yield:** 12-16 servings.

blt chicken salad

Cindy Moore, Mooresville, North Carolina

I like this salad because I can prepare all the ingredients ahead of time and just throw it together at the last minute. Barbecue sauce in the dressing gives a different taste to this green salad that features the fun fixings for a BLT chicken sandwich. Even picky eaters love it.

- **1/2 cup mayonnaise**
- **3 to 4 tablespoons barbecue sauce**
- **2 tablespoons finely chopped onion**
- **1 tablespoon lemon juice**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**
- **8 cups torn salad greens**
- **2 large tomatoes, chopped**
- **1-1/2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts, cooked and cubed**
- **10 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled**
- **2 hard-cooked eggs, sliced**

In a small bowl, combine the first five ingredients; mix well. Cover and refrigerate until serving. Place salad greens on a large serving platter. Sprinkle with tomatoes, chicken and bacon; garnish with eggs. Drizzle with dressing. **Yield:** 8 servings.

fruity green salad

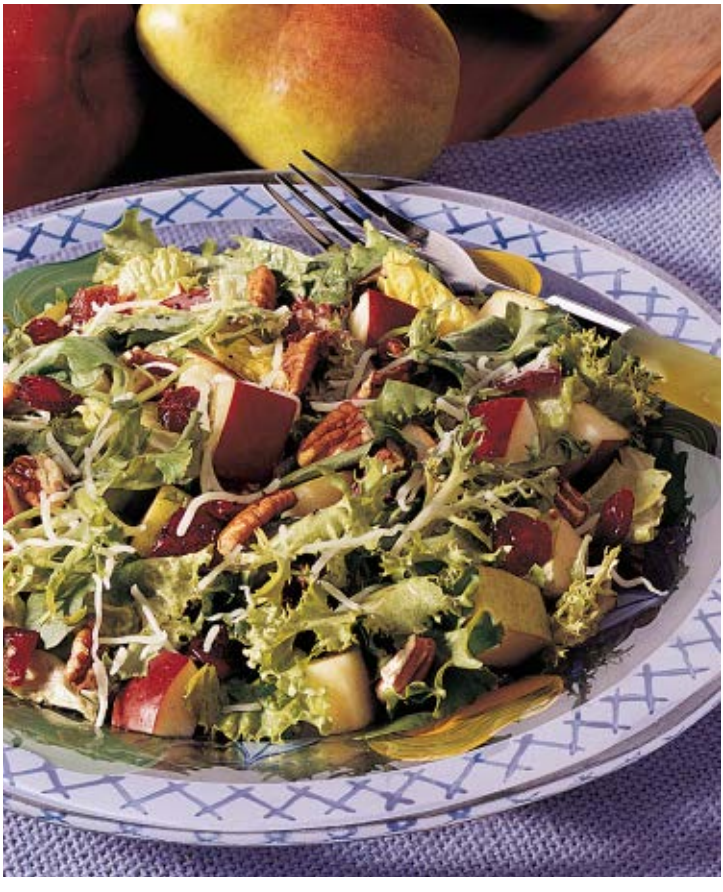
Helen Petisi, Palm Coast, Florida

My family enjoys this fast and refreshing salad. It's jazzed up with a beautiful blend of red apple, pear, dried cranberries, toasted pecans and Swiss cheese. No matter when I serve it, the light dressing and fruity flavor remind me of springtime.

- **2/3 cup vegetable oil**
- **1/3 cup lemon juice**
- **1/4 cup sugar**
- **2 teaspoons chopped green onions**
- **3/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1 teaspoon poppy seeds**
- **8 cups torn mixed salad greens**
- **1 medium red apple, chopped**
- **1 medium pear, chopped**
- **1 cup chopped pecans, toasted**
- **1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese**
- **1/4 cup dried cranberries**

In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the first six ingredients; shake well. In a large bowl, combine the remaining ingredients.

Drizzle with dressing and toss to coat. Serve immediately. **Yield:** 16 servings.



almond-raspberry tossed salad

Jennifer Long, St. Peters, Missouri

My husband and I helped to make this summery salad for a weekend retreat. The recipe served 60 to 80 people, so I modified it to use at home. The sweet-tart dressing is wonderful with toasted almonds and fresh raspberries.

- **8 cups torn romaine**
- **1 cup fresh raspberries**
- **1/2 cup sliced almonds, toasted**
- **1/2 cup seedless raspberry jam**
- **1/4 cup white wine vinegar**
- **1/4 cup honey**
- **2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons vegetable oil**

In a salad bowl, combine the romaine, raspberries and almonds. In a blender, combine the remaining ingredients; cover and process until smooth. Serve with salad. **Yield:** 10 servings.

***** prize winning tips

* When a recipe calls for shredded Parmesan cheese, you can use the convenient cheese found in bags in the grocery store dairy section. Shredded Parmesan is often used in salads or soups where the shreds make a pretty garnish. If grated Parmesan is called for, use the finely grated cheese sold in containers with shaker/pourer tops. You can substitute either shredded or grated Parmesan in equal proportions in your favorite recipes.

  Taste of Home Test Kitchen

* To store lettuce to keep it crisp and fresh, wash it in cold water and drain very well. Use a "salad spinner" or pat it dry with paper towels. Store in a resealable plastic bag or airtight container with a dry paper towel in the bottom to absorb any leftover moisture. (Be certain to replace the towel if it gets wet.) For extra-crispy salads, you may want to use a lettuce variety like romaine that's naturally more crisp.

  Taste of Home Test Kitchen

* Instead of regular croutons to top salads, I use dry stuffing mix. I recommend the instant mix for chicken that you can buy in a canister. The seasonings are already mixed in, and the croutons are smaller so you can enjoy their crunch in most every bite.

  Terry B., Haines City, Florida

* A friend brought us a meal that included a green salad with raisins in it. We liked it so much that now I always sprinkle raisins on my tossed salads.

  Carol K., Sioux Center, Iowa

CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE DOUGH CHEESECAKE

chocolate chip cookie dough cheesecake

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

A love of good food and entertaining go hand in hand for folks like Julie Craig of Jackson, Wisconsin. So Julie treats guests to a delectable dessert that combines two favorite flavors.

Her Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough Cheesecake is a winner with everyone who tastes it—including our panel of judges, who awarded Julie the Grand Prize in our Say "Cheesecake" contest.

"The bits of chocolate chip cookie dough throughout the cool, creamy cheesecake make it doubly scrumptious," says Julie, a stay-at-home mom who's had a longtime interest in food.

> "The bits of chocolate chip cookie dough throughout… make it doubly scrumptious."

"Over the years, I've latched onto as many kitchen gadgets as possible, plus lots of terrific recipes," she says. Husband Jeff and sons, Austin and Tyler, are her lucky taste-testers.

1-3/4 cups crushed chocolate chips cookies *or* chocolate wafer crumbs
1/4 cup sugar
1/3 cup butter, melted

FILLING:

3 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
3 eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

COOKIE DOUGH:

1/4 cup butter, softened
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon water
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1-1/2 cups miniature semisweet chocolate chips, *divided*

In a small bowl, combine cookie crumbs and sugar; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom and 1 in. up the sides of a greased 9-in. pan. Place pan on a baking sheet; set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add eggs; beat on low just until combined. Add sour cream and vanilla; beat just until blended. Pour over crust; set aside.

In another mixing bowl, cream butter and sugars on medium speed until light and fluffy. Add water and vanilla. Gradually add flour. Stir in 1 cup chocolate chips. Drop dough by teaspoonfuls over filling, gently pushing dough below surface (dough should be completely covered by filling). Place pan on a baking sheet.

Bake at 350° for 45-55 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight.

Remove sides of pan. Sprinkle with remaining chips. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 12-14 servings.

apple danish cheesecake

Ann Wandler, Camrose, Alberta

I have collected many recipes. The one for this delightful cheesecake has traveled with me for many years. It's an excellent item for brunch.

1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup ground almonds
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup cold butter
1/4 teaspoon almond extract

FILLING:

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 egg

TOPPING:

1/3 cup packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
4 cups thinly sliced peeled tart apples
1/3 cup slivered almonds

In a small bowl, combine flour, almonds and sugar; cut in butter until crumbly. Add extract. Shape dough into a ball; place between two sheets of waxed paper. Roll out into a 10-in. circle. Transfer to a greased 9-in. springform pan; gently press dough against the bottom and up the sides of pan. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, sugar and cream of tartar until smooth. Add egg; beat on low just until combined. Pour over crust.

In a bowl, combine brown sugar, flour and cinnamon. Add apples and stir until coated. Spoon over the filling. Sprinkle with almonds.

Bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight. Remove sides of pan. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

tangy lemon cheesecake

Pam Persons, Towanda, Kansas

This dessert gets added spark from a gingersnap crust and a luscious lemon sauce.

2-1/2 cups crushed gingersnap cookies (about 40 cookies)
1/3 cup butter, melted

FILLING:

3 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
3 eggs
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon vanilla extract

SAUCE:

1/2 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
3/4 cup water
2 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup lemon juice
1 tablespoon grated lemon peel

In a small bowl, combine cookie crumbs and butter; mix well. Press onto the bottom and 2 in. up the sides of a greased 9-in. springform pan; set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add eggs, beat on low just until combined. Add lemon juice and vanilla; beat just until blended.

Pour into crust. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around the edge of pan to loosen; cool for 1 hour.

In a saucepan, combine sugar and cornstarch. Stir in water until smooth; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cook and stir over medium heat for 2 minutes or until thickened. Remove from the heat; stir in butter, lemon juice and peel. Refrigerate cheesecake and sauce overnight. Serve sauce over cheesecake. **Yield:** 12 servings.

frozen chocolate cheesecake tart

Heather Bennett, Dunbar, West Virginia

I first made this dessert for dinner guests, who were overwhelmed by its rich flavor and appearance. It's a cool, different dessert. My husband said it was the best he had ever eaten!

2-1/4 cups crushed chocolate cream-filled sandwich cookies (about 22 cookies)
1/3 cup butter, melted

FILLING:

2 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1/3 cup confectioners' sugar
3 cups vanilla *or* white chips, melted and cooled
1/3 cup heavy whipping cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup miniature semisweet chocolate chips

Chocolate curls, optional

In a bowl, combine cookie crumbs and butter. Press onto the bottom and sides of a greased 9-in. fluted tart pan with a removable bottom. Cover and freeze for at least 1 hour.

In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Beat in the vanilla chips, cream, and vanilla until well combined. Stir in chocolate chips; pour over crust. Cover and freeze for 8 hours or overnight.

Uncover and refrigerate 3-4 hours before serving; garnish with chocolate curls if desired. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 12 servings.

creamy crab cheesecake

Cathy Sarrels, Tucson, Arizona

A savory appetizer cheesecake such as this one, dotted with tender crabmeat, is sure to tempt taste buds.

