



holiday favourites

by
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from my home to yours. . .



I've always loved Christmas baking. As soon as the snow started to fly, my family would whip open the recipe books. We'd spend many nights curled up with a recipe book on our laps, picking our favourites and the new ones we wanted to try, to make the ultimate Christmas dainty tray.

I would flip through the pages, specifically looking for the dirtiest ones. Sure enough, those pages contained the best recipes, complete with little notes in the margins about how good the recipe was, any changes I would make, and often who was there or what occasion I made it for the first time.

As an adult, I took my Christmas baking to a whole other level. As a private music teacher, I would often be responsible for at least 6 different Christmas recitals, almost all of which I'd have to provide some (or all) of the baking for. As soon as November 1st hit, I would start making 3 recipes every week, so that by the time the Christmas recital season started, I had a freezer full of goodies to feed at least 300 people spread out over all those receptions.

Roles reversed when my grandma would help me do all this baking every Tuesday afternoon. Even though she took on the role of sous chef, she'd still dutifully check everything I made, making sure that my impatience didn't make me underbake anything.

While I would sometimes get annoyed, I miss her fiercely every year I open up the recipe books and wish that she was still here to putter around with me in the kitchen. What I wouldn't give to taste another slice of her bread, or see her smile when we'd sit my son in the kitchen sink so he could watch us bake.

I hope you'll love these recipes as much as I do and that they will inspire many loving memories in your own kitchens.

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Prep

10 min

Chill

2 hours

Ready in

2.5 hours

quick & easy *Fudge*

Ingredients

3 cups semi-sweet chocolate morsels
1 can Eagles Brand Sweetened
Condensed Milk (or homemade recipe)
Dash of salt
1.5 tsp vanilla

Optional toppings/decorations:
1/2 c nuts (stir in, or crush and
sprinkle on top)
Mini marshmallows
White Chocolate chips (melt and
drizzle for decoration)
Coconut flakes

Directions

- 1** Melt chocolate in a bowl over a water bath. Stir in sweetened condensed milk, salt, and vanilla. Combine until smooth.
- 2** Add any additional (optional) ingredients you want in the fudge (nuts, marshmallows, etc.). Pour & spread evenly into an 8×8 pan lined with wax or parchment paper. This is a great time to add toppers!
- 3** Refrigerate for 2 hours, or until set, and then remove from pan & paper and cover tightly with plastic wrap to avoid it drying out. If cutting into several pieces at once (sometimes mini cookie cutters are nice for this), set it out on the counter for 20 minutes or so to soften enough for neater, easier cuts.

The Easiest Quick Gift



When the holidays hit, I am all about having a quick and easy present ready and available to give in a pinch--something I can easily give as a hostess gift to the neighbour who shovels my snow or to someone in my life who needs a lift.

That's why I love this fudge recipe. I'll make 4-8 batches of it using a variety of mix-ins and sprinkles. Once the fudge has cooled, I cut it into 8 larger bars and individually wrap them.

Then, when I need a quick gift, it's easy to grab a cute Christmas tin from the dollar store, line it with tissue paper, pick 3-4 varieties of fudge--and done!



variations *for easy Christmas gifts*

with White Chocolate

- Cranberries
- Crushed candy canes
- Crushed Oreos
- Snowflake, blue & white sprinkles
- Multi-coloured marshmallows

with Milk Chocolate

- Pretzels
- Skor Bits
- Red & Green Sprinkles
- Walnuts
- Slivered Almonds & Caramel drizzle

with Dark Chocolate

- Drizzle of White or Milk chocolate on top
- Dried cherries
- Sprinkling of Sea Salt
- Pistachios
- Orange flavouring
- Mint flavouring

homemade

Sweetened Condensed Milk

Ingredients

1 cup powdered sugar
2/3 cup white sugar
1/3 cup water
1/4 cup butter

Directions

Combine ingredients in a blender until extremely smooth. If your blender is low-quality, I suggest using boiling water to better dissolve the sugar.

Use in the fudge, coffee creamer, or Marshmallow Toffee Rice Krispie balls recipes.

Unused sweetened condensed milk can store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.



Tips for Kids in the Kitchen

Even though it can be messy and stressful, it's so important to include your children in the baking process if they show interest. Here's how I keep my sanity while letting my young kids help.

- Give them a small job. Stirring, bringing out a bowl, or dumping in ingredients are all perfect tasks for little hands.
- Be okay with imperfection. Your toddler is likely going to stir the batter too much or not enough--and that is okay! It's more important that you install a love of baking than have the perfect texture of cookie.
- Give them their own little piece of dough (or whatever you're making) to shape however they like. And it's totally normal and fine if they just play with the dough and run away. You've still provided them with a sensory experience.



Prep

15 min

Cook

15 min

Ready in

30 min

cranberry *Butter Tarts*

Ingredients

3 1/2 cup butter
1 beaten egg
1 cup brown sugar
1 tbsp flour
1 tsp vanilla
2 tbsp cream
1 cup dried cranberries
16 tart pastry shells

Directions

- 1** Combine all ingredients (except shells) into a pot over medium-high heat.
- 2** Stir until combined and melted and remove from heat once boiling.
- 3** Fill tart shells.
- 4** Bake at 350 for 15 minutes.
- 5** Cool and serve.

Note

If you don't like cranberries, you can omit them. These are perfectly delicious without the cranberries and hold up to any classic butter tart recipe. You could also replace the cranberries with raisins or chopped walnuts.

Prep

20 min

Cook

30 min

Additional

60 min

Ready in

1 hr 50 min

Sour Cherry Tarts



Ingredients

6 cups pitted sour cherries
2 cups white sugar
1 heaping tbsp cornstarch
2-3 tbsp water
1 package pastry tart shells
(approximately 30 in a package)
Whipped cream to garnish

Optional: Edible flowers and
thyme for garnish.

Directions

1. Pit sour cherries if you haven't done so already. The additional time in the recipe is how long you should allow yourself to pit the cherries.
2. Combine cherries and sugar in a saucepan. Cook on medium-high heat.
3. Mix together the water and cornstarch in a small dish. Mixing with water helps to avoid lumps in the sauce. Add to the cherry and sugar mixture when it boils.
4. Stir the mixture until it thickens, approximately 1-2 minutes. If it does not thicken, add more cornstarch and water.
5. Let cherries cool slightly, then spoon evenly into tart shells.
6. Bake at 375 degrees for approximately 30 minutes. The time will vary depending on your oven. The crust of the tarts should be golden brown when finished.
7. Let cool completely. Add whipped cream, edible flowers (I used violas) and thyme for garnish if you wish.

Notes

This recipe used two cups of sugar, but you can easily change the amount to suit your own tastes. I would use 1 cup if you like sour foods, 2 cups for most people, and 3 cups if you're making these for kids or don't enjoy sour foods as much. I personally do 2 cups if I'm planning on serving them with whipped cream or ice cream, and 3 if I think I'll be eating them plain.



