

A Holiday Cookbook

*Centered on*  
**Comfort**  
*and*  
**Joy**



((CENTRIC))



## A Holiday Cookbook Centered on *Comfort and Joy*

This holiday season, we're centered on bringing our clients and their families' comfort and joy — and what better way to do that than with food?

Food brings us together. It joins us and breaks barriers. When we share a meal, time stops as we savor flavors and fellowship, love and libations, gathered in good company.

Food's power only grows when we create it together. The recipes and stories Centric Consulting employees have shared here are more than ingredients. They combine culture, memories and experiences, becoming even better when you make them with friends and family.

Whether you're making ginger strips or biscotti with kids in the kitchen, remembering how mom made a favorite pie crust or enchiladas, or seeing the pleasure on people's faces as they devour saltine toffee bark, these recipes remind us that life is more about savoring the moment.

A warm bowl of butternut squash soup, steaming Syrian loobyeh d'zeit woo ruz, hearty gumbo — these dishes serve comfort and joy to everyone in the making as well as the eating, no matter who you are, where you come from or how you celebrate the holidays.

We hope you will find recipes in this cookbook that bring you warmth and happiness in the kitchen and dining room, becoming part of your holiday traditions for years to come.

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## SERVINGS OF

### Comfort and Joy

- ❤️ Heartfelt Story
- 🌐 Cultural Cuisine
- 🏠 Family Recipe
- 🌱 Vegetarian-friendly
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# The World We Share

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Appetizer

# Butternut Squash Soup



Sue Meyer 📍 Bridgewater, NJ

Living in the Northeast, soup in the fall is a staple, and this soup is one I feature at my Thanksgiving table year after year. I love that this soup can easily flex for my vegetarian and vegan friends and family as well. Living with food allergies, I'm always looking for ways to make my table more inclusive for the varying needs of my family and friends.



## Ingredients

2 medium-large butternut squash, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces

4-6 shallots, sliced

Canola oil

2 quarts chicken or vegetable stock

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

2 tablespoon good quality maple syrup

¼ cup half and half or milk (optional)

Salt and pepper to taste

## Directions

1. Preheat oven to 450° F.
2. Peel and dice up your butternut and shallots.
3. Line 2 large-rimmed baking sheets or ½ sheet pans with non-stick foil.
4. Toss the squash and shallots with the salt, pepper and oil. Transfer to the baking sheets and roast for 40-50 minutes. Squash should be soft. Shallots should be caramelized but not burnt.
5. Transfer the veggies and stock to a large Dutch oven over med-low heat.
6. Using an immersion blender, or working in batches with a standard blender, blend the veggies and stock to a smooth consistency.
7. Simmer over low heat for 15-20 minutes to let the flavors meld. Enjoy right away or refrigerate or freeze for later!

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Main Dish

# Enchiladas



Monica Lopez 📍 Palm Beach Gardens, FL

Anything my mom made consistently brings me joy since she's been gone for several years now. In grad school, I made enchiladas for my friends and then coworkers in the years after that. Just recently, I made a big batch for my dad's church group because as part of a Hispanic family, we share love through food. So, cooking for others brings me joy, and anything covered in cheese is automatically comfort food!



## Ingredients

2 pounds ground beef

Salt and pepper to taste

12 to 18 corn tortillas (more if needed)

4 rounded tablespoons McCormick dark red chill powder

¼ cup flour (more if needed to thicken gravy)

2 pounds shredded Colby or mild cheddar cheese

Oil (as needed)

## Directions

1. Slowly brown ground beef. Salt and pepper to taste.
2. Add chili powder and stir. Add flour and stir. Slowly add enough cold water, stirring over medium heat until gravy thickens and there is enough to cover the tortillas.
3. Heat the tortillas on low heat in a small amount of cooking oil to soften, then dip into the red gravy and place in a 9 x 13 pan.
4. Using a slotted spoon put a small amount of ground beef into the tortilla along with a small amount of shredded cheese. Roll tortilla over the beef and cheese and turn over so the folded side is on the bottom.
5. Line rolled tortillas in the pan. When pan is full, cover with gravy, sprinkle with cheese and bake in 350° F oven for 15 minutes or until cheese is melted and bubbly. Serve warm.



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Main Dish

# Loobyeh d'zeit woo ruz - لز و كوييا



Paul Holway 📍 St. Louis, MO

My grandmother made this recipe every holiday. We had a large family, and basically made two meals, which allowed us to choose from "Syrian food" and "American food." The cinnamon smell of this classic Lebanese-Syrian stew reminds me of the season, and especially of great times with family telling stories, playing pool and cards, and laughing. It is the easiest of the family recipes to make, and one of my father's favorites. So, I have enjoyed passing on the tradition to my family.

## Ingredients

### LOOBYEH

1 pound sirloin, diced

1 large onion, chopped

4 cloves garlic

1 pound green beans

1 pound can diced tomatoes

1 ½ teaspoons cinnamon

Salt and pepper to taste

Olive oil

### RICE PILAF

2 cups long grain rice

4 cups water

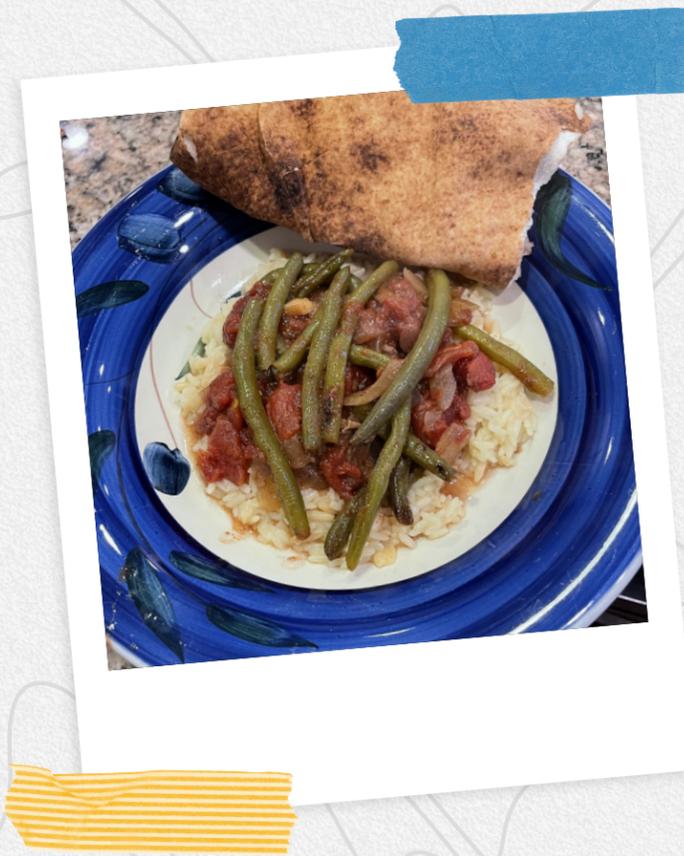
2 tablespoons butter  
(or ghee)