1 cup crushed butter-flavored crackers
3 tablespoons butter, melted
2 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
3/4 cup sour cream, *divided*
3 eggs, lightly beaten
2 teaspoons grated onion
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon seafood seasoning
2 drops hot pepper sauce
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 cup crabmeat, drained, flaked and cartilage removed
Additional seafood seasoning, optional

In a small bowl, combine cracker crumbs and butter. Press onto the bottom of the greased 9-in. springform pan. Place pan on baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes. Place pan on a wire rack. Reduce heat to 325°.

In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and 1/4 cup sour cream until smooth. Add eggs; beat on low just until combined. Add onion, lemon juice, seafood seasoning, hot pepper sauce and pepper; beat just until blended. Fold in crab. Pour over crust. Return pan to baking sheet.

Bake for 35-40 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen. Cool 1 hour longer. Spread remaining sour cream over top. Refrigerate overnight.

Remove sides of pan. Let cheesecake stand at room temperature for 30 minutes before serving. Sprinkle with seafood seasoning if desired. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 20-24 appetizer servings.

s'more cheesecake

Robin Andrews, Cary, North Carolina

This luscious dessert is just as wonderfully tasty as the campfire snack that inspired it.

2-1/4 cups graham cracker crumbs
1/3 cup sugar
1/2 cup butter, melted

FILLING:

2 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3 eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup (6 ounces) miniature semisweet chocolate chips
1 cup miniature marshmallows

TOPPING:

1 cup miniature marshmallows
1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1 tablespoon shortening

In a small bowl, combine cracker crumbs and sugar; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom and 1-3/4 in. up the sides of a greased 10-in. springform pan; set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, milk and vanilla until smooth. Add eggs; beat on low just until combined. Stir in chocolate chips and marshmallows. Pour over crust. Place on a baking sheet.

Bake at 325° for 40-45 minutes or until center is almost set. Sprinkle with marshmallows. Bake 4-6 minutes longer or until marshmallows are puffed.

Meanwhile, melt chocolate chips and shortening in a heavy saucepan or microwave; stir until smooth. Drizzle over marshmallows.

Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight. Remove sides of pan. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 12 servings.

chocolate truffle cheesecake

Mary Jones, Cumberland, Maine

If you delight in the taste of chocolate, then this is the cheesecake for you. Every bite melts in your mouth.

1-1/2 cups chocolate wafer crumbs (about 27 wafers)
2 tablespoons sugar
1/4 cup butter, melted

FILLING:

1/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1/4 cup heavy whipping cream
3 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
1/3 cup baking cocoa
3 eggs, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

TOPPING:

1-1/2 cups (9 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips
1/4 cup heavy whipping cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Whipped cream and miniature chocolate kisses, optional

In a small bowl, combine wafer crumbs and sugar; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom and 1-1/2 in. up the sides of a greased 9-in. springform pan. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes. Cool on a wire rack. Reduce heat to 325°.

For filling, melt chocolate chips in a small heavy saucepan or microwave; stir until smooth. Remove from the heat; add cream and mix well. Set aside. In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add cocoa and beat well. Add eggs; beat on low just until combined. Stir in vanilla and reserved chocolate mixture just until blended. Pour over crust. Return pan to baking sheet.

Bake for 45-50 minutes or until center is almost set. For topping, melt chocolate chips in a heavy saucepan or microwave, stir until smooth. Stir in cream and vanilla; mix well. Spread over filling. Cool pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around

edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight.

Remove sides of pan. Just before serving, garnish with whipped cream and miniature chocolate kisses if desired. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 12 servings.

tiny cherry cheesecakes

Janice Hertlein, Esterhazy, Saskatchewan

I prepare these mini cheesecakes every Christmas and for many weddings. I've received countless compliments.

1 cup all-purpose flour
1/3 cup sugar
1/4 cup baking cocoa
1/2 cup cold butter
2 tablespoons cold water

FILLING:

2 packages (3 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup sugar
2 tablespoons milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 egg, lightly beaten
1 can (21 ounces) cherry *or* strawberry pie filling

In a small bowl, combine flour, sugar and cocoa; cut in butter until crumbly. Gradually add water, tossing with a fork until dough forms a ball. Shape into 24 balls. Place in greased miniature muffin cups; press dough onto the bottom and up the sides of each cup.

In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Beat in milk and vanilla. Add egg; beat on low just until combined. Spoon about 1 tablespoonful into each cup.

Bake at 325° for 15-18 minutes or until set. Cool on a wire rack for 30 minutes. Carefully remove from pans to cool completely. Top with pie filling. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 2 dozen.

peanut butter cheesecake

Lois Brooks, Newark, Delaware

The first time I served this cheesecake, my friends all went wild over it. They loved the flavor combination.

1-1/2 cups crushed pretzels
1/3 cup butter, melted

FILLING:

5 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1-1/2 cups sugar
3/4 cup creamy peanut butter
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3 eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup peanut butter chips
1 cup (6 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips

TOPPING:

1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
3 tablespoons creamy peanut butter
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup finely chopped unsalted peanuts

In a small bowl, combine pretzels and butter. Press onto the bottom and 1 in. up the sides of a greased 10-in. springform pan. Place pan on a baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 5 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add peanut butter and vanilla; mix well. Add eggs; beat on low just until combined. Stir in chips. Pour over the crust. Return pan to baking sheet.

Bake at 350° for 50-55 minutes or until center is almost set. Remove from the oven; let stand for 15 minutes (leave oven on).

For topping, in a small mixing bowl, combine the sour cream, peanut butter and sugar; spread over filling. Sprinkle with nuts. Bake 5 minutes longer.

Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around the edge of the pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight. Remove sides of pan. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 12-14 servings.

family-favorite cheesecake

Esther Wappner, Mansfield, Ohio

This fluffy, delicate cheesecake has been a family favorite for more than 20 years.

2-1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs (about 40 squares)
1/3 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 cup butter, melted

FILLING:

3 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1-1/2 cups sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 eggs, *separated*

TOPPING:

1/2 cup sour cream
2 tablespoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup heavy whipping cream, whipped

In a small bowl, combine the cracker crumbs, sugar and cinnamon; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom and 2 in. up the sides of a greased 9-in. springform pan. Bake at 350° for 5 minutes. Cool on a wire rack. Reduce heat to 325°.

In a large mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, sugar and vanilla until smooth. Add egg yolks; beat on low just until combined. In a small mixing bowl, beat egg whites until soft peaks form; fold into cream cheese mixture. Pour over crust.

Bake for 1 hour or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate until completely cooled.

Combine the sour cream, sugar and vanilla; fold in whipped cream. Spread over cheesecake. Refrigerate overnight. Remove sides of pan. **Yield:** 12 servings.

tropical cheesecake

Shawntel Kemp, Pickens, Oklahoma

I don't bake many sweet items, but I like to put together this tropical cheesecake for parties.

1 cup flaked coconut
1/4 cup chopped almonds
2 tablespoons butter, melted

FILLING:

2 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
3 tablespoons cornstarch
3 eggs
1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
3 tablespoons lemon juice
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon almond extract

TOPPING:

1/3 cup apricot preserves
1/2 cup pineapple tidbits
2 to 4 kiwifruit, peeled, sliced and halved
1/4 to 3/4 cup flaked coconut, toasted

In a small bowl, combine coconut and almonds; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom of a greased 9-in. springform pan. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add cornstarch and beat well. Add eggs; beat on low just until combined. Add sour cream, lemon juice and extracts; beat just until blended. Pour over crust.

Bake at 350° for 45-50 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 1 hour. Refrigerate overnight. Remove sides of pan.

In a small saucepan, melt preserves, stirring to break up any apricot pieces. Arrange pineapple and kiwi on top of cheesecake. Brush preserves over fruit and on sides of cheesecake. Press coconut onto the sides of the cheesecake. Chill. **Yield:** 10-12 servings.

cranberry cheesecake

Nancy Zimmerman
Cape May Court House, New Jersey

The holidays wouldn't be complete without cranberries and eggnog. I use them both in this lovely cheesecake.

1 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 cup cranberry juice
1-1/2 cups fresh *or* frozen cranberries

CRUST:

1 cup graham cracker crumbs
3 tablespoons *each* sugar and butter, melted

FILLING:

4 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
4 eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup eggnog
1 tablespoon vanilla extract

In a saucepan, combine sugar and cornstarch. Stir in juice; add cranberries. Bring to a boil; cook and stir 2 minutes or until thickened. Remove from heat; set aside.

In a small bowl, combine cracker crumbs and sugar; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom of a greased 9-in. springform pan. Place pan on a baking sheet. Bake at 325° for 10 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add flour; beat well. Add eggs, beat on low just until combined. Add eggnog and vanilla; beat just until blended. Pour two-thirds of filling over crust. Top with half of the cranberry mixture (cover and refrigerate remaining cranberry mixture). Spoon remaining filling on top. Return pan to baking sheet.

Bake at 325° for 60-70 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight. Remove sides of pan. Spoon remaining cranberry mixture over cheesecake. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 12 servings.

Editor's Note: This recipe was tested with commercially prepared eggnog.

***** prize winning tips

* To prevent cracks in a cheesecake, avoid overbeating after adding the eggs—beat on low just until blended. Gently fold in by hand any additional ingredients like chocolate chips. Don't overbake. When done, the edges should be puffed; the center set but still soft. The center will form until cooling. Finally, cool your cheesecake on a rack at room temperature for 1 hour before refrigerating. Refrigerate for 3 hours, uncovered, or until thoroughly chilled. Then you can cover and continue to refrigerate overnight or up to 2 days.

Taste of Home Test Kitchen

* Removing a cheesecake from the bottom of a springform pan is best done with help from someone else. Make sure your cheesecake is chilled overnight so that it's very firm. Remove the band from the pan; take a large knife or metal spatula and carefully run it under the bottom of the cheesecake to loosen it. Then use two or three large pancake turners to carefully lift the cake over to the platter. Be sure the cake is equally supported by the turners so it won't crack.

Taste of Home Test Kitchen

VALENTINE BERRIES AND CREAM

valentine berries and cream

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Love abounds at the Apple Valley, Minnesota home of Tamera O'Sullivan. Her sweethearts—husband John and their three young children—love her cooking and baking, especially when she serves Valentine Berries and Cream.

Aware of her family's affection for this dessert, Tamera entered the recipe in our Sweetheart Treats contest.

Her own heart beat a little faster when we called to say that our judges, completely taken with the captivating look and luscious taste of her treat, selected it the Grand Prize winner!

> "This chocolate heart… is not hard to make, yet it steals the show when it's served."

"This chocolate heart with rich chocolate cream inside is not hard to make, yet it steals the show when it's served," Tamera says.

A busy homemaker, Tamera enjoys trying new recipes and considers sweets her specialty. "I've been baking since I was a girl, but I still find it challenging to keep a supply of homemade cookies and treats around this house," she says.