The different sides of my family couldn't have been more different on Christmas Day. On my Dad's side, it was just our little family of 3 and my grandma. On my mom's side, there were 10 kids plus all of their spouses and kids pouring into one 1000 sqft home for the holidays. It was loud, chaotic, and survival of the fittest.

And I loved it.

Food was served basically every hour on the hour, but you wouldn't know it by the rate at which the food disappeared. There was always enough of the main meal to go around, but dessert was always an assortment of squares and cookies.

The "Grandma Portion"

If you didn't act fast you were not guaranteed your favourites. As the years went on, the number of favourites increased, and it became clear that even though it was Christmas, I should probably attempt some vague restraint.

The solution? The Grandma Portion.

Instead of taking one of everything you wanted, you would grab a knife and serve yourself half of a portion. You could still enjoy your favourites, and pat yourself on the back because you were being "reasonable with calories."

The kicker?

It was pretty much guaranteed that you'd be back for the other half within 15 minutes.

Moral of the story?

It's Christmas. Pick your favourites and enjoy the full slice.

Prep

15 min

Cook

40 min

Additional

4 hrs

Ready in

4 hrs 55 min

cheesecake

Brownie Bites

Ingredients

Cheesecake topping:
2 8 oz pkgs cream cheese
2 eggs, slightly beaten
2/3 cup sugar
2 tsp vanilla
1 cup chocolate chips

Brownie bottom:
2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 cup butter
1 1/4 cups flour
4 beaten eggs
2 tsp baking powder

Directions

- 1** Combine cheesecake and brownie ingredients in separate bowls.
- 2** Spread brownie mixture evenly on the bottom of a baking pan. Cover with cheesecake mixture.
- 3** Bake at 350 for 40 minutes. It's done when the edges are golden brown. The centre will not look done, but it is.
- 4** Cool and put in the fridge to set for at least 4 hours (preferably overnight). Cut and serve. (Tip: Do not cut into the dessert before it has cooled completely.)

No Bake

Peppermint Mocha Cheesecake Bites



Prep	Cook	Ready in
30 min	2 hrs	2 hrs 30 min

Ingredients

- 1 box of oreos (36 cookies)
- 1/2 cup melted butter
- 2 envelopes powdered whip topping
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 cup cold brew coffee
- 2 bricks cream cheese
- 4 crushed candy canes

Directions

1. Start by pulsing the Oreos in a food processor. Put in a bowl and add the melted butter. Press approximately 1 heaping tablespoon of the mixture into the bottom of 2 lined muffin tins. Set aside.
2. In your mixer or another bowl, combine powdered whipped cream, milk, and cold brew. Whip until soft peaks form.
3. In another bowl, mix cream cheese with a small amount of the coffee whip until smooth and no lumps remain. Add in the rest of the whipped cream mixture. Spoon over top of oreo mixture
4. Crush four candy canes and sprinkle them on top. Crushed Coffee Crisp tastes great too!
5. Set in fridge for at least 2 hours or freeze. If you choose to freeze them, let thaw 10-15 minutes before serving.

In the small town where I grew up, everyone's grandma had what I thought was a fruit cake recipe. And everyone's grandma knew that theirs was the best... obviously. And like most young children, I broke my grandma's heart repeatedly, by not liking the treasured "fruit cake" and eating only one, small slice each season just to make her happy.

Imagine my surprise when I grew up, learned that the "fruit cake" was actually fruit bread... and that I really liked it.

Our family's version of Hutzelbrot is actually some sort of odd combination of hutzelbrot (apricot bread), white fruit bread, and stollen. The ingredients resemble Bremer Klaben, but there are no nuts or alcohol and the ratio of bread to fruit is wrong. I personally like to think of it as fruit cake (actually, bread) for people who hate fruit cake.

It's best served at breakfast or for a snack, with heaps of butter or jam. Traditionally you're supposed to let fruit bread cure for a couple of days, but I wouldn't recommend it with this version.

Fruit cake for people who hate fruit cake.



I don't think the sugar or alcohol content is high enough to preserve it. And honestly, who can resist a slice of warm, fresh bread straight out of the oven?

And if you happen to be from Humboldt, SK? Make sure you buy your dried fruit EARLY. If you wait until December, everyone else's grandma will have beat you to it.



Prep

2 hr 30 min

Cook

40 min

Ready in

3 hr 10 min

Hutzelbrot

German Fruit Bread

Ingredients

2 1/2 cups dried fruit such as peaches, pears, apples, figs, apricots, prunes, cranberries, or currants.

1/2 cup of raisins

5 1/4 cups unbleached white flour

1/2 cup warm water

1 1/2 tbsp dry yeast

1/2 tsp sugar or honey

1 cup liquid from cooking fruit

1 tsp cinnamon

1 tsp salt

1 tsp grated lemon or orange peel

1/2 tsp ground cloves

1/4 cup honey

1/2 cup melted butter

Directions

1. Boil all fruit except raisins. Drain and set one cup of liquid aside for use in the bread recipe.
2. Combine sugar, yeast and 1/2 cup warm water and let yeast rise for 10 minutes.
3. Put all ingredients in a mixer and mix with a dough hook until the dough makes a nice soft ball. You can mix by hand, but it is very difficult dough to work with and I don't recommend it for beginners.
4. Place dough in a greased bowl, cover with a tea towel, and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size. This can range from 1-2 hours depending on the humidity level where you live.
5. Punch down and shape into loaves. Place in greased bread pans and poke holes in the top with a fork. Let rise for 30 minutes to 1 hour.
6. Bake at 350 for 40-50 minutes, or 25-30 minutes if you use smaller loaf pans.

The Time I Tried to Impress My New Jamaican Relatives *and failed miserably*

It was December 24th, 2017 and I was spending Christmas away from my mom and in a place without snow for the first time in my entire life. And while I was having a wonderful time, I was really missing having Christmas baking.

Everything was different in Jamaica (obviously) but it seemed easy enough to find the ingredients for my favourite shortbread cookies.

I was a woman on a mission!

I dutifully made those cookies in the plus 30 temps, dreaming of a little bite of home.

What I ended up with was a runny mess of cookie-like substance that wasn't really fit for anyone--and certainly not our new family members that would be visiting in a few days!! (My sister-in-law had married a man from Jamaica and we were there meeting his family for the first time.)

I did not take into account how the difference in fat content in the baking ingredients, plus the humidity in the air, plus the 60 degree temperature difference that I usually bake these cookies in would vastly change my results.



Side note: I can't believe I actually posed for this picture.

Side-side-note: Aren't they truly awful looking?

Final side note: I still can't believe my husband thought these were okay to serve.

But I had never tried baking in another country before except the US--and even then it was in Wisconsin which has a somewhat similar climate.

Those cookies felt like an insult to injury. I was a partial food blogger for goodness sake. How could I mess up cookies so badly?!