½ cup orzo  
(or vermicelli broken into small pieces)



## Directions

1. Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in pan.
2. Add diced sirloin and onion in pan until browned.
3. Add garlic for last 60 seconds and add to mixture. Turn off heat.
4. In a separate pan, sauté green beans with salt and oil for a couple of minutes.
5. Add steak mixture and green beans to a slow cooker.
6. Add can of diced tomatoes, cinnamon and salt and pepper to a slow cooker.
7. Cook on low for at least 6 hours.
8. In last 30 minutes, rinse rice twice.
9. Heat butter in a saucepan.
10. Brown the orzo until golden brown.
11. Add the rice and stir.
12. Add water and salt.
13. Bring to a boil.
14. Reduce heat to low, cover with lid (about 20 minutes).
15. Serve in bowl with rice as base, stew on top, with a side of Arabic bread to mop up the delicious goodness.





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Main Dish

# Shakshuka

Phil Gorman 📍 Austin, TX

During a trip around Israel, I had my first bowl of shakshuka with an incredible Israeli woman who would later become my wife. Now that we live in Austin, I like to prepare it to remind her of home. It's also a great opportunity to empty the fridge of any tomatoes, peppers or onions that are at the end of their lives. Even better, it's perfect for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

## Ingredients

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 red bell pepper, diced

1 onion, diced  
(yellow or sweet)

4 cloves garlic, minced

2 teaspoons paprika  
(smoked, sweet or hot)

1 teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon chili powder

½ teaspoon dried oregano

¼ teaspoon black pepper

1 teaspoon salt

28-ounce can crushed tomatoes (or equivalent fresh tomatoes, diced)

4 eggs

¼ cup crumbled feta

¼ cup coarsely chopped parsley or cilantro

Pita bread or pita chips

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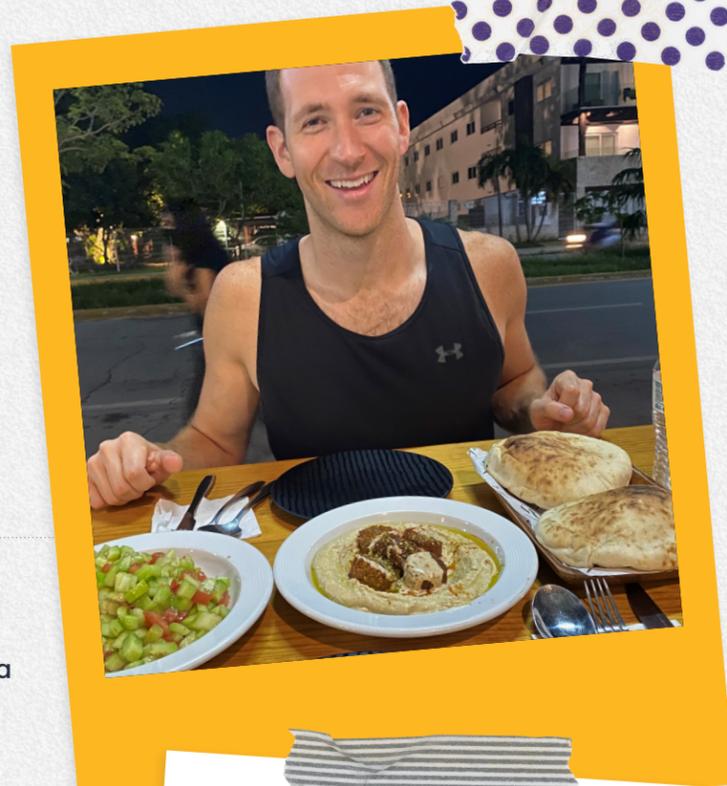
Optional:

½ bunch green onions, diced

6-ounce can tomato paste (for deeper tomato flavor)

¼ teaspoon coriander (if you like it)

½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (for added spice)



## Directions

1. In a small bowl, add the dry spices including paprika, cumin, chili powder, oregano, black pepper and optional crushed red pepper and coriander. Mix together with a fork.
2. Heat olive oil in a 12-inch cast iron skillet or sauté pan on medium heat. Add the chopped bell pepper and chopped onion. Cook until they're both soft, about 20 minutes. Add the optional diced green onion when the pepper and onion mixture has about 5 minutes remaining.
3. Add a little more olive oil to the bottom of the pan and add minced garlic and spices, mixing thoroughly and immediately. Blooming the spices will give it a more robust flavor, but be very careful not to let them cook for too long or burn them with a pan that's too hot! Nothing will ruin the flavor more tragically than burnt garlic and burnt spices.
4. Add the tomatoes (and the optional tomato paste) and stir, breaking down the tomatoes thoroughly. Bring the sauce to a simmer, lower the heat, and allow it to simmer for 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally. If, while stirring, you notice that the mixture is at risk of burning, add ½ cup of water.
5. Remove the pan from the heat and garnish with the feta cheese and the parsley or cilantro. Serve with toasted pita or pita chips. If you like runnier eggs, eat them first!
6. Any leftover shakshuka can be refrigerated. Eat leftovers hot or cold.



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Main Dish

# Old World Sauerkraut Supper

Traci Whetzel 📍 Wadsworth, OH

The Whetzel family has this meal every New Year's Day. My mother-in-law, who is no longer with us, insisted that we all get together for this meal to start the new year. She made this in a crock pot that looked 40 years or older, and each year I joked that she would burn the house down. Mom Whetzel accompanied the meal with mashed potatoes, corn, apple sauce and bread. We still get together, but now my husband (Matt) and I make the main meal, and everyone else makes the sides. While it's the same recipe, it just doesn't taste the same without her, and I'd be lying if I didn't hear her in my ear. My answer: "Yes, mom, I made sure to get the right sauerkraut." I hope you enjoy this little piece of our family!