Tamera first tasted this treat at a banquet for the adult Sunday School class. "Everyone was so impressed with this scrumptious filled chocolate treat, I had to have the recipe," she says.

8 squares (1 ounce *each*) semisweet chocolate
1 tablespoon shortening
2 packages (3 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup butter, softened
1-1/2 cups confectioners' sugar
1/3 cup baking cocoa
2 tablespoons milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2-1/2 cups heavy whipping cream, whipped, *divided*
1-1/2 cups fresh strawberries, halved

Line a 9-in. heart-shaped or square baking pan with foil; set aside. In a large heavy saucepan over low heat, melt chocolate and shortening; stir until smooth. Pour into prepared pan, swirling to coat the bottom and 1-1/2 in. up the sides.

Refrigerate for 1 minute, then swirl the chocolate to reinforce sides of heart or box. Refrigerate for 30 minutes or until firm. Using foil, lift from pan; remove foil and place chocolate heart on a serving plate.

In a large mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese and butter until smooth. Combine confectioners' sugar and cocoa; add to creamed mixture with milk and vanilla. Beat until smooth.

Gently fold two-thirds of the whipped cream into cream cheese mixture. Spoon into heart. Insert star tip #32 into a pastry or plastic bag; fill with the remaining whipped cream. Pipe around the edge of heart. Garnish with strawberries. **Yield:** 8-10 servings.

black forest pie

Trudy Black, Dedham, Massachusetts

With three active children, I don't usually fuss with fancy desserts. This one is simple but impressive—it's the one I make to show how much I care. The tempting combination of chocolate and tangy red cherries is guaranteed to make someone feel special.

3/4 cup sugar
1/3 cup baking cocoa
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/3 cup milk
1/4 cup butter, cubed
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 can (21 ounces) cherry pie filling, *divided*
1 unbaked pastry shell (9 inches)
Whipped topping, optional

In a small saucepan, combine the sugar, cocoa and flour. Stir in milk until smooth. Add butter. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until thickened and bubbly. Reduce heat; cook and stir 2 minutes longer.

Remove from the heat. Stir a small amount of hot filling into eggs; return all to pan, stirring constantly. Fold in half of the pie filling.

Pour into pastry shell. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until filling is almost set. Cool completely on a wire rack. Just before serving, top with the remaining pie filling and whipped topping if desired. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.

raspberry white chocolate mousse

Mary Lou Wayman, Salt Lake City, Utah

Raspberry sauce is an appealing base for this fluffy white chocolate mousse. The treasured treat is surprisingly easy and a delightful change of pace from heavier cakes and pies.

1 package (10 ounces) frozen sweetened raspberries, thawed
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed
2 cups heavy whipping cream
6 ounces white baking chocolate
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 cup milk chocolate chips
1 teaspoon vegetable oil

In a blender, combine the raspberries, sugar and orange juice concentrate; cover and process until smooth. Press through a sieve; discard seeds. Refrigerate sauce.

In a large saucepan cook and stir cream and white chocolate over low heat, until chocolate is melted. Stir in vanilla. Transfer to a large mixing bowl. Cover and refrigerate for 6 hours or until thickened, stirring occasionally.

Beat cream mixture on high speed until light and fluffy, about 1-1/2 minutes (do not overbeat). Just before serving, melt chocolate chips and oil in a microwave or saucepan. Spoon 2 tablespoons of raspberry sauce on each plate. Pipe or spoon 1/2 cup chocolate mousse over sauce; drizzle with melted chocolate. Store leftovers in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 8 servings.

true love truffles

Kim Weiesnbach, Claremore, Oklahoma

I began giving these smooth, minty truffles in tins as Christmas gifts and now I can't go a year without sharing them. They also make a perfect Valentine's treat.

- **1 tablespoon butter plus 3/4 cup butter, *divided***
- **1-1/2 cups sugar**
- **1 can (5 ounces) evaporated milk**
- **2 packages (4.67 ounces *each*) mint Andes candies (56 pieces total)**
- **1 jar (7 ounces) marshmallow creme**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **22 ounces white baking chocolate, *divided***
- **1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips**
- **Green food coloring, optional**

Butter a 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. pan with 1 tablespoon butter; set aside. In a heavy saucepan, combine the sugar, milk and remaining butter. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Reduce heat; cook and stir until a candy thermometer reads 236° (soft-ball stage). Remove from the heat. Stir in candies until melted and mixture is well blended. Stir in marshmallow creme and vanilla until smooth. Spread into prepared pan; cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Cut into 96 pieces; roll each into a ball (mixture will be soft). Place on a waxed paper-lined baking sheet.

In a heavy saucepan or microwave-safe bowl, melt 18 oz. of white chocolate and chocolate chips. Dip balls in melted chocolate; place on waxed paper to harden. Melt the remaining white chocolate; add food coloring if desired. Drizzle over truffles. Store in an airtight container. **Yield:** 8 dozen.

Editor's Note: We recommend that you test your candy thermometer before each use by bringing water to a boil; the thermometer should read 212°. Adjust your recipe temperature up or down based on your test.

fancy cream cupcakes

Merrilee Chambers, Haines Junction, Yukon

These cute, tender cupcakes are creamy and not too sweet. They look fancy but are quick to fix.

- **1/2 cup shortening**
- **1-1/2 cups sugar**
- **4 egg whites**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **3-1/2 teaspoons baking powder**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1 cup milk**
- **1 cup heavy whipping cream**
- **2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar**
- **4 to 5 drops red food coloring, optional**
- **1/4 teaspoon almond extract**

In a bowl, cream shortening and sugar until light and fluffy. Add egg whites, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Combine flour, baking powder and salt; add to creamed mixture alternately with milk, beating well after each addition.

Fill paper or foil-lined muffin cups two-thirds full. Bake at 350° for 15-20 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing to wire racks to cool completely.

For filling, beat cream in a chilled bowl until it begins to thicken. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar and food coloring if desired until stiff peaks form. Beat in extract.

Cut a 1-in. cone shape from the center of each cupcake; set cone aside. Fill indentation with filling. Cut each cone in half from top to bottom; place two halves on filling for butterfly wings. If desired, pipe a thin strip of filling between wings for butterfly body. **Yield:** 22 cupcakes.

cinnamon love knots

Marlene Fetter, Alpena, Michigan

My sister-in-law and I enjoy these flavorful yeast rolls for breakfast, brunch or dessert, served with cups of steaming coffee and a hearty helping of love.

2 packages (1/4 ounce *each*) active dry yeast
1/2 cup warm water (110° to 115°)
1/2 cup warm milk (110° to 115°)
1/2 cup butter, softened
1/2 cup sugar
2 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon salt
4-1/2 to 5 cups all-purpose flour
TOPPING:
2 cups sugar
2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
3/4 cup butter, melted

In a large mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in water. Let stand for 5 minutes. Add milk, butter, sugar, eggs and salt. Stir in enough flour to form a stiff dough.

Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1-1/2 hours.

Punch dough down; divide into three portions. Cover two with plastic wrap. Shape one portion into 12 balls. Roll each ball into an 8-in. rope. Combine sugar and cinnamon. Dip rope into melted butter, then coat with cinnamon-sugar. Tie into a knot. Tuck and pinch ends under and place on ungreased baking sheets. Repeat with remaining dough. Cover and let rise until doubled, about 30 minutes.

Bake at 375° for 12-14 minutes or until golden brown. **Yield:** 3 dozen.

heart's delight eclair

Lorene Milligan, Chemainus, British Columbia

This lovely and luscious treat is rumored to have been the favorite dessert of European royalty long ago. I know that it's won the hearts of everyone I've ever made it for. Enjoy!

1 package (17.3 ounces) frozen puff pastry, thawed
3 cups cold milk
1 package (5.1 ounces) instant vanilla pudding mix
2 cups heavy whipping cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract, *divided*
1 cup confectioners' sugar
1 tablespoon water
1/4 teaspoon almond extract
1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1 teaspoon shortening

On a lightly floured surface, roll each puff pastry sheet into a 12-in. square. Using an 11-in. heart pattern, cut each pastry into a heart shape. Place on greased baking sheets. Bake at 400° for 12-15 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to wire racks to cool.

Meanwhile, whisk milk and pudding mix until thickened. In a large mixing bowl, beat cream and 1/2 teaspoon of vanilla until stiff peaks form. Carefully fold into pudding.

Split puff pastry hearts in half. Place one layer on a serving plate. Top with a third of the pudding mixture. Repeat twice. Top with remaining pastry.

In a large bowl, combine the confectioners' sugar, water, almond extract and the remaining vanilla until smooth. Spread over top. In a heavy saucepan or

microwave, melt chocolate chips and shortening; stir until smooth. Pipe in diagonal lines in one direction over frosting. Beginning 1 in. from side of heart, use a sharp knife to draw right angles across the piped lines. Refrigerate until set. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 10-12 servings.

triple chocolate kisses

Evelyn Lindburg, Shenandoah, Iowa

These crisp meringue cookies with a chocolate center are easy to make but look like you spent a lot of time. When our son and daughter-in-law moved into their first home on Valentine's Day, I prepared them a nice dinner and gave them a batch of these treats.

- **2 egg whites**
- **1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar**
- **1/2 cup sugar**
- **1/4 teaspoon almond extract**
- **1 square (1 ounce) semisweet chocolate, grated**
- **42 milk chocolate kisses**
- **Baking cocoa**

In a mixing bowl, beat egg whites until foamy. Add cream of tartar; beat until soft peaks form, about 6 minutes. Gradually add sugar, beating until stiff peaks form, about 6 minutes. Beat in extract. Fold in grated chocolate.

Insert a medium open-star tip in a pastry or plastic bag. Fill with the meringue. On lightly greased baking sheets, pipe forty-two 1-in. circles. Press a chocolate kiss into the center of each. Pipe meringue around each kiss in continuous circles from the base to the top until kiss is completely covered. Dust with cocoa.

Bake at 325° for 15-18 minutes or until the edges are lightly browned. Immediately remove to wire racks to cool. **Yield:** 3-1/2 dozen.

cupid's chocolate cake

Shelaine Duncan, North Powder, Oregon

I'm pleased to share the recipe for the very best chocolate cake I have ever tasted. I prepare this treat every year on Valentine's Day. It's rich, delectable and absolutely irresistible.

- **1 cup butter, softened**
- **2-1/2 cups sugar**
- **4 eggs**
- **2-1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract, *divided***
- **2-3/4 cups all-purpose flour**
- **1 cup baking cocoa**
- **2 teaspoons baking soda**
- **1/2 teaspoon baking powder**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **2 cups water**
- **1 cup heavy whipping cream**
- **1/4 cup confectioners' sugar**
- **4 cups buttercream frosting of your choice**

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat on high speed until light and fluffy. Stir in 1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla. Combine dry ingredients; add to the creamed mixture alternately with water.

Pour into three greased and floured 9-in. round baking pans. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks to cool completely.