Horried and a little sad, I ate my runny, shameful cookies and hid the rest away.

On Christmas Day we had an amazing breakfast, opened a few presents, and headed out to spend a few days with my new brother-in-law's family.

We had the best time, and all my sadness over the failed cookies was long forgotten.

A few days later and we wanted to see them one last time before we left. The plan was that they would come to our Airbnb for the day, and we'd

go swimming and do some other fun stuff around the complex.

The family arrives and our hosting manners kick in. What can we serve everyone after they've been driving for 3 hours to see us?

Suddenly, my husband remembers the failure cookies. He grabs them from their hiding place in the cupboard, sets them out on a platter and everyone digs in.

My cheeks are red, my heart is pounding, and I'm waiting for everyone to say how awful they are.

To my surprise and delight, my new family members are so excited to try them and love them! They've never tasted anything like them and some of them even grab seconds.

It just goes to show that sugar is sugar, and unless you burn it or add way too much of it--it's really hard to mess up.

So to my family in Jamaica, if you are reading this, I promise that if you're ever in Canada for Christmas, I'll make you the proper version of these cookies!



Prep

10 min

Cook

20 min

Ready in

30 min

Shortbread



Ingredients

1 cup corn starch,
1 cup icing sugar,
2 cups flour,
1 1/2 cups butter, softened

Directions

- 1** Mix all ingredients and spoon on to a cookie sheet.
- 2** Optional: chill for 30 minutes and roll out for a cut cookie.
- 3** Apply sprinkles or cherries before baking
- 4** Bake at 300 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 to 20 minutes. Cookies should have the barest hint of light brown at the edges. Makes 48 small cookies

Variation

So what makes these shortbread cookies even better? A quick dip in white chocolate and snowflake sprinkles. Don't worry about buying one of those expensive containers of winter-themed sprinkles. Go to your nearest bulk store and purchase snowflake sprinkles, coarse sugar, and those little shiny silver balls. To warm up the chocolate, microwave for 30 seconds at a time until the pieces are mostly melted. Stir vigorously to melt the remaining pieces. Dip half the cookie in the melted chocolate, then immediately dip in the sprinkle mixture. Set on a piece of wax paper to dry, and you'll have beautiful, drool-worthy shortbread cookies in minutes.

Sugar Cookies

that are (almost) too pretty to eat!



Most of the recipes in this ebook are beginner-friendly, and designed to come together as easily as possible to make you be the holiday hero. If you are not particularly artistic and don't enjoy painting, you're likely already scrolling past.

But don't write it off--even the most non-creative person can still manage the trees and candy canes! If you can draw a short line, you can successfully make these cookies.

So grab a paintbrush, a plate, and some food colouring, and have fun decorating! I also highly recommend watching a Shayda Campbell watercolour video or two on YouTube to get your creative juices flowing.

I'd love to see your results! Tag me @shifting_roots on IG.

Sugar Cookies

Prep
75 min

Cook
8 min

Ready in
85 min

Ingredients

2 cups sugar
1 lb butter
4 eggs
5 cups flour
2 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
4 tsp cream of tartar
1/4 tsp nutmeg

DIRECTIONS

1. Cream sugar and butter.
2. Add eggs on at a time, beating after each egg.
3. Sift together the flour, baking soda, salt, cream of tartar and nutmeg. Add to butter mixture.
4. Knead to make a soft dough. Chill for 30-60 minutes.
5. Roll out on lightly floured surface to 1/4 inch thickness. Cut into shapes with floured cookie cutter.
6. Bake at 375 Fahrenheit for 6-8 minutes. Decorate as desired. If you don't want to ice the cookie, sprinkle with coarse sugar before baking.



Watercolour Variation

Additional

60 min

NOTES

Once you make the sugar cookies, it's time to decorate with a base of royal icing (recipe on pg. 23). Pipe a border around the cookie, and fill in with lines of icing. Then fill out any spaces by scratching over the cookie with a toothpick. It works best if you do one cookie from start to finish at a time. Leave the cookies to dry overnight. If the icing is even slightly wet, the cookies will not look as nice when you decorate them.

When it's time to decorate, you will need:

- A clean plate
- food colouring (liquid is fine, but gel works better)
- small container of water
- 1 thin clean brush
- 1 thick clean brush

Put one or two dots of food colouring on the plate, and add 3-4 drops of water to each colour. Then you can use the colours as-is, or combine them to create whatever colours you desire. Since Christmas cookies lend themselves to using a lot of green, I like to make 4 greens: a brown-green, blue-green, yellow-green, and a truer green with a little dab of red to mute it. Once your palette is ready, it's time to decorate!

on Christmas Mornings...

Christmas morning can be one of the best mornings of the year--but the joy can get sucked right out of it when you're "the Mom" and instead of enjoying your kids opening presents, you're trying to make breakfast while getting everyone packed to go somewhere or rush off to church. That's why these baked eggs are GENIUS.



Simple and fast to make, a hit of protein in case lunch doesn't appear on time, and easy enough that you can pop these in the oven then go relax on the couch with a coffee.

Serve these with a tray of cut up fruit, a few slices of toast, and some bacon (that you've baked in the oven of course--no slaving over a hot stove for you!!) and you've got a decadent breakfast in a fraction of the time of literally any other special meal you could make.

Win-win. Now go back and drink that coffee.

Baked Eggs

The perfect Christmas morning breakfast.



Prep Cook Ready in

10 min

20 min

30 min

Ingredients

12 large eggs

1/2 cup cream

1 cup shredded cheese

salt and pepper to taste

fresh chives optional

Directions

1. Generously grease a muffin tin with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Crack an egg into each muffin tin. Add a splash of cream. You can easily substitute milk or any alternative milk.
3. Add salt and pepper to taste.
4. Sprinkle approximately 2 tsp of cheddar cheese on each egg.
5. Bake in a 350 Fahrenheit oven for 15-20 minutes, or until cheese is melted and a little bubbly.
6. Add fresh chives if desired and serve.

Basic Cupcakes



Prep 15 min **Cook** 25 min **Ready in** 60 min

Ingredients

1 cup finely shredded zucchini
2 eggs
1 cup sugar
1 cup milk
1 tsp vanilla
1/2 cup cocoa powder (optional)
2 cups flour (or 1 1/2 cups if making chocolate cupcakes)
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
pinch of salt



Directions

1. Combine zucchini, sugar, and all wet ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Add flour, baking powder, and baking soda (and cocoa powder for chocolate cupcakes) and stir until just combined.
3. Line muffin pan with liners, fill 3/4 of the way, and bake for 20-25 minutes in a 350 degree oven.
4. Prepare icing (if desired)
5. Pipe icing on cooled cupcakes and decorate as desired.