This is my favorite picture with her

## Ingredients

- 4 bacon strips
- 1 ½ tablespoons flour
- Two 16-ounce cans sauerkraut
- 3 tablespoons apple sauce
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 pounds Kielbasa sausage
- ½ cup water

## Directions

1. Fry bacon in pan until done. Remove bacon and cut into small pieces leaving grease in pan.
2. Add flour and water to bacon drippings. Mix well.
3. Drain sauerkraut and then add sauerkraut to bacon drippings. Mix well.
4. Place sauerkraut and bacon pieces in a slow cooker.
5. Cut sausage into quarter size pieces and add to a slow cooker.
6. Add applesauce and brown sugar to a slow cooker. Mix well.
7. Cover and cook in a slow cooker on low for 7 to 9 hours.

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Dessert

# Mailänderli

George Burgi 📍 Chicago, IL



This recipe is from a part of Switzerland that my family comes from. It is a simple and delicious cookie that reminds me of my childhood.

After shoveling your driveway, commuting through the cold or otherwise enjoying the winter weather, make yourself a cup of hot chocolate or herbal tea and enjoy this taste of the Swiss Alps!



## Ingredients

- 1 pound unsweetened butter, softened
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 6 large egg yolks
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 1 additional egg

## Directions

1. Cream together butter and sugar with an electric mixer.
2. Add egg yolks, vanilla and lemon zest and mix well.
3. Gradually sift in the flour while stirring and mix until a tacky dough forms.
4. Tightly wrap dough and chill in a refrigerator for at least 2 hours but ideally overnight.
5. Preheat oven to 325° F.
6. Roll out dough until it is ¼-inch thick and cut into desired shapes, traditionally 2-3-inch-wide circles.
7. Score the dough using the back of a fork to create shallow, parallel lines.
8. Beat the remaining egg with a few drops of cold water and brush each cookie with egg-wash.
9. Place cookies on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake for 22-25 minutes until shiny and golden.



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Dessert

# Dulce De Leche



Yudy Pineiro 📍 Marathon, FL

Dulce de leche, which translates to “sweet milk,” is a common dessert throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Its name refers to how it’s made: by heating sweetened milk until it caramelizes. While it might look like caramel, it’s not the same. Caramel is made from water and sugar. And dulce de leche tastes so much better! As a Cuban American, I grew up eating it in many of our sweets – pastries, ice cream, churros. But my personal favorite was when my mom made dulce de leche at home. We’d chill it and eat it with a spoon over a few days. It’s a delicious treat on its own! It’s also quick and easy to make.



## Ingredients

1 can condensed milk

## Directions

1. Remove label from unopened can of condensed milk and put in a pressure cooker. Fill with water until the can is submerged.
2. Set it to cook on high pressure for 45 minutes. After time is up, allow the pressure to release naturally, leaving the lid on for at least 20 minutes.
3. Remove the can and set aside, letting it cool completely (at least one hour).
4. Use it as filling or topping on anything: cupcakes, cakes, ice cream, pancakes, French toast. Or just dig in. Have a spoonful (or two), refrigerate and enjoy more tomorrow!

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Drink

# Snowy Day

Lisette Albert 📍 Los Angeles, CA

Every winter, I’m always envious of people who live in colder climates. Since it never snows in Los Angeles, the closest thing I get might be this snowy cocktail. Though the coconut flakes and the color looks like a snowy day, the lime and falernum tastes like the Caribbean. It’s the perfect holiday cocktail to cozy up with on the couch while watching horrible, mindless reality television.



## Ingredients

1½ ounce Empress 1908 Gin

1 ounce cream of coconut syrup

¼ ounce Falernum liqueur or syrup

1 ounce fresh lime juice

1 egg white or 1 ounce aquafaba

### GARNISH:

More cream of coconut, dried shredded coconut and fresh rosemary

## Directions

1. Add some cream of coconut to a small dish and dried shredded coconut to another dish. Dip the rim of your serving glass into the cream of coconut and then into the shredded coconut to create a coconut rim on the glass.
2. Add the lime juice, cream of coconut, falernum and Empress 1908 Gin to a cocktail shaker.
3. Shake everything with ice, and strain out ice.
4. Add egg white or foamer to cocktail.
5. Shake everything again without ice.
6. Double strain into your prepared cocktail glass and add a sprig of fresh rosemary as a garnish. Enjoy!

# The Traditions We Savor

◆ CLASSICS ◆

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- Cheeseburger Soup ..... 22  
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Sue Meyer · Bridgewater, NJ



# Blue Cheese Grapes

Paul Newkirk 📍 Columbus, OH



*It's an unexpected holiday treat and can be fun for people to try something they haven't had before, combining sweet and savory.*



## Ingredients

One 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened  
1 tablespoon milk  
2 teaspoon blue cheese  
1 pound seedless red or green grapes  
1 ¼ cups coarsely chopped pecans

## Directions

1. Combine cream cheese, milk and blue cheese in a medium bowl. Beat with an electric mixer at medium speed until smooth and creamy.
2. Cover each grape with 1 teaspoon cream cheese mixture (this is done by hand, grapes must be dry to allow the cheese to adhere).
3. Roll cheese coated grapes in a small bowl of pecans to coat grapes.
4. Line a plate or tray with waxed paper. Chill covered for 30 minutes.
5. Arrange the coated grapes on prepared plate. Serve with toothpicks.



# Garden Vegetable Soup Starter

(makes about 20 quarts)

Pat McMillin 📍 Kansas City, MO

Reminds me of my childhood, the family gathering to preserve summer harvest for winter enjoyment.

## Ingredients

**FOR STARTER:**  
½ bushel ripe tomatoes, peeled and deseeded  
2 quarts carrots  
12 large onions  
3 heads cabbage  
3 green peppers  
3 bunches celery  
½ cup salt  
2 quarts water

## FOR COMPLETED SOUP:

1 pound ground beef  
1 quart tomato juice or beef broth  
1 can potatoes  
1 can green beans  
1 can corn  
1 quart of starter

## Directions

1. Starter preparation: Chop all vegetables. In large pot, dump chopped vegetables, add seasoning and water. Mix well and boil until tender.
2. Split mixture and liquid in quart jars. Can using the water bath method, boil for 15 minutes.
3. To enjoy: Brown the ground beef. In large pot, add ground beef, 1 quart soup starter and tomato juice or beef broth.
4. Add canned potato, green beans and corn, including liquid.
5. Add noodles, rice or barley. Cook until done. Serve and enjoy!