For filling, in a large mixing bowl, beat cream until stiff peaks form. Beat in confectioners' sugar and remaining vanilla.

Place bottom cake layer on a serving plate; spread with half of the filling. Repeat. Place top layer on cake; frost top and sides of cake with buttercream frosting. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 12-14 servings.

chocolate peanut sweeties

Gina Kintigh, Connellsville, Pennsylvania

Inspired by my passion for peanut butter and chocolate, I combined a trusted recipe for peanut butter eggs with the salty crunch of pretzels. Now our kids have fun helping me make and eat these heavenly treats.

- **1 cup peanut butter**
- **1/2 cup butter, softened**
- **3 cups confectioners' sugar**
- **60 miniature pretzels (about 3 cups)**
- **1-1/2 cups milk chocolate chips**
- **1 tablespoon shortening**

In a small mixing bowl, beat peanut butter and butter until smooth. Beat in confectioners' sugar until combined. Shape into 1-in. balls; press one on each pretzel. Place on waxed paper-lined baking sheets. Refrigerate until peanut butter mixture is set, about 1 hour.

In a microwave-safe bowl or heavy saucepan, melt chocolate chips and oil. Dip the peanut butter ball into chocolate. Return to baking sheet, pretzel side down. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 5 dozen.

sweetheart walnut torte

Gladys Jenik, Orland Park, Illinois

I always donate one of these lightly sweet, heart-shaped tortes for our church bake sale. The congregation never gets to see it, however—the ladies in charge quickly put it aside for one of them to buy!

- **1/2 cup butter, softened**
- **1/2 cup sugar**
- **4 egg yolks**
- **1/3 cup milk**
- **1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **1 cup all-purpose flour**
- **2 teaspoons baking powder**
- **1/8 teaspoon salt**

MERINGUE:

- **4 egg whites**
- **1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar**
- **3/4 cup sugar**
- **1 cup chopped walnuts**

Walnut halves

FILLING:

- **1 cup cold milk**
- **1 package (3.9 ounces) instant chocolate pudding mix**
- **1 cup heavy whipping cream, whipped**

Grease two 9-in. heart-shaped pans. Line with waxed paper and grease the paper; set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Add egg yolks, milk and vanilla; mix well. Combine flour, baking powder and salt; gradually add to creamed mixture. Pour into prepared pans.

In a mixing bowl, beat egg whites and cream of tartar until soft peaks form. Gradually add sugar; beat until stiff and glossy. Fold in chopped nuts. Spread evenly over batter, sealing edges to sides of pan. Arrange walnut halves over meringue in one pan.

Bake at 300° for 55 minutes or until golden brown. Cool for 10 minutes; remove to wire racks. Invert so meringue side is up; cool completely.

In a large mixing bowl, beat milk and pudding mix until thickened. Fold in whipped cream. Place plain cake, meringue side up, on serving plate. Spread with half of the filling; top with remaining cake. Frost sides with remaining filling. **Yield:** 12-16 servings.

apple-of-your-eye cheesecake

Debbie Wilson, Sellersburg, Indiana

My most-often-requested dessert, this exquisite cheesecake with apples, caramel and pecans wins me more compliments than anything else I make. My husband's co-workers say it's too pretty to cut…but agree it's well worth it to do so.

1 cup graham cracker crumbs (about 16 squares)
3 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons finely chopped pecans
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup butter, melted

FILLING:

3 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
3/4 cup sugar
3 eggs, lightly beaten
3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

TOPPING:

2-1/2 cups chopped peeled apples
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
6 tablespoons caramel ice cream topping, *divided*

Sweetened whipped cream
2 tablespoons chopped pecans

In a bowl, combine the crackers, sugar, pecans and cinnamon; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom of a lightly greased 9-in. springform pan. Place pan on a baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes. Place pan on a wire rack (leave oven on).

In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add eggs; beat on low speed just until combined. Stir in vanilla. Pour over crust. Toss apples with lemon juice, sugar and cinnamon; spoon over filling. Return pan to baking sheet.

Bake for 55-60 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen. Drizzle with 4 tablespoons caramel topping. Cool for 1 hour. Chill overnight.

Remove sides of pan. Just before serving, garnish with whipped cream. Drizzle with remaining caramel; sprinkle with pecans. Store in refrigerator. **Yield:** 12 servings.

***** prize winning tips

* My family loves the combination of chocolate and peanut butter. So when I make cook-and-serve chocolate pudding, I stir in extra-chunky peanut butter after I remove it from the heat while it's still warm.

Pat S., Webster, New York

* My favorite way to serve brownies is to put them on individual serving plates, top each with a scoop of chocolate swirl ice cream, add some chocolate sauce and a generous spoonful of whipped cream, then top with a maraschino cherry. If I want this dessert to look really fancy, I drizzle chocolate sauce on the plate first.

Robin A., Madison, Wisconsin

FROSTED FUDGE BROWNIES

frosted fudge brownies

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Busy bakers in the Taste of Home Test Kitchen earned batches of brownie points from everyone in the office when they set out samples from the many entries in our Best-Ever Brownies contest!

Our judges were especially delighted with the variety of chewy choices chock-full of pleasing ingredients such as nuts, caramels, chocolate chips, marshmallows, coconut and cream cheese. The bars varied in flavor from fudge, mint and mocha to semisweet, white and milk chocolate.

> "…they're a 'must' for church potlucks, school activities and work parties."

After snacking through pans of lip-smacking treats, our panelists finally agreed the Grand Prize belonged to Sue Soderlund of Elgin, Illinois for her Frosted Fudge Brownies.

Sue relates that her chocolaty concoction came to her special delivery. "A neighbor gave our family a trayful, along with the recipe, when I brought our baby daughter home from the hospital," she reported. "Laurie still considers these brownies a favorite dessert, as do my husband, Ernie, and son Eric.

"We celebrate special family occasions with them, plus they're a 'must' for church potlucks, school activities and work parties," remarked the registered nurse.

A batch of her rich made-from-scratch bars is memorable even without the frosting, Sue affirmed. "Laurie likes them just plain—or with a sprinkle of powdered sugar on top or a dollop of chocolate whipped topping.

"Other times, we go all out and add nuts, chocolate bits or holiday candies. For an elegant twist, I spread cherry pie filling on top instead of frosting and add whipped cream and shaved chocolate for a Black Forest variation."

1 cup butter plus 3 tablespoons butter, cubed
3/4 cup baking cocoa
4 eggs
2 cups sugar
1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

FROSTING:

6 tablespoons butter, softened
2-2/3 cups confectioners' sugar
1/2 cup baking cocoa
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 to 1/3 cup milk

In a saucepan, melt butter. Remove from the heat. Stir in cocoa; cool.

In a mixing bowl, beat eggs and sugar. Combine flour, baking powder and salt; gradually add to egg mixture. Stir in vanilla and the cooled chocolate mixture; mix well.

Spread into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 25-28 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean (do not overbake). Cool on a wire rack.

For frosting, in a mixing bowl, cream butter, confectioners' sugar, cocoa and vanilla. Add enough milk until the frosting achieves spreading consistency. Spread over brownies. Cut into bars. **Yield:** 2 dozen.

coconut pecan blondies

Anna Tokash Henry, Keller, Texas

Here's a classic white chocolate brownie that I've entered in the state fair and frequently made for the men I work with—I'm a landscaper. I enjoy munching on these while cheering on my alma mater, Ohio State University.

- **1 egg**
- **3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar**
- **1/2 cup butter, melted and cooled**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- **3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **1/2 teaspoon baking soda**
- **1/8 teaspoon salt**
- **3/4 cup coarsely chopped pecans, toasted**
- **2/3 cup flaked coconut**
- **4 squares (1 ounce *each*) white baking chocolate, coarsely chopped**

In a large mixing bowl, beat egg and brown sugar for 3 minutes. Add butter and vanilla; mix well. Combine the flour, baking soda and salt; gradually add to the brown sugar mixture, beating just until blended. Stir in pecans, coconut and white chocolate.

Spread into a greased 8-in. square baking pan. Bake at 325° for 30-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out with moist crumbs (do not overbake). Cool on a wire rack. Cut into bars. **Yield:** 16 brownies.

macaroon brownies

Christine Foust, Stoneboro, Pennsylvania

My mother-in-law made these coconut-filled brownies for my bridal shower and wedding reception. After the first bite, I knew why my husband loves them!

- **1 cup butter, softened**
- **2 cups sugar**
- **4 eggs**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **1/2 cup baking cocoa**
- **1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar**
- **1/2 cup chopped walnuts**

MACAROON FILLING:

- **1 package (14 ounces) flaked coconut**
- **1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk**
- **2 teaspoons vanilla extract**

FROSTING:

- **3/4 cup sugar**
- **1/4 cup milk**
- **2 tablespoons butter**
- **1 cup miniature marshmallows**
- **1 cup (6 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs and vanilla; mix well. Combine the flour, cocoa and cream of tartar; gradually add to creamed mixture. Stir in nuts. Spread half into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan.

For filling, combine the coconut, condensed milk and vanilla; carefully spread over batter in pan. Top with the remaining batter. Bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack.

For frosting, combine the sugar, milk and butter in a saucepan; cook and stir until sugar is dissolved. Add the marshmallows and chocolate chips; cook and stir until melted. Remove from the heat; stir in vanilla. Cool until frosting reaches spreading consistency, about 25 minutes. Spread over the cooled brownies. Cut into bars. **Yield:** 4 dozen.

glazed chocolate chip brownies

Dawn Berg, Budd Lake, New Jersey

A fudgy base and a rich chocolate glaze make these the best brownies ever!

2/3 cup butter, melted
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups sugar
1-1/3 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup baking cocoa
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup water
1 cup (6 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips

GLAZE:

3/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1/4 cup milk
2 tablespoons butter
1-1/4 cups confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

In a bowl, combine the butter, eggs and vanilla. Combine the dry ingredients; add to the butter mixture and mix well. Stir in water and chocolate chips until combined.

Pour into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 30-35 minutes or until brownies pull away from sides of the pan. Cool on a wire rack.

In a saucepan, combine the chips, milk and butter until chips and butter are melted. Remove from the heat; whisk in the confectioners' sugar and vanilla until smooth. Cover and refrigerate until frosting is room temperature, about 20 minutes; frost brownies. Cut into bars. **Yield:** 4 dozen.

mint brownie cupcakes

Carol Maertz, Spruce Grove, Alberta

"Are they a brownie or are they a cupcake?" There's no wrong answer to this question, I tell my first-grade students. I found the recipe when I began teaching nearly 20 years ago. I grew up on a farm in north-central Alberta and love to bake for my husband, a psychologist, and our two children.

1 cup mint chocolate chips
1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup sugar
2 eggs
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder

TOPPING:

4 cups miniature marshmallows
3/4 cup milk
1-1/2 teaspoons peppermint extract
Green *or* red food coloring, optional
1-1/2 cups heavy whipping cream, whipped
Additional chocolate chips, optional

In a heavy saucepan, melt chips and butter; stir until smooth. Remove from the heat. Stir in sugar and eggs. Combine flour and baking powder; gradually stir into chocolate mixture until smooth.