Royal Icing

Prep
10 min

Cook
10 min

Ready in
20 min



Ingredients

1 lb. powdered sugar
3 egg whites
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

1. Sift sugar into bowl. Add remaining ingredients. Mix on low with an electric mixer until sugar is completely mixed in. Increase speed to medium and beat for 5 minutes. Check for stiff peaks.
2. If needed, increase speed to medium-high and continue beating icing, watching closely for stiff peaks. Once peaks are formed, transfer to bowls and cover with plastic wrap. Press the wrap onto the icing to prevent crusting.
3. Add gel food colouring, if desired. The icing can also be thinned with water to fill in piped outlines.

Buttercream Icing

Prep
5 min

Cook
10 min

Ready in
15 min

Ingredients

1 cup butter, salted,
2 cups icing sugar
1 tsp vanilla
milk to desired consistency,
approximately 3-6 tsp

DIRECTIONS

1. Whip 1 cup softened butter, vanilla, and 2 cups icing sugar together.
2. Add milk to desired consistency. (I've found that this varies wildly on the day I'm baking and how much humidity is in the air.) Add any desired ad-ins (food colouring, crushed candies or chocolates, etc.) and stir.
3. Pipe icing on cooled cupcakes and decorate as desired.





Building a gingerbread house was something that I always dreamed of doing as a kid. We didn't go to the city a lot in those days, but I'll never forget the one time we went to the Festival of Trees and looked at the fancy gingerbread house contest.

I was blown away. The tall structures, the candy-stained glass windows, and the clever way they made ice cream cones and icing into magnificent trees.

I never imagined you could make something so amazing with sugar!

Fast-forward twenty years, and I was a Mom with a toddler looking for new Christmas traditions to do and ways to keep him occupied. Bonus if it worked on his fine motor skills too!

Enter, the gingerbread house-making kit. While that grocery store kit was a far cry from the structures in my memory, it was reasonably priced, fun to make, and kept my toddler occupied and happy for at least an hour. Whenever we had kid guests, I would buy the kits with multiple houses so each kid could have their own little house.

Add in a few extra candies and some Christmas music and you've got a memory in the making!



The Gingerbread House

Icebox Cookies

Prep

20 min

Chill

4 hr

Cook

10 min

Ready in

4 hr 30 min

Ingredients

1 cup unsalted butter, softened
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1 large egg
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking powder
3/4 tsp salt
optional add-ins: sprinkles,
chopped nuts, chopped
chocolate

DIRECTIONS

1. Cream together butter, sugar, egg, and vanilla.
2. In a separate, medium-sized bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add to butter mixture until completely combined.
3. If stirring in add-ins, mix them in here.
4. Divide dough into two halves and lightly flour your hands. Form each half into a log about 1 1/2-2 inches in diameter.
5. Wrap dough logs in plastic wrap and refrigerate. Chill dough for at least 4 hours, but preferably overnight (or up to a week).
6. When you are ready to bake, slice into 1/4 inch slices and transfer to a lined baking sheet, spacing cookies at least 2 inches apart.
7. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes or until edges are just beginning to turn light golden brown.

Gingersnaps

Prep

10 min

Cook

12 min

Ready in

22 min

Ingredients

1 cup white sugar
3/4 cup margarine, softened
1 egg
4 tbsp molasses
2 cups flour
1 tsp salt
2 tsp baking soda
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp cloves
1 tsp ginger

DIRECTIONS

1. Cream together the sugar, margarine, eggs, and molasses until fluffy.
2. Sift together dry ingredients and add to creamed mixture.
3. Roll small (walnut-sized) balls of dough in sugar and bake on a greased cookie sheet in 350 Fahrenheit oven for approximately 12 minutes.

NOTES

If you add more flour, and roll out the dough, this is a perfect recipe for gingerbread men!

Prep

10 min

Cook

10 min

Ready in

20 min

Kid-Friendly **Snowballs**

Ingredients

1 cup butter
1/2 cup icing sugar
1/2 tsp vanilla
2 cups flour
maraschino cherries for
centres
white sugar for rolling.

Directions

- 1** Cream butter, icing sugar, flour, and vanilla together.
 - 2** Drain and dry cherries.
 - 3** Roll dough into balls. Flatten and roll around cherry.
 - 4** Bake at 300F for 8-10 minutes.
 - 5** Cool 2 minutes and roll into white sugar.
-

Goosey Cinnamon Buns



Prep Cook Ready in

1 hr 40 min 20 min 2 hr

Ingredients

1 tbsp yeast
1 tbsp sugar
1 cup warm water
2 eggs
5 cups flour
pinch of salt
cinnamon for sprinkling
brown sugar for sprinkling
1/2 cup melted butter for rolls
1 cup cream
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup butter

Directions

1. Dissolve sugar in warm water and add yeast. Let sit for 10 minutes.
2. Whisk in two eggs. Add flour one cup at a time and mix with dough hook. Add in the pinch of salt with one of your cups of flour. Do not add salt before the flour, as it can make the yeast less effective.
3. Let the dough rise in a greased bowl for 60-90 minutes or until doubled. If it is cold outside, let rise in an oven that has been warmed up and turned off.
4. To make sauce, combine the cream, brown sugar, and butter in a saucepan and mix until combined. Do not boil.
5. When the dough has doubled, punch down and divide into 4 smaller balls. Roll out into a rectangle.
6. Spread over some of the melted butter. Sprinkle brown sugar and cinnamon. Roll up and cut into pieces with a string.
7. Set in a greased pie plate or casserole dish and pour in some sauce. Reserve a bit of sauce for drizzling at the end.
8. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 15-20 minutes or until light golden brown. Drizzle with reserved sauce and enjoy!

a little more about St. Lucia Day

St. Lucia Day is a Christian feast day observed on December 13th. This day commemorates Lucia of Syracuse, a 4th-century martyr who secretly brought food to Christians hiding in the catacombs under Rome. St. Lucia is known for wearing a candlelit wreath on her head, keeping her hands free to carry as much as possible.

My family was more of a St. Nicholas Day family than a St. Lucia Day family, but we started observing the day because of one of my dear friends. Her family throws a St. Lucia Day party every morning of December 13th--and from 6am to 10am her parents' household is filled with strong coffee, delicious sweets, candlelight, laughter and fun.

The day starts with the eldest daughter of the house donning the St. Lucia Day crown and white robe and serving the first guests. My friend is not the oldest and also has two sisters, so in fairness they take turns playing St. Lucia every year.

After that the music begins!

My husband (then fiancé) and I had been invited to help provide the entertainment. My friend is a very accomplished accompanist, and all three of us sing well, so we were a natural fit to make the morning festive!

I love singing Christmas carols, and the whole experience was so much fun! I can't wait for the day when my friend starts hosting her own St. Lucia Day party--I'll be there in a heartbeat and I'll be bringing these buns!

My friend's Mom shared her recipe for St. Lucia Day buns with me, but the directions were from a different era. Nobody uses yeast cakes anymore, and the writer of the recipe assumed that you were a very proficient baker and would know how to roll the dough into the special shape AND know how long to let them rise.