# Cheeseburger Soup

Jessica Thompson 📍 Charlotte, NC

“*I love a warm, hearty soup on a chilly day. My husband and I make it at least twice a month during the holiday season, and it’s the perfect meal for a party!*”



## Ingredients

2 pounds ground beef

¾ onion, chopped

2 cans diced tomatoes with chilies

1 tablespoon dried basil

1 tablespoon dried parsley

1 tablespoon cayenne pepper (optional)

4 tablespoons butter, divided

1 box beef broth

2-3 cups water

¼ cup all-purpose flour

Half bag egg noodles

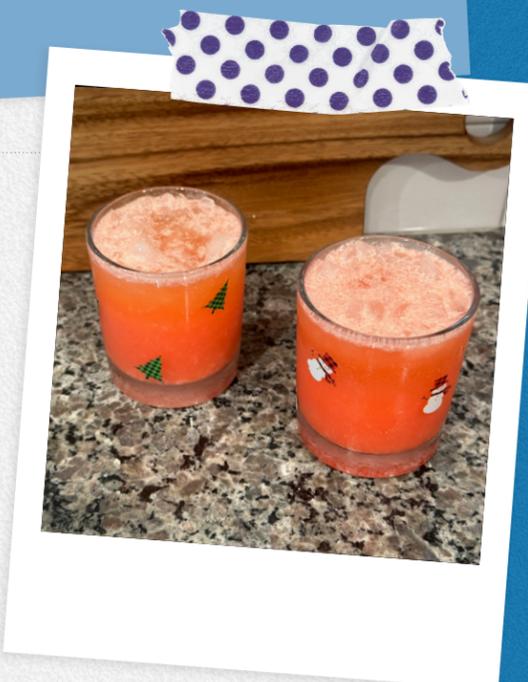
12 ounces

Velveeta cheese, cubed

4 ounces pepper jack cheese, cubed

½ cup milk

1 teaspoon pepper



## Directions

1. In a large saucepan, brown the ground beef. Drain and set aside.
2. In a large pot, sauté the onions, celery, cayenne, basil and parsley with 1 tablespoon of butter until vegetables are tender (about 10 minutes).
3. Add cans of tomatoes and broth and bring to a boil.
4. Add egg noodles and ground beef. Add water to cover noodles and boil until noodles are done.
5. While soup is boiling, in a separate, small saucepan, melt remaining butter. Then add the flour one spoonful at a time and whisk to form paste, then add to soup.
6. Once noodles are cooked, reduce heat to simmer. Add the cheese cubes, milk and pepper and stir until cheese melts through.
7. Serve with bread or tortilla chips. Enjoy!

## Drink

# Holly Jolly Mocktail

Jessica Thompson 📍 Charlotte, NC

## Ingredients

2 ounces orange juice

½ ounce pineapple juice

1 ounce lime juice

1 ounce grenadine

1 ounce coconut cream (softened)

1 ounce ginger ale (or ginger beer for a punchier flavor)

## Directions

1. Half-fill a tall glass with crushed ice.
2. In a cocktail shaker, shake together orange juice, pineapple juice, lime juice, grenadine and coconut cream.
3. Strain into glass and top off with ginger ale (or ginger beer).



# Good Eats Roast Turkey

Sue Meyer Bridgewater, NJ

“This is the best Thanksgiving turkey every time I put it on the table.”



## Ingredients

1 (14-16 pound) frozen young turkey

Canola oil

Garlic powder

Salt

Pepper

### FOR THE BRINE:

1 cup kosher salt

½ cup light brown sugar

1 gallon vegetable stock

1 tablespoon black peppercorn

1 ½ teaspoons allspice berries

1 ½ teaspoons chopped candied ginger

1 gallon heavily iced water

### FOR THE AROMATICS:

1 red apple, sliced

½ onion, sliced

1 cinnamon stick

1 cup water

4 sprigs rosemary

6 leaves sage

## Directions

### 1-2 days before the day you'd like to eat

Combine the vegetable stock, salt, brown sugar, peppercorns, allspice berries and candied ginger in a large stockpot over medium-high heat. Stir occasionally to dissolve solids and bring to a boil. Then remove the brine from the heat, cool to room temperature and refrigerate.

### The night before or early on the day you'd like to eat

Combine the brine, water and ice in a 5-gallon bucket. Place the thawed turkey (with innards removed) breast side down in brine. If necessary, weigh down the bird to ensure it is fully immersed, cover and refrigerate or set in cool area for 8-16 hours, turning the bird once halfway through brining.

1. Preheat the oven to 500° F. Remove the bird from brine and rinse inside and out with cold water. Discard the brine.
2. Place the bird on roasting rack inside a half sheet pan and pat dry with paper towels.
3. Combine the apple, onion, cinnamon stick and 1 cup of water in a microwave safe dish and microwave on high for 5 minutes. Add steeped aromatics to the turkey's cavity along with the rosemary and sage. Tuck the wings underneath the bird and coat the skin liberally with canola oil, garlic powder, salt and pepper.
4. Roast the turkey on lowest level of the oven at 500° F for 30 minutes. Insert a probe thermometer into thickest part of the breast and reduce the oven temperature to 350° F. Set the thermometer alarm (if available) to 161° F. A 14–16-pound bird should require a total of 2-2 ½ hours of roasting. Let the turkey rest, loosely covered with foil or a large mixing bowl for 15 minutes before carving.



# Gumbo

Carmen Calderon Baton Rouge, LA

Gumbo is a staple during the holiday season in Louisiana. It's easy to make a large batch and feed a crowd. I love how it brings people together, whether it's during the prep or during mealtime. I have many happy memories of helping to make gumbo, usually either the chopping veggies or stirring the roux. It's a fun process with everyone involved. All Cajun families have their own spin on gumbo and there are tons of variations, whether that's chicken and sausage, seafood or okra plus a special secret ingredient. Gumbo brings me comfort and joy because it means good company, cool weather, quality time and full bellies.



## Ingredients

### ROUX:

1 ¼ cup flour and ¾ cup oil or 16-ounce jar of roux such as [Kary's Roux](#)

### GUMBO:

1 bone-in whole chicken quartered (adds flavor) or 4-6 chicken breasts

2 onions, chopped

1 bell pepper, chopped

2 large celery stalks, chopped

4-6 quarts water, hot

3 links smoked sausage sliced (approx. ½ pound)

Salt, black pepper and cayenne pepper to taste or Cajun seasoning such as [Tony Chachere's](#)

Filé (optional)

Old Bay Seasoning (optional)

3-4 cloves garlic minced

Green onions chopped (optional)

Parsley chopped (optional)

\*Secret Ingredient\* 1-2 tablespoons liquid shrimp and crab boil, such as [Zatarain's](#)

## Directions

1. Add oil to a large pot, brown chicken then remove from pot and set aside.
2. Reduce heat and add oil and flour for roux to pot stirring constantly until brown (color of a paper bag or darker to your preference and consistency of chocolate syrup).
3. Add celery, onion and bell pepper and sauté for 1-2 min, then add minced garlic and continue to sauté until it begins to stick slightly.
4. Add water and bring to a boil then add chicken. Allow to cook for approximately 2 hours simmering (the longer it cooks the more flavor, chicken will be cooked through after approx. 1 hour).
5. After 1 hour, add sliced sausage (will release oils at the top of your gumbo, you can sift this out).
6. Once gumbo is finished cooking remove chicken, debone and add back to pot.
7. Add seasonings along with green onions and parsley, if preferred, and continue to simmer for 10 minutes before serving.
8. Serve over rice.