Fill paper-lined muffin cups half full. Bake at 350° for 15-20 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean (cupcakes will fall in center). Remove to a wire rack.

In a saucepan, cook and stir marshmallows and milk over low heat until smooth. Remove from the heat; stir in extract and food coloring if desired.

Cover and refrigerate until cool, about 15 minutes. Fold in whipped cream. Spread over cupcakes or top each with a dollop of topping. Chill for at least 1 hour. Sprinkle with chocolate chips if desired. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 16 cupcakes.

fudgy nut brownies

Ruth Stern, Shadow Hills, California

I've prepared this special recipe for many an open house and potluck dinner. It came from an old roommate, who is now a grandmother.

2-1/2 cups semisweet chocolate chips
1 cup butter
1 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
4 eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup coarsely chopped hazelnuts

TOPPING:

12 squares (1 ounce *each*) semisweet chocolate
1 tablespoon shortening
3 squares (1 ounce *each*) white baking chocolate

In a heavy saucepan or microwave, melt chocolate chips and butter; stir until smooth. Add sugar and salt; stir until dissolved. Cool for 10 minutes. Stir in eggs, vanilla, flour and nuts.

Spread into a greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near center comes out with moist crumbs (do not overbake). Cool completely on a wire rack.

For topping, melt semisweet chocolate and shortening in a heavy saucepan or microwave; stir until smooth. Spread over brownies. Melt white chocolate; cool slightly. Pour into a small heavy-duty resealable plastic bag; cut a small hole in corner of bag. Pipe thin lines 1 in. apart widthwise. Beginning about 1 in. from a wide side, gently pull a toothpick through the lines to the opposite side. Wipe toothpick clean. Then pull toothpick through lines in opposite directions. Repeat over entire top at 1-in. intervals. Cut into bars. **Yield:** about 2-1/2 dozen.

brownie baked alaska

Carol Twardzik, Spy Hill, Saskatchewan

Who says it takes a lot of work to make this traditional dessert? Not me. Try it. You'll like it!

2 squares (1 ounce *each*) unsweetened chocolate
1/2 cup shortening
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 eggs
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon *each* baking powder and salt
1 cup chopped walnuts, optional
1 quart *each* strawberry and vanilla ice cream, slightly softened

MERINGUE:

5 egg whites
2/3 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar

In a large saucepan, melt chocolate and shortening; remove from the heat. Stir in sugar and vanilla. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt; stir into chocolate mixture. Add nuts if desired.

Spread into a greased 9-in. round baking pan. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out with moist crumbs (do not overbake). Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack to cool completely.

Meanwhile, line an 8-in. or 9-in. round bowl (1-1/2-qts.) with foil. Quickly spread strawberry ice cream over bottom and up sides of bowl, leaving center hollow; cover and freeze for 30 minutes. Pack vanilla ice cream into center; cover and freeze.

To assemble, place the brownie base on a 10-in. ovenproof serving plate. Unmold ice cream onto brownie.

Return to freezer while preparing meringue.

In a heavy saucepan or double boiler over simmering water, combine the egg whites, sugar and cream of tartar. Heat over low heat while beating egg white mixture with a portable mixer on low speed for 1 minute, scraping down sides of bowl. Continue beating until mixture reaches 160°. Remove from the heat. Beat on high speed until stiff peaks form.

Quickly spread over ice cream and brownie. Bake at 500° for 2-5 minutes or until meringue is lightly browned. Transfer to a serving plate; serve immediately. **Yield:** 12 servings.

caramel cashew brownies

Judy High, Berryville, Arkansas

I always have my eye out for a good recipe, like these marvelous golden brownies. It's hard to eat just one!

- **18 caramels**
- **1/3 cup butter**
- **2 tablespoons milk**
- **3/4 cup sugar**
- **2 eggs**
- **1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **1 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1/2 teaspoon baking powder**
- **1/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1 cup chopped salted cashews**

In a saucepan, cook and stir the caramels, butter and milk over low heat until the caramels are melted and mixture is smooth. Remove from the heat; stir in sugar.

Combine eggs and vanilla; stir into caramel mixture. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt; stir into caramel mixture until blended. Fold in cashews.

Transfer to a greased 9-in. square baking pan. Bake at 350° for 24-28 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack. Cut into bars. **Yield:** 25 brownies.

out-of-this-world brownies

Jeannette Haley, Council, Idaho

For company and every time there is a local bake sale, I bake a batch of these fabulous brownies. Most everyone who tastes them says, "Yum! These are the best brownies I have ever eaten!" My cooking background came from my mother. Just watching her helped educate me in the "ways of the kitchen."

- **1 cup butter, softened**
- **2 cups sugar**
- **4 eggs**
- **2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- **2 cups all-purpose flour**
- **1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons baking cocoa**
- **1/8 teaspoon salt**

BROWN BUTTER FROSTING:

- **1/2 cup butter**
- **4 cups confectioners' sugar**
- **1/4 cup plus 2 teaspoons half-and-half cream**
- **2 teaspoons vanilla extract**

GLAZE:

- **1 square (1 ounce) unsweetened chocolate**
- **1 tablespoon butter**

In a mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Combine flour, cocoa and salt; gradually add to the creamed mixture.

Spread into an ungreased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean (do not overbake). Cool on wire rack.

For frosting, in a heavy saucepan, cook and stir butter over medium heat for 5-7 minutes or until golden brown. Pour into a mixing bowl; beat in the confectioners' sugar, cream and vanilla. Frost cooled brownies.

For glaze, melt chocolate and butter; drizzle over the frosting. Cut into bars. **Yield:** 3 dozen.

macadamia chip brownies

Lucile Cline, Wichita, Kansas

With two kinds of chocolate and macadamia nuts, there's no need to frost these scrumptious bars! I like to make them for special occasions. I'm a retired home economist and love to bake for fun and relaxation. Often, I share goodies with friends and families at our local Ronald McDonald House.

- **1/3 cup butter**
- **4 squares (1 ounce *each*) white baking chocolate**
- **2 eggs**
- **1 cup sugar**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **1 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1/2 cup chopped macadamia nuts**
- **1/2 cup milk chocolate chips**

In a saucepan over low heat, melt butter and white chocolate; remove from the heat. In a bowl, combine the eggs, sugar and vanilla. Add the chocolate mixture, flour and salt; mix well. Stir in nuts and chocolate chips.

Pour into a greased 9-in. square baking pan. Bake at 325° for 30-35 minutes or until top is lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack. Cut into bars. **Yield:** 1-1/2 dozen.

treasured brownies

Marianne Wolfe, Westlock, Alberta

This terrific treat is included in a book of good-but-easy recipes my sister compiled as a wedding present for me. She refers to them as "money-back-guarantee" brownies. And I can confirm that they turn out 100% of the time.

- **1 cup butter, melted and cooled**
- **3 eggs**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- **1 cup all-purpose flour**
- **1 cup sugar**
- **1 cup packed brown sugar**
- **3/4 cup baking cocoa**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder**
- **1 cup chopped nuts**

ICING:

- **1/2 cup butter, softened**
- **1-1/4 cups confectioners' sugar**
- **2/3 cup baking cocoa**
- **2 tablespoons milk**
- **2 tablespoons hot brewed coffee**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

In a mixing bowl, combine butter, eggs and vanilla. Combine the dry ingredients; gradually add to butter mixture. Stir in nuts (do not overmix).

Spread into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack.

Combine icing ingredients in a mixing bowl; beat until smooth. Spread over cooled brownies. Cut into bars. **Yield:** 1-1/2 dozen.

mocha truffle brownies

Margaret Roberts, Kuna, Idaho

My husband is a chocolate lover, so I bake brownies about once a week. This mouth-watering variety is one of his favorites and is so simple to make.

1-1/4 cups semisweet chocolate chips
1/2 cup butter
1 teaspoon instant coffee granules
2 tablespoons hot water
2 eggs
3/4 cup packed brown sugar
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder

FILLING:
1 tablespoon instant coffee granules
1 tablespoon hot water
1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1/3 cup confectioners' sugar
1 cup (6 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips, melted

GLAZE:
1/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1 teaspoon shortening

In a heavy saucepan or microwave, melt chips and butter. Stir until smooth; cool for 5 minutes. Dissolve coffee granules in hot water; set aside. In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs and brown sugar; beat on medium for 1 minute. Stir in chocolate mixture and coffee. Combine flour and baking powder; gradually add to chocolate mixture.

Transfer to a greased 9-in. square baking pan. Bake at 350° for 30-35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out with moist crumbs. Cool completely on a wire rack.

For filling, dissolve coffee granules in water; set aside. In a small mixing bowl, beat cream cheese until smooth. Beat in confectioners' sugar, melted chocolate and coffee. Spread over brownies.

For glaze, melt the chocolate chips and shortening in a heavy saucepan or microwave; stir until smooth. Drizzle over filling. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before cutting. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** about 6-1/2 dozen.

***** prize winning tips

*When making brownies, you can prevent the edges from getting hard. First of all, use an oven thermometer to make sure your oven temperature is accurate. Then test for doneness toward the end of the baking time. If the brownie springs back when lightly touched in the center and the sides have started to pull away from the pan, it is done. If your brownie recipe has a cake texture (rather than a dense fudgy consistency), it's done when a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Avoid dark-colored baking pans, which can cause the edges to brown too fast. Finally, try lowering your baking temperature by 25°.

Taste of Home Test Kitchen

*For a delightful change, I mix a can of cherry pie filling into my brownie batter.

Myrna A., Idalia, Colorado

CHOCOLATE AND FRUIT TRIFLE

chocolate and fruit trifle

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

From snacks to side dishes and entrees to desserts, contest winner Angie Dierikx of State Center, Iowa knows the value of quick-and-easy fare.

"I'm a stay-at-home mom with two lively kids, so I'm always on the run," she relates.

"Fuss-free recipes that reduce my workload in the kitchen give me more time for family activities."

"My husband Terry and I and Lucie and Logan love being outdoors during the warm summer months," she notes. "We often go to the local park, take long walks and work in our vegetable garden.

"The kids are in a play group once a week, and I participate in a mom's group," Angie shares. "I also enjoy reading and golfing."

> "All the luscious layers make this dessert great for special occasions."

With her jam-packed schedule, it's no wonder Angie keeps her eyes open for simple recipes that taste great but don't take all day to prepare.

Her Chocolate and Fruit Trifle fits the bill on both counts. It's not only delicious but a breeze to whip up because it uses a packaged cake mix, instant pudding and fresh fruit that can be sliced and arranged in a jiffy.

"All the luscious layers make this dessert great for special occasions," she assures. "But no matter when I serve it, I always receive rave reviews."