Needless to say, my first attempt looked like a bunch of sad sea cucumbers. I decided to salvage the situation, and turned the dough into cinnamon buns instead.

But the second time? I got it right, and those are the St. Lucia Day buns you see here.

Prep

30 min

Cook

20 min

Ready in

50 min

St. Lucia Day Buns



Ingredients

2 tbsp yeast
1 tsp sugar
1/2 cup lukewarm water
1 1/2 cups light cream
2 tbsp Saffron threads
3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup butter
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp cardamom
4-6 cups flour
1/2 cup ground blanched almonds
2 eggs
1 egg white

Directions

1. Dissolve sugar in lukewarm water. Add yeast and set aside for 10 minutes.
2. In a saucepan, combine light cream, saffron threads, sugar, butter, cinnamon, and cardamom until just before boiling. Set aside.
3. Add eggs, flour, almonds, & cream mixture to the yeast. Start with 4 cups of flour and gradually add 1/2 cup of flour at a time.
4. Let the dough rise until doubled.
5. Roll out dough with a rolling pin and use a pizza cutter or sharp knife to cut dough into equally sized strips. Shape the dough into S-shapes as seen in the picture. Brush egg wash on your buns. (Note: Do not let your buns rise once they are in the S-shape. You will lose the beautiful shape.)
6. Bake for 15-20 minutes at 350 degrees or until golden brown.
7. Serve these buns the morning of December 13th with a cup of tea and enjoy!

St. Lucia-Inspired Cinnamon Buns

Prep **Cook** **Ready in**

30 min 20 min 50 min

Ingredients

2 tbsp yeast
1 tsp sugar
1/2 cup lukewarm water
1 1/2 cups light cream
1/4 tsp Saffron threads (optional)
3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup butter
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp allspice
5 1/2 cups flour
1/2 cup ground blanched almonds
2 eggs
1/4 cup melted butter
1/4 cup brown sugar
2 tbsp water
1/2 tsp vanilla
2/3 cup icing sugar

Directions

1. Dissolve tsp of sugar in lukewarm water. Add yeast and set aside for 10 minutes.
2. In a saucepan, combine light cream, saffron threads, sugar, butter, cinnamon, and allspice until just before boiling. Set aside.
3. Add eggs, flour, and almonds to the yeast mixture. Add cream mixture a little at a time, so you don't end up with scrambled eggs.
4. Mix dough until it is nice and elastic. Put in a greased bowl and set to rise in a warm place until doubled in size.
5. When doubled, punch down and roll into a rectangle. Do this on a surface that is safe to cut on! Spread melted butter and disperse brown sugar. Cut in thin strips.
6. Roll one half of each strip, twist, then roll other side. Let buns rise to desired size.
7. Bake at 350 for approximately 20 minutes.
8. Make a thin icing with water, vanilla, and icing sugar. Drizzle over warm cinnamon buns.



Kristen's Basic Bread

Prep
10 min

Cook
12 min

Ready in
22 min



Ingredients

3/4 cup warm water
1 tsp sugar
3 tbsp traditional yeast

6 eggs
1 cup sugar
1 cup oil
1 tbsp salt
3 cups warm water
app. 12 cups flour

DIRECTIONS

1. Stir water and sugar together. Sprinkle yeast over top. Let stand for 10 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, beat eggs, add sugar, oil, and salt. Mix in water and risen yeast mixture. Mix flour in gradually, mixing well.
3. When mixer can no longer handle it, turn dough out onto floured surface and work in flour, kneading it until it is smooth and not sticky.
4. Cover and let stand until doubled in size, about 1 hour.
5. Roll into balls with buttered hands and place on greased cookie sheets. Cover and let rise for about 3 hours.
6. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Yields 7 dozen.

NOTES

If you'd like to make bread instead, this recipe fits nicely into 4 standard loaf pans.

Fun Fact: This humble recipe is the basis of almost every single bread-type recipe in this book and elsewhere on the blog. I've made it so many times that I don't even use the recipe anymore.

the right dough consistency

Making bread is one of those skills that are best learned by doing it with a more experienced bread baker. There's a particular feel to the dough that's hard to properly explain. But once you know that feeling? You're set!

If you don't have someone in real life to bake with, here's my best description of what you're looking for. The dough should be ever so slightly tacky, but not sticky. The dough threatens to stick to your fingers but ultimately doesn't. If the dough has so much flour that there's no chance of it sticking, there is too much flour.





The Classic "Dad" Gift

Dads can be notoriously hard people to buy for. Sure, your dad might be into tools, golf, sports, or hunting--but those aren't always the easiest interests to buy for when you're a kid.

I can't speak for all Dad's everywhere, but I'm sure they're also quite tired of getting socks, ties, and underwear.

One thing I COULD reliably get my dad every year that I knew he would love were Turtles chocolates. As soon as the boxes hit store shelves every November, I would grab one faster than you can say "Mmm... I love Turtles."

And wouldn't you know it, years later I married a man who also had Turtles high up on his wishlist.

For many years, Turtles were a reasonably priced and reliable gift that most people loved--until a few years ago when the price really took a jump up.

I was not paying \$13 for a box of Turtles--especially since over the years the amount of Turtles in the box seemed to be less and less. So I made my own.

While the ingredients aren't cheap either, you definitely get a lot more bang for your buck--and they'll be the first thing to run out in your Christmas baking tray.

Prep

25 min

Cook

30 min

Ready in

55 min

Homemade Turtles

Ingredients

200 grams pecans
2 cups chocolate chips
2 tablespoons coconut oil
Caramel:
1/4 cup butter
1/4 cup corn syrup
1 can sweetened condensed milk (11oz)
1 1/4 cups brown sugar

Directions

1. Place pecans in 40 small clusters, approximately 4 pecan halves in a cluster, on a cookie sheet covered in wax paper or a silicon mat.
2. Melt caramel ingredients in a saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring constantly the entire time. Once the caramel starts boiling, stir for exactly 7 minutes. Do not go over 7 minutes.
3. Spoon caramel mixture over pecan clusters.
4. Freeze for approximately 30 minutes.
5. Melt chocolate and coconut oil. If using the microwave instead of a double boiler, warm for no more than 30 seconds at a time, for no more than 90 seconds.
6. Dunk clusters in the chocolate, covering completely and dripping off excess chocolate. Place back on the cookie sheet.
7. Let chocolate dry completely, or freeze again to speed up the process.

Note

If pecans are pricy where you live, you can replace them with walnuts for a very similar taste.