## Additional Tips

1. If using a jar of roux, instead of following step 2 after browning chicken, begin boiling water in pot. Once boiling, add jar of roux and stir continuously until roux dissolves, then add vegetables and chicken and continue cooking process from step 5.
2. Gumbo freezes well and is often said to be more flavorful the following day.
3. While this recipe includes measurements, gumbo is meant to be cooked from the heart. I highly encourage you to adjust as necessary. Part of the fun is getting to play in the kitchen. Try browning your roux for longer, keeping it lighter or adding more roux all together for a thicker gumbo (2 jars seems to be my sweet spot. I enjoy a thicker gumbo). You can also add more or less water depending on the consistency you want or substitute half of your water with chicken broth.
4. It is highly discouraged to skip the potato salad, for a true authentic Cajun gumbo, it absolutely must be served with warm potato salad (I prefer no relish).
5. Enjoy!



# Sausage, Peppers and Onions

Deanna Hamm 📍 Olmsted Falls, OH

My family recipe is so simple, seasonally colorful, optionally spicy and makes bellies oh so happy, especially on those cold winter nights. We have this at most holiday lunches and dinners or just because. It constantly reminds me of my family sitting around the table enjoying the eats and good company.

## Ingredients

### SAUSAGE PEPPERS AND ONIONS:

10-12 hot or sweet Italian sausage links

1-2 medium yellow onions

2-4 bell peppers, all colors

1 bottle zesty Italian dressing

### TO MAKE YOUR OWN SAUSAGE:

2 pounds ground meat (i.e., beef, turkey, chicken or plant-based options)

### HERB/SPICE BLEND:

2 teaspoons dried parsley

2 teaspoons Italian seasoning (thyme, oregano, basil)

1 ½ teaspoons black pepper

1 teaspoon fennel (whole or ground)

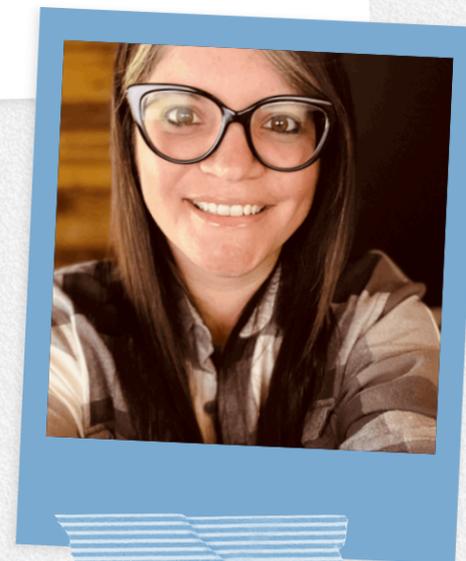
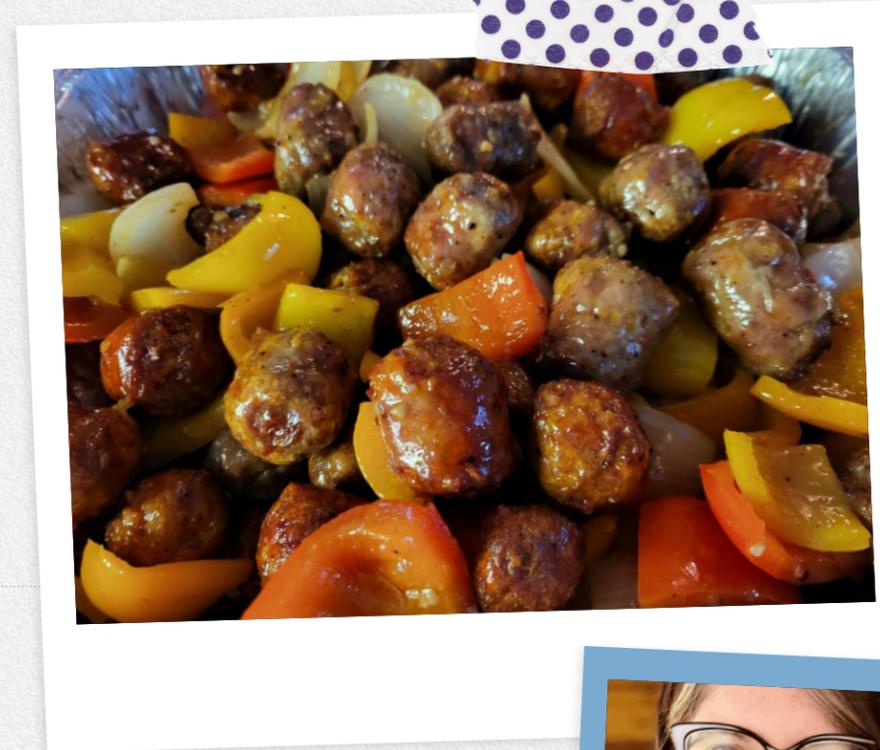
½ teaspoon paprika (smoked is super tasty)

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes (more for those that like some heat)

1 ½ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon minced garlic

1 teaspoon onion powder



## Directions

1. Fill a sauté pan halfway with water, place on burner and turn to medium high heat. Cut up raw sausage links into bite size chunks (5-6 pieces per link) and add to pan, low boil water for 5-7 minutes. Do this in batches to not over crowd. Sausage will turn a light grey color during the first part of cooking process.
2. On a separate cutting board with a clean knife, cut up peppers and onions and add to frying pan or cast-iron skillet over medium heat and cover with zesty Italian dressing. Cook anywhere from 5-10 minutes depending personal crunch levels. You most likely need to do this in batches and will use most if not all of the bottle of dressing by the last batch.

**\*\*Note** that multi-color peppers present a nice fall color pallet. For the colder months and holiday season red and green bell peppers are very festive! Also, when all mixed together showcase the colors of the Italian flag.