1 package (18-1/4 ounces) devil's food cake mix
1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
1 cup cold water
1 package (3.4 ounces) instant vanilla pudding mix
2 cups heavy whipping cream, whipped
2 tablespoons orange juice
2 cups fresh strawberries, chopped
2 cups fresh raspberries
2 kiwifruit, peeled and chopped

Prepare cake batter according to package directions; pour into a greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool completely on a wire rack. Crumble enough cake to measure 8 cups; set aside. (Save remaining cake for another use.)

In a large mixing bowl, combine milk and water until smooth. Add pudding mix; beat on low speed for 2 minutes or until slightly thickened. Fold in the whipped cream.

To assemble, spread 2-1/2 cups pudding mixture in a 4-qt. glass bowl. Top with half of the crumbled cake; sprinkle with 1 tablespoon orange juice. Arrange half of the berries and kiwi over cake.

Repeat pudding and cake layers; sprinkle with remaining orange juice. Top with remaining pudding mixture. Spoon remaining fruit around edge of bowl. Cover and refrigerate until serving. **Yield:** 12-16 servings.

caramel fudge cheesecake

Brenda Ruse, Truro, Nova Scotia

It's hard to resist this cheesecake with its fudgy crust, crunchy pecans and gooey layer of caramel. I combined several recipes to create this version that satisfies both the chocolate lovers and the cheesecake lovers in my family.

- **1 package fudge brownie mix (8-inch square pan size)**
- **1 package (14 ounces) caramels**
- **1/4 cup evaporated milk**
- **1-1/4 cups coarsely chopped pecans**
- **2 packages (8 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened**
- **1/2 cup sugar**
- **2 eggs, lightly beaten**
- **2 squares (1 ounce *each*) semisweet chocolate, melted and cooled**
- **2 squares (1 ounce *each*) unsweetened chocolate, melted and cooled**

Prepare brownie batter according to the package directions. Spread into a greased 9-in. springform pan. Place pan on a baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes. Place pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes (leave oven on).

Meanwhile, in a microwave-safe bowl, melt the caramels with milk. Pour over brownie crust; sprinkle with pecans. In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar. Add eggs; beat on low speed just until combined. Stir in melted chocolate. Pour over pecans. Return pan to baking sheet.

Bake for 35-40 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool one hour longer. Refrigerate overnight. Remove sides of pan. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 12 servings.

chocolate chip cheese ball

Kelly Glascock, Syracuse, Missouri

Your guests are in for a sweet surprise when they try this unusual cheese ball…it tastes just like cookie dough! Rolled in chopped pecans, the chip-studded spread is wonderful on regular or chocolate graham crackers. I especially like it because it can be assembled in a wink.

- **1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened**
- **1/2 cup butter, softened**
- **1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **3/4 cup confectioners' sugar**
- **2 tablespoons brown sugar**
- **3/4 cup miniature semisweet chocolate chips**
- **3/4 cup finely chopped pecans**
- **Graham crackers**

In a mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, butter and vanilla until fluffy. Gradually add sugars; beat just until combined. Stir in chocolate chips. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours.

Place cream cheese mixture on a large piece of plastic wrap; shape into a ball. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Just before serving, roll cheese ball in pecans. Serve with graham crackers. **Yield:** 1 cheese ball (about 2 cups).

cream puff dessert

Lisa Nash, Blaine, Minnesota

I recently took this rich dessert to a fellowship meeting at our church. Everyone loved it! In fact, so many people asked for the recipe that the church secretary printed it in our monthly newsletter.

1 cup water
1/2 cup butter
1 cup all-purpose flour
4 eggs

FILLING:

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
3-1/2 cups cold milk
2 packages (3.9 ounces *each*) instant chocolate pudding mix

TOPPING:

1 carton (8 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed
1/4 cup chocolate ice cream topping
1/4 cup caramel ice cream topping
1/3 cup chopped almonds

In a large saucepan bring the water and butter to a boil over medium heat. Add flour all at once; stir until a smooth ball forms. Remove from the heat; let stand for 5 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Continue beating until mixture is smooth and shiny.

Spread into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish. Bake at 400° for 30-35 minutes or until puffed and golden brown. Remove to a wire rack to cool completely.

For filling, beat the cream cheese, milk and pudding mix in a large mixing bowl until smooth. Spread over puff; refrigerate for 20 minutes.

Spread with whipped topping; refrigerate until serving. Drizzle with the chocolate and caramel toppings; sprinkle with almonds. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 12 servings.

german chocolate ice cream

Peggy Key, Grant, Alabama

I have been taking this treat to ice cream socials for years. The cool combination of chocolate, coconut and pecans is delicious!

1-1/2 cups sugar
1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
4 cups milk
3 eggs, beaten
1 quart half-and-half cream
2 packages (4 ounces *each*) German sweet chocolate, melted
1 cup flaked coconut
1 cup chopped pecans

In a large heavy saucepan, combine the sugar, flour, cinnamon and salt. Gradually add milk and eggs; stir until smooth. Cook and stir over medium-low heat until mixture is thick enough to coat a metal spoon and reaches 160°, about 15 minutes. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Refrigerate for several hours or overnight.

Fill ice cream freezer cylinder two-thirds full; freeze according to manufacturer's instructions. Refrigerate remaining mixture until ready to freeze. Remove ice cream from the freezer 10 minutes before serving. **Yield:** 1 gallon.

fudgy raspberry torte

Dolores Hurtt, Florence, Montana

Guests will think you fussed when you serve this three-layer torte made with convenient cake and pudding mixes, a bit of jam and fresh raspberries.

- **1 package (18-1/4 ounces) chocolate fudge cake mix**
- **1-1/3 cups water**
- **3 eggs**
- **1/3 cup vegetable oil**
- **3/4 cup ground pecans**
- **1-1/2 cups cold milk**
- **1 package (3.9 ounces) instant chocolate fudge *or* chocolate pudding mix**
- **1/2 cup seedless raspberry jam**
- **1-1/2 cups whipped topping**
- **1/4 cup finely chopped pecans**
- **Fresh raspberries**

In a mixing bowl, combine cake mix, water, eggs and oil; mix well. Add ground pecans; mix just until combined. Pour into three greased and floured 9-in. round baking pans. Bake at 350° for 15-20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 19 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks to cool completely.

In a mixing bowl, beat milk and pudding mix on low speed for 2 minutes or until thickened. In a saucepan, melt jam. Brush over the top of each cake.

Place one cake on a serving plate; spread with half of the pudding. Repeat layers. Top with third cake layer; spread top with whipped topping. Sprinkle with chopped pecans. Garnish with raspberries. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 12 servings.

frozen mocha marbled loaf

Cheryl Martinetto, Grand Rapids, Minnesota

This showstopping marbled dessert seems fancy, but it's really simple to prepare ahead of time and pop in the freezer. Frosty slices have a creamy blend of chocolate and coffee that's delightful any time of year.

- **2 cups finely crushed chocolate cream-filled sandwich cookies (about 22 cookies)**
- **3 tablespoons butter, melted**
- **1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened**
- **1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **2 cups heavy whipping cream, whipped**
- **2 tablespoons instant coffee granules**
- **1 tablespoon hot water**
- **1/2 cup chocolate syrup**

Line a 9-in. x 5-in. x 3-in. loaf pan with foil. In a bowl, combine the cookie crumbs and butter. Press firmly onto the bottom and 1-1/2-in. up the sides of prepared pan.

In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese until light and fluffy. Add milk and vanilla; mix well. Fold in whipped cream. Spoon half of the mixture into another bowl and set aside. Dissolve coffee in hot water; fold into remaining cream cheese mixture. Fold in chocolate syrup.

Spoon half of the chocolate mixture over crust. Top with half of the reserved cream cheese mixture. Repeat layers. Cut through layers with a knife to swirl the chocolate (pan will be full). Cover and freeze for 6 hours or overnight. To serve, lift out of the pan; remove foil. Cut into slices. **Yield:** 12 servings.

chocolate peanut delight

Karen Kutruff, New Berlin, Pennsylvania

Peanut lovers will appreciate this yummy dessert I dreamed up. A brownie-like crust is packed with nuts, topped with a fluffy peanut butter layer and covered with whipped topping and more nuts. It was so well received that I made it for a local restaurant where I used to work.

- **1 package (18-1/4 ounces) chocolate cake mix**
- **1/2 cup butter, melted**
- **1/4 cup milk**
- **1 egg**
- **1 cup chopped peanuts, *divided***
- **1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened**
- **1 cup peanut butter**
- **1 cup confectioners' sugar**
- **1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk**
- **1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- **1 carton (16 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed, *divided***
- **1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips**
- **4-1/2 teaspoons butter**
- **1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract**

In a large mixing bowl, combine cake mix, butter, milk and egg. Add 3/4 cup of peanuts. Spread into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack.

In a large mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, peanut butter, sugar, condensed milk and vanilla until smooth. Fold in 3 cups whipped topping. Spread over the crust; top with the remaining whipped topping and peanuts.

In a microwave-safe bowl, heat chocolate chips and butter on high for 1 minute or until melted. Stir in vanilla until smooth; drizzle over the dessert. Refrigerate for 2-3 hours before cutting. **Yield:** 12-15 servings.

homemade chocolate cake

Cindy Miller, Riverside, Iowa

A rich chocolate frosting is the flavorful finishing touch to this moist from-scratch cake that's mixed in one bowl. It always turns out and is quickly gobbled up by friends and family. I'm asked to fix this favorite so often that the recipe card is an absolute mess!

- **3 cups all-purpose flour**
- **2 cups sugar**
- **1/3 cup baking cocoa**
- **2 teaspoons baking soda**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **2 cups water**
- **3/4 cup vegetable oil**
- **2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- **2 teaspoons white vinegar**

CHOCOLATE CREAM CHEESE FROSTING:

- **1 package (3 ounces) cream cheese, softened**
- **1/4 cup butter, softened**
- **2 cups confectioners' sugar**
- **1/3 cup baking cocoa**
- **Dash salt**
- **3 tablespoons milk**
- **1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract**

In a large mixing bowl, combine the first five ingredients. Add the water, oil, vanilla and vinegar; mix well (batter will be thin).

Pour into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool completely.

For frosting, in a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and butter until fluffy. Add the confectioners' sugar, cocoa, salt, milk and vanilla; mix well. Spread over cake. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 12-15 servings.

Editor's Note: This recipe does not use eggs.

chocolate cherry bars

Tina Dierking, Skohegan, Maine

These tempting bars are simple to make with cherry pie filling, crunchy almonds and chocolate chips. I took them to a church supper and everyone wanted the recipe. Some people said the sweet treats reminded them of chocolate-covered cherries.