Prep

25 min

Cook

5 min

Ready in

30 min

Chocolate-Covered **Rice Krispie Trees**



Ingredients

6 cups Rice Krispie cereal
40 large marshmallows
1/2 cup butter
1 tsp vanilla
1 1/2 cups white chocolate melting wafers
sprinkles

Directions

- 1** Melt butter, marshmallows and butter in a large bowl in the microwave for approximately 5 minutes, setting the microwave one minute at a time and stirring in between.
- 2** Add Rice Krispies and press into a large cookie sheet. Allow to cool. Cut Christmas tree shapes with cookie cutter.
- 3** Melt chocolate wafers and dip in Rice Krispie treats. Add sprinkles if desired. Work fast, as the chocolate dries quickly!

Beef Birds

A family favourite for special occasions



While beef birds aren't baking, my Christmas recipe book wouldn't be complete without them. These are not my typical quick-and-easy recipe, and are something that you'll probably only make once a year at either Christmas or New Years. But the fuss is totally worth it! If you're someone who likes to make memorable dishes that people talk about for years--you need to make this!

Prep Cook Ready in

1 hr 1 hr 30 min 2 hr 30 min

Ingredients

3-4 lbs beef roast
2 packages Stovetop stuffing
1/2 cup flour
oil for frying
2 cans tomato soup
3/4 can of hot water
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper
1 tsp dried onion flakes
1/2 tsp garlic powder

Directions

1. Cut beef into 1/3 inch to 1/2 inch slices.
2. Tenderize each slice.
3. Wrap a small amount of stuffing in each beef slice and secure with a tooth pick. Approximately a tbsp worth, but it will depend on the size of your slice of beef.
4. Fry rolls until browned.
5. Place the rolls in a 9 x 13 sized casserole dish.
6. In another bowl, mix together soup, water, and spices. Pour over the rolls.
7. Cook at 350 Fahrenheit for 90 minutes.
8. Serve over rice or pasta, and enjoy!

The page features a light grey background with festive decorations. In the top left corner, there are red berries on a branch. In the top right, there is a red textured fabric and a green evergreen branch. The recipe title 'Almond Roca' is centered in a large, bold, black serif font within a white rectangular box. Below the title, the ingredients and directions are listed in a clean, sans-serif font. The ingredients are on the left and the directions are on the right, separated by a vertical line. The bottom of the page has a dark green banner with the website URL and the page number.

Prep

15 min

Cook

15 min

Ready in

30 min

Almond Roca

Ingredients

1 sleeve soda crackers (2 for a large cookie sheet)
1 cup butter
1 cup brown sugar
3/4 cup slivered almonds,
1/2 cup milk chocolate chips, melted
1/2 cup white chocolate chips, melted

Directions

1. Line cookie sheet with tinfoil. Spray with cooking oil.
2. Layer crackers.
3. Bring butter and brown sugar to a boil for 2 minutes, stirring often.
4. Pour over crackers and bake in a 325 oven for 10 minutes. Turn off oven. Sprinkle with almonds and return to the oven for 5 minutes.
5. Cool. Drizzle melted milk & white chocolate chips, alternating colours.
6. Cut in squares and serve.

Sometimes, a recipe just goes easier with a helper or two. That's the case for these next two recipes--Oreo Cookies and Caramel Marshmallow Treats.

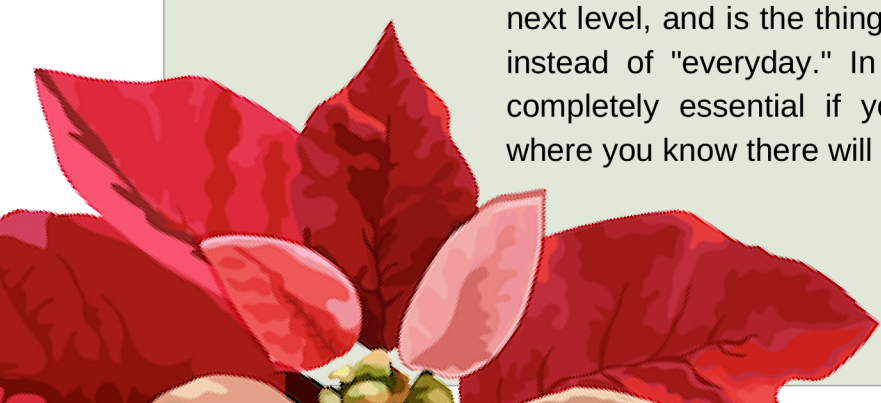
Back when I was teaching music, these two recipes always made the cut for my Christmas baking--and would usually be the first to disappear. But other than sugar cookies, these were also the most labour-intensive recipes. My grandma and I would always divide and conquer to get it done!

For the Caramel Marshmallow Treats, we found it works best if one person dips the marshmallows into the caramel mixture and Rice Krispies, and the other person goes over the marshmallow and makes sure that the Rice Krispies are stuck on well and that it looks neat. I always took my Grandma's job for granted and wondered if it was actually necessary. But once she went off to the nursing home and couldn't help me anymore, I realized how necessary it was.

The first time I did it on my own was an exercise in sheer frustration. I kept going back and forth between the dipping the making-it-look-good jobs and wasted so much time! I also didn't watch the caramel mixture as carefully as I could have since my attention was split, and burnt the whole thing halfway through.

The Oreo Cookies aren't nearly as high-stakes, but it still helps to have a friend. Someone needs to match the most similar-sized cookies together into pairs (because try as you might, you'll always have some cookies that are bigger and smaller!), and ice them together, and the other person needs to dip the finished cookies in sprinkles.

Yes, I know sprinkles are not essential. But it really takes these cookies to the next level, and is the thing that makes them say "Christmas" instead of "everyday." In fact, I'd argue the sprinkles are completely essential if you're making them for an event where you know there will be a lot of kids!



Oreo Cookies

Prep

15 min

Cook

10 min

Ready in

25 min

Ingredients

1 Duncan Hines devil's food cake mix
1 Duncan Hines Swiss chocolate cake mix
2/3 cup oil
4 eggs
6 oz cream cheese
2 1/2 cups icing sugar
1 tsp vanilla

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix one cake mix with eggs and oil. Add second cake mix.
2. Roll into small balls.
3. Bake at 325 Fahrenheit for 10 minutes on an ungreased baking sheet. Do not overbake. Cookies will be soft and will harden when cool.
4. When cool, mix cream cheese, icing sugar, and vanilla and use the mixture to put cookies together.
5. Decorate the sides with crushed candy cane or Christmas sprinkles



Caramel Marshmallow Treats

Prep

10 min

Cook

15 min

Ready in

25 min

Ingredients

1 can sweetened condensed milk
6 McIntosh toffee bars
1/2 cup butter or margarine
Special K or Rice Krispies cereal,
or finely chopped walnuts
2 bags large marshmallows

DIRECTIONS

1. Melt condensed milk, toffee, and margarine in a deep, heavy pan.
2. Dip large marshmallows in melted toffee mixture, and roll in cereal or chopped walnuts.
3. Place on waxed paper to cool. These freeze well in a covered container.