3. Prepare grill, sauté pan or other kitchen appliance (i.e., Ninja, Foreman) for final sausage cooking step. Transition batches that have boiled over. In my Ninja, I grill for 5 minutes, flip and grill for another 5 minutes. This will make your sausage have a little bite and cook all the way through. Same approach on stove top, just looking for a little char.
4. Transition batches of sausages to a serving platter, layering on the peppers and onions tossing together as you add in all batches.
5. Serve and enjoy! Make those bellies giggle.

## Optional

Make your own sausage adventure. You can make this meal using either the links (if you have the casing capabilities) or with the ground meat of your choice. Italian seasoning included in the optional ingredients section.



Classics



The Traditions We Savor



Main Dish

# Mushroom Bolognese



Raquel Richardson 📍 Indianapolis, IN

I love to eat a savory Italian dish but don't always want the meat. Then I found this recipe and discovered mushrooms can be a meat-like experience and completely enjoyable dish. I also think the pasta is fancy which is fun and brings me joy.

## Ingredients

- ½ pounds mixed mushrooms, remove the stems
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 1 medium carrot, diced
- 1 celery rib, diced
- 2 garlic cloves (or more if you're really into garlic)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 pound pappardelle pasta
- ¼ cup basil leaves
- 1 cup fresh parmesan (plus more for garnish)

## Directions

- In a food processor, pulse the mushrooms until they're like coarse breadcrumbs. Set aside.
- Set a large, heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat. Add the olive oil and heat to shimmering. Then add the onion, carrot, celery, garlic and a bit of salt. Cook until the vegetables soften, about 5 minutes. Add the mushrooms and thyme and cook another 5 minutes or until the mushrooms are brown. Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Add the milk, season with more salt, a bit of black pepper and bring to a simmer.
- Meanwhile, add three tablespoons of salt to a large pot of water and bring to a boil for your pasta. Add the pasta and cook until al dente, which is usually about one minute less than the package directions. Occasionally give the pasta a stir, so it doesn't stick together. Scoop out about ¼ of the pasta water and keep it for later, then drain your pasta.
- Add the pasta to the mushroom mixture along with the reserved pasta water. Remove the skillet from the heat and add the basil and parmesan, stir to combine. Top with more parmesan as you wish!

Classics



The Traditions We Savor



Side

# Twice Baked Potatoes



Sue Meyer 📍 Bridgewater, NJ

This is a great option for those who have families who can't decide between baked potatoes or mashed potatoes, like mine!

## Ingredients

- 4 large Russet potatoes, about ¾ pound each, scrubbed and dried
- 2-4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 scallion, finely chopped
- Nutmeg, freshly grated (to taste)
- ½ cup sharp cheddar, shredded
- Salt and pepper to taste

## Directions

- Preheat oven to 400° F. Place the potatoes directly on the center oven rack and bake for 30 minutes.
- Pierce each potato with a fork 4-6 times, on all sides, and place back in the oven for 30 more minutes.
- Remove the potatoes from the oven, and turn the heat down to 375° F.
- Holding the potato, with an oven mitt or towel, trim the top of the potatoes to make a canoe-like shape. Reserve the tops.
- Carefully scoop out most of the cooked potatoes into a bowl. Take care to leave a small amount in the skin so the shells keep their shape.
- Mash the potatoes along with 2-3 tablespoons butter, sour cream and half the cheese.
- Stir in the scallion, nutmeg and season with salt and pepper to taste.
- Refill the shells with the potato mixture, mounding up out of the canoe-shells.
- Sprinkle the remaining cheese on top, season with salt and pepper.
- Brush butter, salt and pepper on the saved tops of the potatoes.
- Set the potatoes and the tops on a baking sheet and bake at 375° F for 20 minutes, or until heated through.

# The Treats We Crave

◆ CONFECTION ◆

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Confection



The Treats We Crave



Dessert

# Authentic Italian Biscotti



TJ Felice Charlotte, NC

This recipe reminds me of my childhood – working side-by-side with my Grandma in her kitchen. She not only taught me some basic cooking skills, but I was also able to glean a few colorful Italian phrases.

## Ingredients

- ¾ cups shortening
- 1 ¼ cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 3 cups flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon anise extract
- 1 cup sliced almonds

## Directions

1. In a standing mixer, beat shortening and sugar until fluffy.
2. Add the four eggs, one at a time and beat well after each egg.
3. In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt.
4. Add anise extract to the shortening, sugar and eggs and beat well.
5. Add the flour, baking powder and salt to the shortening, sugar, eggs and anise. Mix until combined.
6. Portion out the dough into roughly three equal amounts. Place each amount into the bottom of a bread pan and flatten to roughly ½-inch thick.
7. Bake at 375° F for 25-30 minutes, until brown.
8. Promptly remove from bread pan and slice (each slice should be ¼-inch thick).
9. Place slices on cooling rack.

Confection



The Treats We Crave



Dessert

# Ginger Strips



Renee Sullivan Indianapolis, IN

This recipe brings back memories of making these with my children. They loved rolling the cookie dough and sprinkling the sugar on to bake. We normally had to double the glaze frosting because we would eat so much before the cookies could cool. The cinnamon and molasses smells make the whole house feel like the holidays.

## Ingredients

- COOKIE DOUGH:**
- ¾ cup butter, softened
  - 1 cup granulated sugar
  - 1 large egg
  - ¼ cup molasses
  - 2 teaspoons baking soda
  - ½ teaspoon salt
  - ½ teaspoon cinnamon
  - ½ teaspoon ginger
  - ½ teaspoon cloves
  - 2 ½ cups flour

### GLAZE:

- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 1 ½ cups powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons milk

## Directions

1. Heat oven to 350° F. Grease cookie sheets or use a silicon liner.
2. In a large bowl, combine butter, sugar, egg and molasses. Mix thoroughly. Blend in baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, cloves and flour.
3. Divide dough into 6 portions. Shape each part into a 12-inch roll on a prepared cookie sheet. Flatten slightly. If sticky, roll portion in flour before shaping.
4. Bake at 350° F for 12-15 minutes or until golden brown.
5. Cool for 5 minutes. Cut diagonally in ¾-inch bars. Do not separate. Cool completely.
6. In a small bowl, combine glaze ingredients (vanilla, powdered sugar, butter and milk) until smooth. If needed, add a few more drops of milk to ensure proper consistency. Spread over bars. Allow the glaze to set.
7. Separate into bars. Enjoy!