1-3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup sugar
1/4 cup baking cocoa
1 cup cold butter
1 egg, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon almond extract
1 can (21 ounces) cherry pie filling
2 cups (12 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips
1 cup chopped almonds

In a bowl, combine the flour, sugar and cocoa. Cut in butter until the mixture is crumbly. Add egg and almond extract until blended. Set aside 1 cup for topping. Press remaining crumb mixture into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Carefully top with pie filling. Combine chocolate chips, almonds and reserved crumb mixture; sprinkle over pie filling.

Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool; refrigerate for at least 2 hours before cutting into bars. **Yield:** 3 dozen.

chocolate mint cookies

Christina Burbage, Spartanburg, South Carolina

My dad sandwiches mint patties between two tender chocolate cookies to create these chewy treats. The blend of chocolate and mint is a big hit at our house. Best of all, these cookies are easy and fun to make.

1-1/4 cups butter, softened
2 cups sugar
2 eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup baking cocoa
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
32 round thin chocolate-covered mint patties

In a mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Combine the flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt; gradually add to the creamed mixture, beating until well combined.

Drop by tablespoonfuls 2 in. apart onto ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 350° for 8-9 minutes or until puffy and tops are cracked. Invert half of the cookies onto wire racks. Immediately place a mint patty on each, then top with remaining cookies. Press lightly to seal. Cool completely. **Yield:** 32 sandwich cookies.

minty cocoa mousse

Melissa Tarbox, Allen, Texas

Junior Mints give the refreshing mint taste to this scrumptious smooth-as-silk mousse. It's one of my best desserts because it's a snap to prepare!

2 tablespoons baking cocoa
2 tablespoons milk
1 cup chocolate-covered peppermint candies
2 tablespoons butter
1 carton (8 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed, *divided*
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
Fresh mint and additional whipped topping, optional

In a large saucepan, combine cocoa and milk until smooth. Add mints and butter; cook and stir over low heat until smooth. Cool for 15 minutes.

Stir in 1 cup whipped topping and vanilla. Fold in the remaining whipped topping. Spoon into dessert dishes. Refrigerate until serving. Garnish with mint and whipped topping if desired. **Yield:** 4 servings.

***** prize winning tips

* Use cold coffee instead of water when making chocolate cake for a rich mocha flavor.
Velma K., Chicago, Illinois

* When a recipe calls for melted semisweet chocolate chips, it's cheaper to use semisweet baking chocolate squares in the same amount ounce for ounce. After the chocolate is melted, nobody knows what shape it was to begin with!
Camille C., Ames, Iowa

* When preparing brownies, I make them special by adding mint extract and chocolate chips to the batter before baking.
Colleen W., Francesville, Indiana

* When I have leftover melted chocolate from making candies or desserts, I pour it into a small nonstick cake pan, smooth it into an even layer and refrigerate until hardened. Then I pop it out onto a cutting board, chop it into small chunks and store it in the fridge to be used later in any recipe that calls for chocolate chips.
Renee Z., Tacoma, Washington

* Sometimes it is handy to use a toothpick to dip round candies such as truffles and peanut butter balls into melted chocolate.
Jill L., Albuquerque, New Mexico

TOFFEE-MOCHA CREAM TORTE

toffee-mocha cream torte

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Pleasing the palates of family and friends during the holidays is "a piece of cake" for Lynn Rogers of Richfield, North Carolina. She simply serves up slices of Toffee-Mocha Cream Torte!

"I work long hours at a local cotton gin, so my time in the kitchen is limited," Lynn explains. "When I do bake, I rely on recipes that are sure to satisfy, like my Toffee-Mocha Cream Torte.

> "...I rely on recipes that are sure to satisfy, like my Toffee-Mocha Cream Torte."

"This pretty layered dessert makes any occasion special," she assures. Impressed with Lynn's yummy torte, the judges in our Classic Cakes contest selected it as the Grand Prize winner!

"Since I grew up on a Michigan dairy farm, I'm happy to note this recipe uses lots of dairy products," says Lynn. Her sister, Gail, gave her the recipe.

Lynn loves to bake for husband Brad and their children, Neal and Erin. "My family has always enjoyed sharing a tradition of good cooking through the 4-H Foods program," says Lynn.

1 cup butter, softened
2 cups sugar
2 eggs
1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2-2/3 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup baking cocoa
2 teaspoons baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup buttermilk
2 teaspoons instant coffee granules
1 cup boiling water

TOPPING:

1/2 teaspoon instant coffee granules
1 teaspoon hot water
2 cups heavy whipping cream
3 tablespoons light brown sugar
6 Heath candy bars (1.4 ounces *each*), crushed, *divided*

In a mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Combine the flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt; add to creamed mixture alternately with buttermilk. Dissolve coffee in water; add to batter. Beat for 2 minutes.

Pour into three greased and floured 9-in. round baking pans. Bake at 350° for 16-20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks to cool completely.

For topping, dissolve coffee in water in a mixing bowl; cool. Add cream and brown sugar. Beat until stiff peaks form.

Place bottom cake layer on a serving plate; top with 1-1/3 cups of topping. Sprinkle with 1/2 cup of crushed candy bars. Repeat layers twice. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 12-14 servings.

cream cheese sheet cake

Gaye Mann, Rocky Mount, North Carolina

This tender, buttery sheet cake with its fudgy chocolate glaze is a real crowd-pleaser.

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons butter, softened
2 packages (3 ounces *each*) cream cheese, softened
2-1/4 cups sugar
6 eggs
3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
2-1/4 cups cake flour

FROSTING:

1 cup sugar
1/3 cup evaporated milk
1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips

In a mixing bowl, cream butter, cream cheese and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Add flour; mix well.

Pour into a greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Bake at 325° for 30-35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool.

For frosting, combine sugar and milk in a saucepan; bring to a boil over medium heat. Cover and cook for 3 minutes (do not stir). Stir in butter and chocolate chips until melted. Cool slightly. Stir; spread over cake. **Yield:** 24-30 servings.

apricot hazelnut torte

Enid Stoeher, Emsdale, Ontario

This luscious torte is as light as a feather and tastes heavenly. Plus, it looks so beautiful, it's perfect for special occasions.

4 eggs, *separated*
1 cup ground hazelnuts
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup sugar, *divided*
2 cups heavy whipping cream
1/4 cup confectioners' sugar
2/3 cup pureed canned apricots
1/2 cup apricot jam, warmed
Whipped cream, sliced apricots and whole *or* chopped hazelnuts, optional

Let eggs stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. Line two greased 9-in. round baking pans with waxed paper; grease the paper and set aside.

In a bowl, combine the hazelnuts, flour, baking powder and salt; set aside. In a large mixing bowl, beat the egg yolks, water and vanilla until lemon-colored. Gradually add 3/4 cup sugar; set aside.

In a small mixing bowl with clean beater, beat egg whites on medium speed until soft peaks form. Gradually add remaining sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time, beating on high until stiff peaks form. Fold a fourth of the dry ingredients into egg yolk mixture. Repeat three times. Fold in egg white mixture.

Spread batter evenly into prepared pans. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until cake springs back when lightly touched. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks to cool completely.

In a chilled large mixing bowl, beat cream until it begins to thicken. Add confectioners' sugar; beat until stiff peaks form. Fold in apricots.

Split each cake into two horizontal layers. Spread filling between layers and over sides of torte. Spread jam over top. Garnish with whipped cream, apricots and hazelnuts if desired. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 12-14 servings.

strawberry nut roll

Judy Hayes, Peosta, Iowa

The nutty shortcake, creamy filling and fresh strawberries make pretty swirled slices.

6 eggs, *separated*
3/4 cup sugar, *divided*
1 cup ground walnuts, toasted
1/4 cup dry bread crumbs
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/8 teaspoon salt
Confectioners' sugar
FILLING:
1 pint fresh strawberries
1 cup heavy whipping cream
2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Confectioners' sugar

In a large mixing bowl, beat egg whites until soft peaks form. Gradually add 1/4 cup sugar, beating until stiff peaks form. Set aside.

In another large mixing bowl, beat egg yolks and remaining sugar until thick and lemon-colored. Combine walnuts, bread crumbs, flour and salt; add to yolk mixture. Mix well. Fold in egg white mixture. Line a greased 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan with waxed paper; grease the paper. Spread batter evenly into pan. Bake at 375° for 15 minutes or until cake springs back when lightly touched. Cool for 5 minutes.

Invert cake onto a kitchen towel dusted with confectioners' sugar. Gently peel off waxed paper. Roll up cake in the towel, jelly-roll style, starting with a short side. Cool on a wire rack. Slice six large strawberries in half; set aside for garnish. Thinly slice remaining berries; set aside. In a large mixing bowl, beat cream until soft peaks form. Gradually add sugar and vanilla, beating until stiff peaks form. Unroll cake; spread with filling to within 1/2 in. of edges. Top with sliced berries. Roll up again.

Place, seam side down, on serving platter. Chill. Dust with confectioners' sugar. Garnish with reserved strawberries. Refrigerate leftovers. **Yield:** 12 servings.

carrot cupcakes

Doreen Kelly, Rosyln, Pennsylvania

To try to get my family to eat more vegetables, I often hide nutritional foods inside sweet treats. The carrots add wonderful moistness to these cupcakes.

4 eggs
2 cups sugar
1 cup vegetable oil
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon ground allspice
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 cups grated carrots
CHUNKY FROSTING:
1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup butter, softened
2 cups confectioners' sugar
1/2 cup flaked coconut
1/2 cup *each* chopped pecans and chopped raisins

In a large mixing bowl, beat the eggs, sugar and oil. Combine the flour, cinnamon, baking soda, baking powder, allspice and salt; gradually add to egg mixture. Stir in carrots. Fill greased or paper-lined muffin cups two-thirds full. Bake at 325° for 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool for 5 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks.

For frosting, in a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and butter until combined. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar. Stir in coconut, pecans and raisins. Frost cupcakes. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 2 dozen.

pumpkin pound cake

Jean Volk, Jacksonville, Florida

This recipe for spiced pumpkin pound cakes is one I've come to rely on. It's impossible to resist a slice topped with the sweet walnut sauce.

1-1/2 cups butter, softened
2-3/4 cups sugar
6 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup canned pumpkin

WALNUT SAUCE:

1 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
1/4 cup corn syrup
2 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

In a mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in vanilla. Combine the dry ingredients; add to creamed mixture alternately with pumpkin, beating just until combined.

Pour into two greased and floured 9-in. x 5-in. x 3-in. loaf pans. Bake at 350° for 65-70 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks to cool completely.

For sauce, combine brown sugar, cream, corn syrup and butter in a saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Reduce heat; cook and stir 5 minutes longer. Remove from the heat; stir in walnuts and vanilla. Serve warm over the cake. **Yield:** 16 servings.

praline ice cream cake

Joan Hallford, North Richland Hills, Texas

Melted ice cream is a key ingredient in this delectable golden cake. It's been a family favorite for years, we love the pecan praline flavor.