Slivered Almond Squares

Prep
5 min

Cook
38 min

Ready in
43 min

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups flour
3/4 cup margarine
3 tbsp icing sugar
r
4 tbsp margarine
1 tsp vanilla
1 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup whipping cream
1 cup slivered almonds

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix first three ingredients as shortbread, put into 9x12 inch pan and bake at 350 Fahrenheit for 15 minutes.
2. Mix margarine, vanilla, brown sugar, and cream in a heavy saucepan and boil for 3 minutes.
3. Add almonds, spread over base, and bake 20 minutes or more.

Cornflake Yummies

Prep
5 min

Cook
10 min

Ready in
15 min

Ingredients

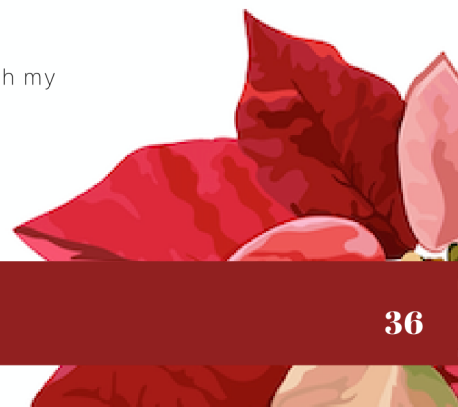
1/4 cup butter
pinch of salt
1/2 cup lightly packed brown sugar
1/4 cup corn syrup
3 tbsp light cream
2 cups corn flakes
1/2 cup shredded coconut
1/2 cup thinly sliced almonds

DIRECTIONS

1. Melt butter in a saucepan.
2. Add corn syrup, salt, cream, and brown sugar. Bring to a boil over low heat.
3. Boil until it forms a hard ball in cold water, then remove from heat.
4. Add cornflakes, coconut, and almonds. Toss together and place by the spoonful in small paper cups.
5. Store in a covered container. Freezes well.

Note

It is very important that you don't double this recipe. Ask me how I know... Even though my grandma warned me not to, I doubled the recipe, and it did not work out at all!





The week between Christmas & New Years

*aka one of the best
weeks of the year*

The week between Christmas and New Years is a time of blissful hibernation. Skip the hustle and bustle of the stores on Boxing Day (do you REALLY need whatever deal they're selling?) and become one with your couch.

These precious days are also the best for visiting friends you only seem to see once a year, playing board games, endless rounds of Kaiser, and watching whatever Hallmark Christmas movies you might have missed.

It's also when I make all my goals and intentions for the coming year--if I haven't already. There's just something about the peace and silence of this precious week that gives you the space to think and figure out what you really want.

But some years, this week can be the worst--especially if you've been burnt out from trying to do too much in the lead up to the holidays. I've definitely spent my fair share of years super sick.

These next two recipes are for you, whichever situation you find yourself in. Socializing or resting? The homemade coffee creamer is your new best friend. Feeling sick? The non-alcoholic hot toddy will help keep your sore throat and cough to manageable levels.

Prep

5 min

Cook

0 min

Ready in

5 min

Homemade Coffee Creamer



Ingredients

1 cup whipping cream
1 can sweetened condensed milk
1 tsp cocoa powder
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp vanilla extract

Directions

1. Put cinnamon and cocoa powder in a bowl and slowly whisk in cream a few tablespoons at a time.
2. Once mixed completely with no lumps, add in the rest of the cream and a can of sweetened condensed milk.
3. Refrigerate and enjoy!

Note

The shelf life of your homemade coffee creamer is whatever the expiry date of the heavy cream is. If you don't use up coffee creamer that fast, use a can of evaporated milk instead. Your creamer won't be as creamy, but it will still taste delicious!

You can easily modify this recipe with different flavours. Substitute mint extract for vanilla extract, add more cocoa, or whatever you'd like to change up the flavours.

Four-Ingredient Hot Toddy

Prep **Cook** **Ready in**
5 min 5 min 10 min

Ingredients

1 cup boiling water
juice of 1/2 a lemon
1 tsp honey
1/2 tsp cinnamon (or to taste)

Directions

1. Set a kettle of water to boil.
2. Cut a lemon in half. Juice one of those halves, and save the other half for another cup later.
3. Add lemon juice, honey, and cinnamon to 1 cup of boiling water. Drink as needed.

Notes

Nothing except time and rest can really fix a cough, cold, or sore throat. This hot toddy will just make you feel better until your body heals.



Prep

30 min

Cook

3 hrs

Ready in

3 hrs 30 min

Oven-Dried **Oranges & Grapefruit**

**Ingredients**

As many oranges and/or grapefruits as you like!

Directions

1. Slice your oranges or grapefruit as thinly as your knife skills allow—around 1/4 inch or 5 millimetres. Keep them as even as possible. Use a mandolin if you own one for an easier time slicing and less waste.
2. Arrange the oranges as tightly as possible on a silicone mat set on a baking sheet. Don't worry if one or two oranges have to overlap ever so slightly to make everything fit, as the oranges will shrink.
3. Put oranges in the oven at 225 Fahrenheit for a total of 2-3 hours. The thicker and larger the slices, the longer the oven time. For grapefruits and larger varieties of oranges, it will be 2 hours and 45 minutes to 3 hours. For smaller mandarin oranges, it will be 1 hour and 45 minutes to 2 hours.
4. Flip oranges after an hour in the oven. Remove from oven once they have a very slight brown on them.

Notes

The whole process is a lot easier if you use older oranges and grapefruit to begin with. The fruit is drier inside, which makes the time in the oven shorter. The outside skin is firmer, which makes it easier to cut. Use your dried oranges for decorating wreaths, Christmas trees, or creating a garland.

Pumpkin Seed Brittle



Prep	Cook	Ready in
5 min	15 min	20 min

Ingredients

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup light corn syrup
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 cup water
1 cup pumpkin seeds
1/3 cup sunflower seeds
1/3 cup coconut
1/3 cup sesame seeds
1/2 tsp allspice
2 tbsp butter, softened
1 tsp baking soda
butter, for greasing

Directions

1. Grease a large baking sheet with some butter
2. In a medium saucepan combine sugar, water, salt, and corn syrup. Cook over medium heat until sugar dissolves and mixture starts to boil. Stir in pumpkin seeds, coconut, sesame seeds, and allspice.
3. Cook and stir until temperature reaches exactly 300°F or a bit of the mixture dipped into cold water reaches the hardball stage. This will take about 15 minutes.
4. Immediately remove from heat and stir in butter and baking soda vigorously. Pour onto the greased baking sheet. Spread with a spatula, until it almost fills up the baking sheet.
5. Cool and break into pieces. Store in a tin or other airtight container.