Confection



The Treats We Crave



Dessert

# Chocolate Chip Cookies



Joe Ours Columbus, OH

This recipe is a family favorite and often requested. It takes the classic chocolate chip cookie and elevates it by balancing the right amount of chewiness to crispiness, sweetness to salt. There are several secrets built into this recipe that make them delicious, including the ingredient of time. Allowing the dough to rest for 24 hours produces ideal cookies. In this recipe, order matters for best results.

## Ingredients

8 ounces unsalted butter (2 sticks, Kerrygold or high fat butter tastes best)

1 standard ice cube

10 ounces all-purpose flour (about 2 cups)

¾ teaspoon baking soda

¾ cup granulated sugar (5 ounces)

2 teaspoons kosher salt (or 1 teaspoon table salt)

2 large eggs (ideally room temperature)

2 teaspoons vanilla extract (try Madagascar vanilla for a unique twist)

½ cup + 2 tablespoons brown sugar (5 ounces)

16 ounces milk chocolate chips

## Directions

### CREATE BROWN BUTTER:

You'll want a medium Pyrex or heat safe bowl for this step.

1. Melt butter in medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook, gently swirling pan constantly until particles begin to turn golden brown and butter smells nutty, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and continue swirling until butter is a rich brown.

2. Transfer to Pyrex bowl. Whisk in ice cube. This stops the butter from "cooking." Transfer bowl to refrigerator for 20 minutes until completely cool. Alternately you can whisk butter over an ice bath.

## Directions (Cont.)

Dessert

### CREATE DOUGH:

1. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda and salt. Set aside for later.
2. In a separate mixing bowl (preferably a stand mixer) whisk together granulated sugar (not the brown sugar), eggs and vanilla extract with a whisk attachment. Whisk on medium-high speed until pale thick, brownish-yellow ribbons fall off the whisk, about 5 minutes.
3. Join ingredients. This step requires the cooled butter, which should start to turn opaque and firm up around the edges. Using a paddle attachment and in the same bowl with the egg/sugar/vanilla mixture mix in the browned butter and the brown sugar. Mix on medium speed to combine, about 30 seconds.
4. Add dry to wet. In the mixer, on low speed, slowly add in the flour/baking soda/salt mixture until combined. Add in 3-4 batches to prevent flour from flying everywhere.
5. Mix in chocolate chips. Slowly mix in the chocolate chips until well combined.
6. **To make later:** Ideally, these cookies are best made later. I prefer to refrigerate the dough 24 hours in a covered bowl. This will firm up the dough and give the ingredients time to fully meld. Alternately, you can freeze the dough by scooping the dough into individual servings on a parchment sheet covered cookie sheet and freeze. Once frozen, you can transfer to a Ziploc bag and keep frozen.
7. **To make now:** To make now, you may see the dough is pretty loose. To firm up the dough, mix in up to ¼ cup to ½ cup of flour until dough is more traditional in firmness.
8. Bake. Preheat oven to 325° F. The bake time will vary depending on if you're baking now, from refrigerator or from freezer. In all cases, I like to use a silicone mat to cover my cookie sheet for cooking. Otherwise, use parchment paper. To cook newly made room temperature cookies, bake for 12-14 minutes. For refrigerated dough, plan to add another 2 minutes, and from frozen, plan to add 4 minutes. Pull from oven when at the desired doneness. When cooler, transfer cookies to a cooling rack for further cooling.
9. Collect your accolades. Serve warm cookies to your guests and watch the compliments come in.



# Pineapple Upside Down Cake

Nishant Awasthi 📍 Chicago, IL

This is my favorite holiday cake that I bake for my friends and get compliments about. It brings me joy, and it not only looks good but tastes amazing, especially the caramel crust.

## Ingredients

¼ cup butter

1 cup packed brown sugar

1 can (20 ounce) pineapple slices in juice, drained, juice reserved

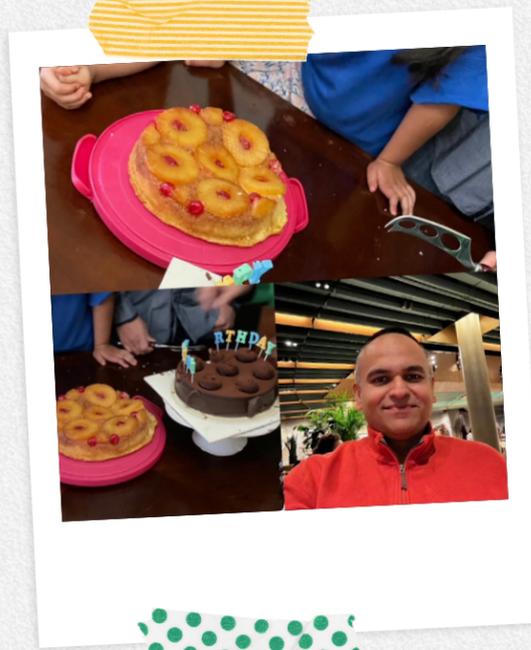
1 jar (6 ounce) maraschino cherries without stems, drained

1 box Betty Crocker™ Super Moist™ Yellow Cake Mix

Vegetable oil and eggs (see cake box)

## Directions

1. Heat oven to 350°F (325°F for dark or nonstick pan).
2. In 13 x 9-inch pan, melt butter in oven. Sprinkle brown sugar evenly over butter.
3. Arrange pineapple slices on brown sugar. Place cherry in center of each pineapple slice and arrange remaining cherries around slices. Press gently into brown sugar.
4. Add enough water to reserved pineapple juice to measure 1 cup. Make cake batter as directed on box, substituting pineapple juice mixture for the water. Pour batter over pineapple and cherries.
5. Bake 42-48 minutes (44-53 minutes for dark or nonstick pan) or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Immediately run knife around side of pan to loosen cake. Place heatproof serving plate upside down onto pan. Turn plate and pan over. Leave pan over cake 5 minutes so brown sugar topping can drizzle over cake. Remove pan. Cool 30 minutes. Serve warm or cool. Store covered in refrigerator.
6. Cut into different pieces and serve. (If you can keep the pineapple ring intact), it will look even better.
7. Bring the cake to me, so I can enjoy it. Happy Holidays!



# Chantilly Cake

Kim Bugg 📍 Indianapolis, IN

Listen! It will tickle you with delight!