1 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 cup sour cream
2 tablespoons plus 1/2 cup butter, *divided*
2 teaspoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon vanilla extract, *divided*
2 cups vanilla ice cream, softened
2 eggs
1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup graham cracker crumbs
2/3 cup sugar
2-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup chopped pecans, toasted
Whipped cream, optional

In a heavy saucepan, combine the brown sugar, sour cream, 2 tablespoons butter and cornstarch. Cook and stir over medium heat until mixture comes to a boil. Remove from the heat. Stir in 1/2 teaspoon of vanilla; set aside.

Melt the remaining butter; place in a mixing bowl. Add ice cream; stir to blend. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition; stir in the remaining vanilla. Combine the flour, cracker crumbs, sugar, baking powder and salt; gradually add to ice cream mixture until combined.

Pour into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Drizzle with half of the praline sauce. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack.

Add pecans to remaining sauce; spoon over warm cake (sauce will not cover the entire cake top). Cool in pan. Serve with whipped cream if desired. **Yield:** 15 servings.

upside-down german chocolate cake

Mrs. Harold Sanders, Glouster, Ohio

This simple recipe yields a delectable German chocolate cake that folks will "flip over!"

1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1/4 cup butter, cubed
2/3 cup pecan halves
2/3 cup flaked coconut
1/4 cup evaporated milk

CAKE:

1/3 cup butter, softened
1 cup sugar
1 package (4 ounces) German sweet chocolate, melted
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon *each* baking powder and salt
3/4 cup buttermilk

Whipped topping, optional

In a saucepan over low heat, cook and stir brown sugar and butter until sugar is dissolved and butter is melted. Spread into a greased 9-in. square baking pan. Sprinkle with pecans and coconut. Drizzle with evaporated milk; set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in the chocolate, eggs and vanilla. Combine the dry ingredients; add to the creamed mixture alternately with buttermilk. Pour over topping in pan.

Bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 5 minutes before inverting onto a serving plate. Serve with whipped topping if desired. **Yield:** 9 servings.

sour cream chocolate cake

Patsy Foster, Marion, Arkansas

This luscious chocolate cake with irresistible topping and marvelous, from-scratch goodness makes it a classic!

4 squares (1 ounce *each*) unsweetened chocolate, melted and cooled
1 cup water
3/4 cup sour cream
1/4 cup shortening
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 eggs
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 cups sugar
1-1/4 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking powder

FROSTING:

1/2 cup butter, softened
6 squares (1 ounce *each*) unsweetened chocolate, melted and cooled
6 cups confectioners' sugar
1/2 cup sour cream
6 tablespoons milk
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon salt

In a mixing bowl, combine the first six ingredients; mix well. Combine the flour, sugar, baking soda, salt and baking powder; gradually add to chocolate mixture. Beat on low just until moistened. Beat on high 3 minutes.

Pour into two greased and floured 9-in. round baking pans. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near center comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks to cool.

In a mixing bowl, combine frosting ingredients. Beat until smooth. Spread between layers and over top and sides. Store in refrigerator. **Yield:** 12-16 servings.

gingerbread with lemon sauce

Kristen Oak, Pocatello, Idaho

I asked my mother-in-law for this recipe since this spice cake with tangy lemon sauce is my husband's favorite.

1 cup shortening
1 cup sugar
1 cup molasses
2 eggs
3 cups all-purpose flour
1-1/2 teaspoons *each* baking soda and salt
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 cup hot water

LEMON SAUCE:

1/2 cup sugar
2 teaspoons cornstarch
Dash salt
Dash nutmeg
1 cup water
2 egg yolks, beaten
2 tablespoons *each* butter and lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon grated lemon peel

In a large mixing bowl, beat the shortening, sugar, molasses and eggs until well blended. Combine the flour, baking soda, salt, ginger and cinnamon; add to molasses mixture alternately with hot water. Pour into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack.

In a saucepan, combine sugar, cornstarch, salt, nutmeg and water until smooth. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until thickened and bubbly. Reduce heat; cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from heat.

Stir a small amount of hot filling into egg yolks; return all to pan, stirring constantly. Bring to a gentle boil; cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from the heat. Gently stir in butter, lemon juice and peel. Serve with warm cake. Refrigerate leftover sauce. **Yield:** 20 servings.

mississippi mud cake

Tammi Simpson, Greensburg, Kentucky

Make this tempting cake and you'll satisfy kids of all ages. Be prepared to hand out the recipe!

1 cup butter, softened
2 cups sugar
4 eggs
1-1/2 cups self-rising flour
1/2 cup baking cocoa
1 cup chopped pecans
1 jar (7 ounces) marshmallow creme

FROSTING:

1/2 cup butter, softened
3-3/4 cups confectioners' sugar
3 tablespoons baking cocoa
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
4 to 5 tablespoons milk
1 cup chopped pecans

In a mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Combine flour and cocoa; gradually add to creamed mixture. Fold in the pecans.

Transfer to a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool 3 minutes (cake will fall in the center). Spoon marshmallow creme over cake; spread to cover top. Cool.

For frosting, in a mixing bowl, cream butter. Beat in confectioners' sugar, cocoa, vanilla and enough milk to achieve frosting consistency. Fold in pecans. Spread over marshmallow creme layer. Store in the refrigerator. **Yield:** 16-20 servings.

Editor's Note: As a substitute for 1-1/2 cups self-rising flour, place 2-1/4 teaspoons baking powder and 3/4 teaspoon salt in a measuring cup. Add all-purpose flour to measure 1 cup. Combine with an additional 1/2 cup all-purpose flour.

lemon meringue cake

Julie Courie, Macomb, Michigan

This cake tastes just like lemon meringue pie! Fresh lemon flavor shines through in the custard filling between the layers.

1 package (18-1/4 ounces) lemon *or* yellow cake mix
3 eggs
1 cup water
1/3 cup vegetable oil

FILLING:

1 cup sugar
3 tablespoons cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup water
1/4 cup lemon juice
4 egg yolks, beaten
4 teaspoons butter
1 teaspoon grated lemon peel

MERINGUE:

4 egg whites
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
3/4 cup sugar

In a mixing bowl, combine cake mix, eggs, water and oil. Beat on low until moistened. Beat on high for 2 minutes or until blended.

Pour into two greased and floured 9-in. round baking pans. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes; remove from pans to wire racks.

For filling, combine sugar, cornstarch and salt in a saucepan. Stir in water and juice until smooth. Bring to a boil over medium heat; cook and stir 1-2 minutes or until thickened. Remove from heat.

Stir a small amount of hot filling into egg yolks; return all to pan, stirring constantly. Bring to a gentle boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in butter and lemon peel. Cool completely.

For meringue, in a mixing bowl, beat egg whites and cream of tartar until foamy. Gradually beat in sugar on high until stiff peaks form.

To assemble, split each cake into two layers. Place bottom layer on an ovenproof serving plate; spread with a third of the filling. Repeat layers twice. Top with fourth cake layer. Spread meringue over top and sides. Bake at 350° for 10-15 minutes or until meringue is lightly browned. Serve or refrigerate. **Yield:** 12-14 servings.

***** prize winning tips

*I find carrot bread and carrot cake improve in flavor and texture when wrapped and refrigerated for several days before serving.

Kimberly T., Little Rock, Arkansas

*When we used to sell white bakery cakes, we stirred in a tiny bit of orange extract to give the batter a little zip.

Ginny C., St. Louis, Missouri

*Bundt and tube (angel food) cakes should always be baked with the rack placed in the lowest oven position. This allows the most even baking for a large pan.

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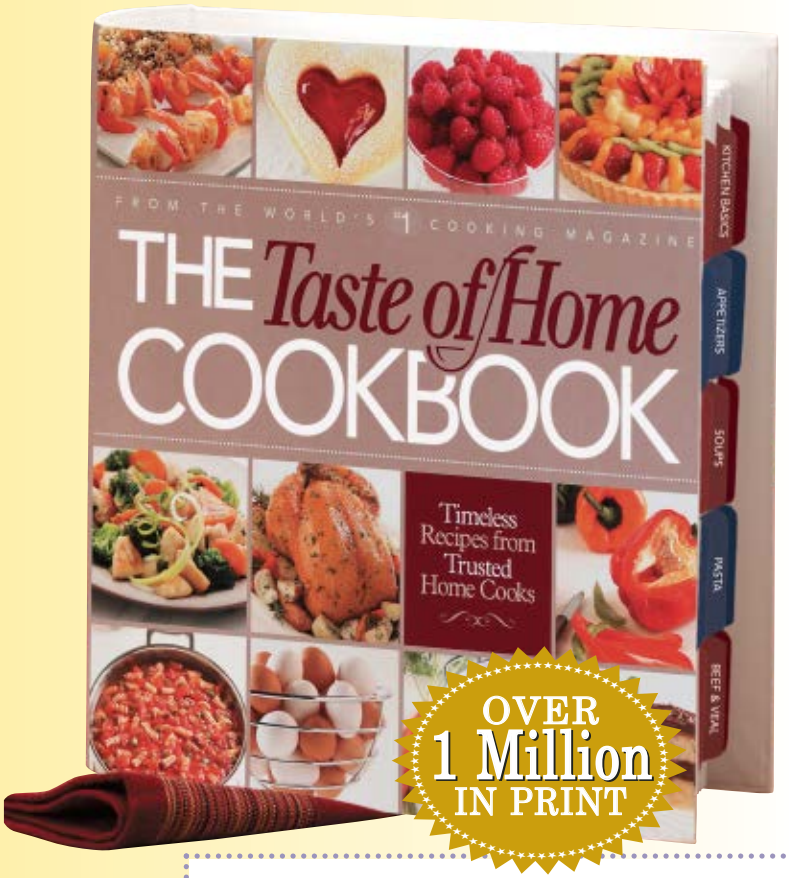

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Roasted Red Pepper & Corn Salsa

You will need:

- ☐ *5 14.5-oz cans petite diced tomatoes*
- ☐ *1 1.3-oz pkg Ball® Simple Creations® Mild Fiesta Salsa Mix*
- ☐ *1 red bell pepper*
- ☐ *1 ear corn on the cob*
- ☐ *1/4 cup chopped white onion*
- ☐ *1 Tbsp chopped fresh cilantro*

1.) COMBINE tomatoes and contents of package in a medium saucepan.

2.) HEAT to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes.

3.) COOL to room temperature, about 30 minutes. Reserve 2 cups salsa. Set aside.

4.) LADLE remaining salsa into clean freezer jars leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Apply lids. Refrigerate up to three weeks or freeze up to one year.

5.) ROAST pepper and corn under a broiler on high until skins wrinkle and char in spots, turning occasionally to roast all sides. Place pepper in paper bag, secure opening and allow to cool, about 10 minutes. Peel, seed and chop pepper. Cut kernels from cob.

6.) COMBINE reserved salsa, roasted red pepper, roasted corn, onion and cilantro in a medium mixing bowl. Serve with tortilla chips.

Yield: about 3 cups.

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