Rolo Cookies

Prep
15 min

Cook
7 min

Ready in
22 min

Ingredients

2 cups margarine
2 cups white sugar
2 cups brown sugar
4 eggs
2 tsp vanilla
1 1/2 cups cocoa
2 tap baking soda
5 cups flour
6 or 7 pkg Rolo candies

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut each Rolo candy in half.
2. Cream margarine, sugars, and eggs together. Add vanilla.
3. Combine cocoa, flour, and baking soda in another bowl. Add to creamed mixture.
4. Wrap 1/2 of a Rolo in a small amount of dough. Roll into a ball and place on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper.
5. Bake at 325 Fahrenheit for 7 minutes. Leave on the pan for 2 minutes before removing o cooling rack.

Scuffles

Prep
1 day

Cook
20 min

Ready in
1 day 20 min

Ingredients

1 pkg yeast
1/4 cup lukewarm water
3 cups flour
3 tbsp sugar
1/2 tsp salt
1 cup margarine
1/2 cup milk
2 beaten eggs

DIRECTIONS

1. Soak yeast in lukewarm water for 15-20 minutes.
2. Mix flour, sugar, salt, and margarine as you would for a pie crust.
3. Add milk, yeast mixture, and eggs. Knead dough until soft (add flour as this is sticky). Refrigerate overnight.
4. Sprinkle a mixture of 1 cup sugar and 2 tbsp cinnamon. Roll dough (fist size) in this mixture as for pie crust. Cut into wedges.
5. Roll wide end to narrow end and pinch. Place on cookie sheet.
6. Bake at 350 Fahrenheit for 15-20 minutes.

How to Bake for 300+ People

aka Planning Out a Well-Rounded Baking Tray

Back in the days when I was a full-time music teacher, I organized and baked for a minimum of 6 Christmas recitals each holiday season. And since most of my students were in smaller towns, a proper reception with lots of goodies was the norm.

Baking this much took a lot of prep, and I prided myself on making a mix of dainties that would be popular with kids but also hit the different flavour profiles their parents and grandparents were looking for.

After a few years of trial and error, I hit upon a checklist of "goody types" that I needed to have at least one of in order to keep everyone in the crowd happy and coming back for more.

The Basic Baking Types

- Something with sprinkles or candy
- Chocolate-based
- Vanilla-based
- Something fruity
- Something with icing
- Something vaguely healthy





Chances are, you're not baking for 300. But if you're looking to make a well-rounded Christmas baking tray, picking one recipe from each of these flavour types will serve you well.

And if you are planning a big reception? You can easily make multiple recipes in a category. Then add in drinks, cheese and crackers, a fruit tray, and a vegetable tray and you're done!

I know, I make it sound so simple when in reality it's weeks of work.

The key to keeping your sanity intact is to start early and shop early. Basic baking items usually go on sale around Canadian Thanksgiving, and then again around American Thanksgiving.

Even before pandemic life, there would always be shortages around Christmas of some of the most coveted baking items--Christmas-themed sprinkles, cream of tartar (something that people tend to use only once a year to make sugar cookies!), dried fruit, and Christmas themed items like Hershey's kisses or the red and green coloured Rice Krispies.

Over the years the toffee bars used in the Caramel Marshmallow Treats have been harder and harder to find, and they've slowly become smaller in size too.

If you can't find them, you can likely find the smaller toffee cubes (you know, the little squares you used to get as a kid in the 80s and 90s) or as a bulk item at the bulk foods store.

So avoid disappointment and try and pick up as many of your baking ingredients as you can before December hits.

Christmas Baking Planner

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Recipe Card

Name Of Recipe

Ingredients

[illegible]

Prep.Time

CookTime

Serves

2 4 6 8

Difficulty

★★★★★

DIRECTIONS

[illegible]

How to Host a Party *in a small space*

I have never been blessed enough to live in a particularly large house. The house I grew up in was around 900 sqft, and the ones I've owned in my adult life have been solidly around the 1000 sqft mark.

However, I've never been one to let a lack of space stop me from having people over if I really want to have them over. You just have to get creative!

1. Map Out Entertaining Zones

This is crucial to any party, but especially in a small house! Decide where shoes and coats will go. (Hint: you probably don't have enough closet space for everyone's jackets, so they might have to go in your bedroom.) Group your chairs so that there are multiple areas for conversation. Keep the food and drinks in a similar location, but not too close together that it restricts traffic flow.

And for Christmas? Presents also need a designated location. Have a garbage bag or recycling bin handy for any used wrapping paper or unwanted bags.

2. Move Your Furniture

Whenever we host a party, we push the dining table to one side for the food zone, and arrange our chairs in a circle to

promote conversation.

Speaking of furniture, if you have any pieces that could work double duty, now is the time to use them. Crates, piano benches, footstools and the like. Don't own these things? Ask your guests if they can bring folding chairs.





3. Use What You Have

There's no need to buy a whole bunch of extra decorations for your party. Besides, where will you store them? Your tree and a couple of re-purposed ornaments are all you need.

Bring out the fine china if you have it. It saves the environment and makes your party look extra fancy. Chances are if you live in a small space, you probably don't have a table setting for 16 in everyday use anyway.

4. Invest in Interchangeable Decor

Or, in my case, make interchangeable decor. Even though chalkboards are old news, I still personally love them for their versatility. I also keep balloons and streamers of all colours on hand. They don't take up a lot of space, and they cheaply make any space instantly festive.

5. Decide where the Kids (and Toys) will Go

Chances are if you live in a small house, you don't have the luxury of a playroom. Maybe you are lucky enough to have a finished basement, and all the kids can go there. If you have to use a child's room, designate the largest room to be the play area and set up toys accordingly.

If there are lots of babies and big kids at your party, try and have one designated area that's more baby-friendly and another that's more big-kid-friendly.

Let the guest children & their parents know if there are any rooms that are off-limits to kids. The way our house is set up, kids always end up in our master bedroom (and bed!) and I



always end up frustrated. Unfortunately, a small house and its layout usually means that no area seems off-limits to kids unless you specifically say so.

6. Keep the Dinner Menu Simple

A small house usually equals a small kitchen. Prepare as much of the meal ahead of time as you possibly can, because sadly, there is likely no room for more than one person to help you in the kitchen.

Also consider how many of your dishes need to be fried, baked in the oven, or require a lot of chopping or last-minute preparation. You need to make sure you have enough room in your oven (especially if yours isn't a full-size one!), or that you aren't trying to prepare everything last minute because it all has to be served fresh. It's frustrating in any size kitchen to have the meal be stressful to make, but even more so in a small kitchen because you'll be tripping over helpers or finding that you have no counter space to put anything. Or even worse... no dishwasher to store the dirty dishes.



Despite these challenges, you can still have an amazing time! Remember that your guests came to see YOU and not your house. So make the best of your small space and have fun!



Kristen Raney

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Thank you!

Your purchase of this recipe book means the world to me. If you make anything from its pages, I'd love to see your results! Tag me on Instagram [@shifting_roots](https://www.instagram.com/shifting_roots)

This Christmas, I hope you'll make some special memories in the kitchen with the ones you love.

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