## Ingredients

### CAKE BATTER:

¾ cup unsalted butter, softened

1 ½ cups sugar

3 large eggs, room temperature

1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract (or almond extract)

2 ⅓ cups cake flour

2 ½ teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

¾ cup milk

### FROSTING:

16 ounces mascarpone cheese

16 ounces cream cheese, softened

3 cups confectioners' sugar

2 cups heavy whipping cream

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

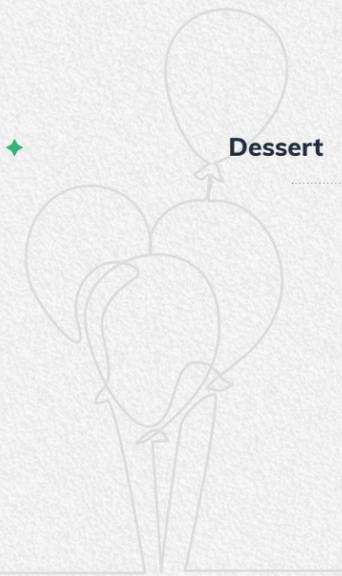
### FILLING:

⅔ cup seedless strawberry jam

2 cups of each preferred fruit like blueberries and strawberries

## Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Line bottoms of two greased 9-inch round baking pans with parchment. Grease the parchment.
2. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy for 5-7 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla.
3. In another bowl, mix the flour, baking powder and salt. Add to creamed mixture alternately with milk, beating well after each addition.
4. Pour into prepared pans, dividing the batter evenly. Bake until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, about 25-30 minutes. Cool in pans for 10 minutes before removing to wire racks. Remove parchment. Cool completely.
5. Make the frosting. In a small bowl, beat mascarpone and cream cheese until blended. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar until smooth.
6. In another bowl, beat cream and vanilla until stiff peaks form.
7. Add whipped cream to mascarpone mixture and beat on low speed until combined.
8. Assemble. Frost, decorate and enjoy! Spread the remaining frosting onto the sides and top of cake, decorating however you'd like with remaining frosting and berries. This is your chance to get creative!
9. Refrigerate any leftovers. (As if! There won't be any!)





# Never Fail Pie Crust



Pat McMillin 📍 Kansas City, MO

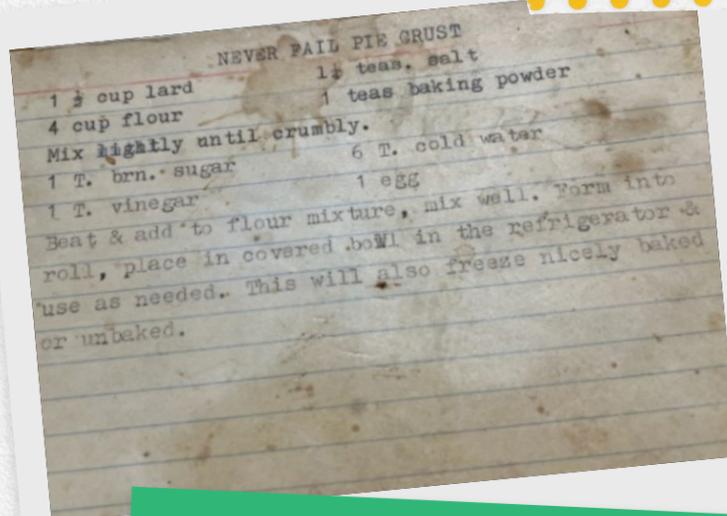
This recipe will always remind me of my mom.

## Ingredients

- 1 ½ cup lard
- 4 cups flour
- 1 ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 6 tablespoons cold water
- 1 egg

## Directions

1. Mix the first four ingredients until crumbly.
2. Beat the second four ingredients and add to the flour mixture, mix well. Form into roll, place in a covered bowl in the refrigerator and use as needed.
3. This will freeze nicely baked or unbaked.



# Old School Black Skillet Blackberry Pie

Pat McMillin 📍 Kansas City, MO

Blackberry desserts are the delayed rewards to offset the gauntlet of thorns, heat, humidity and noxious weeds while picking them.

## Ingredients

- 1 box refrigerated pie crust (or [Never Fail Pie Crust](#), p. 40)
- Two 10-14 ounce packages frozen blackberries
- 1 stick melted butter
- 1 ⅓ cups sugar
- ½ cup flour
- ¼ - ½ cup sugar to sprinkle on top
- ½ stick butter cubed

## Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Unroll one pie crust, and place on the bottom and up sides of a 12-inch cast iron skillet. Pierce the bottom and sides with a fork. Bake for 7 minutes. Remove skillet and increase oven to 375° F.
2. Mix melted butter, 1 ⅓ cups sugar and flour in a large bowl. Toss frozen berries until covered in mixture and crumbly.
3. Gently pour berries into skillet, cover with pie crust, and seal edges on top crust.
4. Scatter small pieces of butter on the top crust, sprinkle ¼ - ½ cup sugar on top and cut slits.
5. Bake for approximately 45 minutes. Enjoy!



Confection



The Treats We Crave



Dessert

# Snickerdoodle Cookies



Ashley Johnson Indianapolis, IN

These cookies are perfect for the holidays. They remind me of baking with my grandma and always turn out soft and chewy on the inside and crispy on the outside!

## Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups white sugar
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup shortening
- 2 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt

### CINNAMON-SUGAR COATING:

- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

## Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400° F.
2. Beat sugar, butter, shortening, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk flour, cream of tartar, baking soda and salt.
4. Gradually mix dry ingredient mixture into wet ingredients until combined, then shape dough into 1-inch balls.
5. Make cinnamon-sugar: Mix 2 tablespoons white sugar and 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon in a small bowl.
6. Roll dough in cinnamon-sugar mixture until coated, then place each cookie 2 inches apart on baking sheet.
7. Bake for 8-10 minutes.
8. Remove from oven and immediately transfer to wire rack to cool.

Confection



The Treats We Crave



Dessert

# Saltine Toffee Bark

Mara Belcher Columbus, OH

This is a very easy dessert to make, but everyone loves it. It brings me joy to see people enjoy it and keep coming back for more until it is gone!

## Ingredients

- 40 saltine crackers
- 2 sticks butter, cubed
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 cups semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 package (8 ounce) milk chocolate English toffee bits (e.g., Heath)

## Directions

1. Line a 15 x 10 x 1-inch baking pan with heavy duty foil. Arrange saltines in a single layer on foil. Set aside.
2. In a large heavy saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Stir in sugar. Bring to a boil. Cook and stir for 1-2 minutes or until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and add vanilla. Pour evenly over crackers.
3. Bake at 350° F for 8-10 minutes or until bubbly. Immediately sprinkle with chocolate chips. Allow chips to soften for a few minutes then spread over top. Sprinkle with toffee bits. Cool.
4. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour or until set. Break into pieces. Store in airtight container.
5. Enjoy this crowd favorite!

Happy Holidays,  
From Our Kitchen to Yours!

